INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

THE BRITISH UNION OF FASCISTS,

1932-1940

by

MATTHEW C. MCMURRAY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2001

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

UMI Number: 9997109

Copyright 2001 by
McMurray, Matthew Clay

All rights reserved.

UMI®

UMI Microform 9997109
Copyright 2001 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) missing in number only; text follows.
Microfilmed as received.

ii

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This manuscript has been read accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

November 6, 2000 — Joel A. Kleinman
Date — Chair of Examining Committee

November 30, 2000 — David Hart
Date — Executive Officer

Prof. Stuart Prall

Prof. John Weiss

Prof. Philip Cannistraro

Prof. Renate Bridenthal
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ABSTRACT

THE BRITISH UNION OF FASCISTS, 1932-1940

by

MATTHEW C. MCMURRAY

ADVISOR: JOEL H. WIENER

This study traces the history of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) which was founded by Sir Oswald Mosley in 1932 and dissolved by the Churchill Government as a threat to national security during the Second World War. It identifies and analyzes the party's major domestic and international proposals, seeks to determine whether its roots were British or foreign, and explains why it achieved success in only a few geographic areas and among a small number of occupational groups and never became a legitimate conder for power. The major theme is that the BUF had British not foreign roots and many of the ingredients to become a larger, more influential movement before it lost its focus with issues such as anti-Semitism and civil order.

Several topics that have received little scholarly attention are explored, including the party's views on Soviet expansionism, the Spanish Civil War, the BUF press, and the role Mosley's lieutenants played, such as William Joyce, Alexander Raven Thomson, Robert Gordon-Canning, and A.K. Chesterton.

The study is divided into two sections. In the first the BUF's domestic program is examined with special attention given to its proposals to establish a Corporate State, strengthen ties with the Empire, and attempt to appeal to both the Left and Right and women. The anti-Semitic campaign it launched in 1934 is also traced. The next section discusses its international program, particularly its views on the League of Nations, the Spanish Civil War, communist expansionism, and Nazi Germany. In the last chapter the major ideas of the study are reviewed and the party's significance explained.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following people for their special help in the preparation of this manuscript: Joel Wiener, Professor of History, City College/City University of New York my dissertation advisor; Lawrence Aspden, Curator, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield; Richard Thurlow, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Sheffield; and the staff of the Wertheim Study, Center for the Humanities, New York Public Library.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION....1

CHAPTER I: THE FOUNDING OF THE BUF....24

CHAPTER II: THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BUF....78

CHAPTER III: 1932-1935: YEARS OF HOPE AND FRUSTRATION....160

CHAPTER IV: THE BUF AND THE JEWS....220

CHAPTER V: AGAINST THE CURRENT: THE BUF'S INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM....300

CHAPTER VI: THE BUF AND THE NAZIS....353

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION....468

BIBLIOGRAPHY....479

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

INTRODUCTION

In 1918 Sir Oswald Mosley, the scion of a wealthy landowning family from Staffordshire, was elected to Parliament as a Conservative. Two years later he became disillusioned with the party and became an Independent. In 1924 he again switched parties and joined the Labour Party (ILP). One of Mosley's special interests was the economy which began to worsen after the war. In the mid-twenties he, John Strachey, his Parliamentary Secretary, and Allen Young, an ILP activist, proposed a set of innovative proposals to remedy the situation known as the Birmingham Proposals. These included expanding credit, nationalizing the banks, establishing a National Economic Council to help match economic production with consumption, and setting minimum wages in a host of industries as a means of boosting purchasing power. Mosley and Strachey outlined many of these ideas in their volume Revolution by Reason (1925) which attracted considerable attention.[1] Most of Mosley's colleagues in the

---

[1]John Strachey and Oswald Mosley, Revolution by Reason: An Account of the Financial Proposals Submited by Oswald Mosley at the 33rd Independent Labour Party Conference, L. Parsons, London, 1925, pp. 14-15.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Labour Party, however, rejected these suggestions. By the end of the decade the depression hit Britain. In 1929 the Labour Party gained control of Parliament from the Conservatives and selected Ramsay Macdonald Prime Minister. MacDonald, who had become the first Labour Prime Minister in 1924, named Mosley Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The chief task Mosley, and his chief, J.H. Thomas, the Lord Privy Seal, were charged with was to find solutions to the unemployment problem which was rising steadily. In 1930 Mosley presented a host of proposals popularly termed the Mosley Memoranda to the cabinet designed to boost economic production and reduce the massive unemployment. In Mosley's view, "The home market must be the future basis of British trade, and that home market depends on the high purchasing power of the people, which in turn depends upon high wages."[2] The cabinet, led by Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and a proponent of the Gold Standard, refused to accept them.

Frustrated and embittered, Mosley left the government in May 1930. To the dismay of Labour leaders, he took the issue to the party. At the annual Labour Party Conference at Llandudno in October1930 his proposals were narrowly defeated by the executive.

---

[2]Mosley, as quoted in Eugen Weber, Varieties of Fascism: Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century, Van Nostrand, New York, 1964, p. 109.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Convinced that party leaders were opposed to major economic change, he resigned from the Labour Party towards the end of 1930. Several months later he and a half-dozen fellow MPs, including Aneurin Bevan, founded the New Party which continued to fight for economic reform.[3] Although the party was less than a year old, the New Party fought the General Election of October 1931.[4] The election was a disaster with all but two of the 24 hopefuls losing their deposit. Recognising that the organization was unable to generate the support it needed to become a legitimate player on the national political scene, Mosley announced a few months later that the New Party was being folded. The BUF, one of the most significant parties on the extreme right in modern British history, grew directly out of the New Party and was officially launched in London in September 1932.

This thesis has several major goals. First, to identify, discuss, and analyze the BUF's chief domestic and international programs; secondly, to identify what factors prevented it from having a greater impact; thirdly, to determine if its roots were British, or, if it was simply a derivative of Italian Fascism and German Nazism. Several topics previous

---

[3]Bevan and most of the other MPs left the party shortly after joining it.

[4]Many candidates, including Mosley, were seen as Labour turncoats and were sometimes received hostilely by audiences.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

researchers have tended to ignore will be explored in this survey, such as its differences with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, its views on key international issues, its press, the role leaders besides Mosley, such as Alexander Raven Thomson, the Director of Policy, William Joyce, the Director of Propaganda, and A.K. Chesterton, editor of Blackshirt, its leading newspaper.in the early thirties, played in the organization, and several auxiliary organizations, such as the British Traders' Bureau, Fascist Union of British Workers (F.U.B.W.) and Federation of British University Fascist Associations (F.B.U.F.A).

Many commentators from across the political spectrum have suggested that the BUF was simply an imitation or a tool of Continental Fascism. In 1934 Dr. W.J. O'Donovan, Conservative MP for Mile End, termed the movement "practical Hitlerism." Hugh Dalton, an influential Labour MP, told the Commons in 1936: "The Fascist nuisance over here... would never have been thought of, it would never have been attempted, and it would never have been heavily subsidised from abroad, as we suspect it is, but for its growth elsewhere." [5] Malcolm Muggeridge called Mosley "a Lilliputian Fuhrer."[6] The British Communists termed the BUF "Hitlerism in Great Britain" and

---

[5]Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 317, November 5, 1936, p. 295

[6]Malcolm Muggeridge, The Sun Never Sets. The Story of England in the Nineteen Thirties, Random House, New York, 1940, p. 69. Muggeridge worked for MI6, a branch of the British secret service charged with gathering intelligence overseas.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

alleged that the fascists' program consisted solely of "ferocious Jew-baiting."[7] Some historians have made a similar argument, such as Robert Benewick and Gisela Lebzelter.

The BUF certainly borrowed generously from both the Italian Fascists and Nazis for its ideas and outward trappings. These included its uniforms, banners, armbands, paramilitary organization, and use of large halls to hold theatrical meetings. As a result, many ordinary Britons assumed that the Blackshirts shared the same goals as the Continental fascists.[8] Mosley's argument that the salute originated with the ancient Greeks and Romans, while perhaps historically accurate, was not taken very seriously. As this example suggests, he did not always appreciate the importance of perception in politics. Too often Mosley assumed people either saw or felt about issues the way he did, or that he could persuade them to adopt his perspective.

This have been partly because he had a charismatic personality and was an outstanding speaker. For instance, Mussolini warned Mosley not to organize his party along paramilitary lines, but he ignored the Duce's advice because he thought that in

---

[7]Blackshirt, March 18, 1933, Pat Devine, "Fascist Votes: An Analysis of the L.C.C. Election Results in East London," Discussion, Vol. II, No. 14 (April 1937), p. 22; World News and Views, October 23, 1937. In 1935 a cartoon in the Daily Worker depicted Mosley carrying the Union Jack with a swastika superimposed on it. This was actually the flag of the Imperial Fascist League, a tiny British fascist party founded by Dr. Arnold Leese, a veterinarian, in 1928. (Daily Worker, January 2, 1935).

[8]One of the flags the BUF regularly used was an Italian Fascist one Mussolini gave them. (Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 13, 1999).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

view of the violent opposition the party faced it could not get its views across to the public unless it was willing to use physical force. The use of force only bred more violence and sullied the fascists' reputation beyond repair at an early date. The recent success enjoyed by both the NSDAP and Italian Fascists was certainly another reason the fascists borrowed these symbols. Mosley and his lieutenants clearly hoped to use the prestige these parties enjoyed to bolster their own popularity.

After the infamous Olympia Hall meeting in London in mid- 1934 in which BUF stewards injured several dozen anti-fascist demonstrators, most of the major media organs gave less attention to the party's activities. This may have been at least partly due to a request by the government to avoid giving the fascists publicity. Roger Eatwell has noted that in the summer of 1934 "The [British] government sent covert instructions to the media requesting that they starve the BUF of press."[9] The government apparently feared that it had the potential to become a larger and more formidable movement. For

---

[9]Roger Eatwell, A History of Fascism, Allen Lane, New York, 1996, p. 185 Richard Thurlow, who has studied the BUF for more than 20 years, has stated that in 1934 "The National government approached newspaper editors and asked them to avoid unnecessary publicity for the BUF " (Richard Thurlow, "State Management of the BUF in the 1930s," Mike Cronin, ed., The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996, pp. 33-34). He has also written: "It seems likely...that newspaper editors were encouraged through offical sources to print only negative publicity about the BUF " (Richard Thurlow, "British Fascism and State Surveillance," Intelligence and National Security, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1988, p. 83).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

instance, Lord Trenchard, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, wrote Sir John Gilmour, the Home Secretary, in 1934: "I am fully convinced that the present difficulties [in the East End of London] arise primarily from the existence and methods of the fascist party, and that the only really effective way of dealing with him [Mosley] is to put a stop to the present organisation and to prevent similar organisations being formed in the future."[10] As a result, the fascists found it more difficult to obtain publicity.

The B.B.C., which is a semi-governmental agency, sought to avoid extremist political issues and did not report most news relating to the BUF from 1934 until it was banned six years later.[11] Major newspapers like the Times and the Manchester Guardian did not print much news about the BUF. Many of the items they published concerning the fascists related to violent episodes, such as Olympia and the "Battle of Cable Street," a march the party organized through Jewish districts in the East End of London that attracted more than 150,000 people and led to dozens of injuries and occasionally to brief reports of major speeches Mosley and his lieutenants delivered. The editor of the Town Crier, a West Midlands paper, probably spoke for most mainstream journalists when he

---

[10] Trenchard, as quoted in The Guardian, May 14, 1986;Thurlow, "State Management of the BUF in the 1930s," in Cronin, ed. The Failure of British Fascism," pp. 33-34

[11] An exception was a lecture Jorian Jenks, a BUF parliamentary candidate, delivered on restricting food imports in 1938. (Action, December 31, 1938).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

regretted that after Olympia and the Battle of Cable Street, there were still "certain misguided folks who provide...Mosley with just the kind of publicity to keep his movement alive and without which he would certainly languish and die."[12]

The BUF protested bitterly but vainly against the treatment it received from the media. "Let Mosley Broadcast" became one of its most popular slogans and was painted and chalked on walls, bridges, and other public places across the country throughout the thirties. Action urged its followers to write to the B.B.C. asking the network to permit Blackshirts to present their views on its airwaves.[13] Towards the end of the decade, a B.B.C. official explained its policy:

> We have no doubt that there are a number of listeners who would like to hear Sir Oswald Mosley speak. On the other hand it seems quite clear that there is also a very large body of opinion antagonistic to Sir Oswald's views who would regard it as very unfair if the B.B.C. were to give him facilities without at the same time giving a similar opportunity for an opposite or very widely divergent point of view to be expressed. The B.B.C.'s policy generally in controversial matters is to ensure that both sides of a case are put fairly.[14]

---

[12] Town Crier, May 24, 1937.

[13] Ezra Pound, who contributed many pieces to BUF periodicals although he did not become a member, contended that the blackout was proof that the B.B.C. "was an instrument for the suppression of truth." (Action, January 7, 1939). Among the articles Pound published in the BUF press were, "Demarcations," " British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No 1 (January-April 1937). Also see his "The Just Price or Why Mosley?" Action, August 13, 1938 and letter to the editor, Action, October 15, 1938.

[14] J.C. Thornton of the B.B.C. Public Relations Department, as quoted in Action, March 4, 1939. Churchill, rejected an offer to serve on a committee formed to oversee the network in 1933 explaining that he was upset by the "very unsatisfactory conditions in which the B.B.C. do their work." (Manchester Guardian, January 31, 1933). In 1934, William Ferrie, a laborer, refused to deliver a speech on the "national character" from a worker's perspective because the network censored his text. (Ibid., March 6, 1934, Daily Worker, March 24, 1934).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Throughout the decade, few politicians on either the right or left expressed much concern about the way the mainstream media reported news relating to the BUF, a testament to the movement's unpopularity. There were a few on the right, however, who were upset. For instance, Lt. Col. J.T.C. Moore-Brabazon, the Conservative MP for Ayr Burghs and a former cabinet Minister, told the Commons: "Although he [Mosley] is leader of a political party, [he] is not mentioned at all. That must be because some form of arrangement and conspiracy exists within our Press. If that is so, we have not a free Press, and that state of affairs should be altered."[15]

It is not entirely accurate to say that the BUF modelled itself after the Fascists and Nazis since the party always pursued a nationalist agenda and relied on home-grown models like the Social Imperialists for some of its domestic and international programs, such as restriction of immigration, imperial and foreign trade, and agriculture. Indeed, the BUF sometimes referred to itself as "Imperial Socialism." The fascists always billed

---

[15] Hansard, House of Commons Debates, February 15, 1939, p. 1834. Aeroplane, a monthly aviation journal, complained:

> One may dislike Sir Oswald Mosley. But a press which ignores meetings at which audiences amount to many, many thousands at a time, and are moved to great enthusiasm, cannot profess to be a representative press. The great danger of such suppression of truth and suggestion of falsehood, is that we may be drawn into a war in which we are not concerned and in the interests of alien political movements and international finance. (Aeroplane, as quoted in R.R. Bellamy, "The Norfolk Bailiff," in Jeffrey Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986, p. 63).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

themselves as nationalists. The notion that they were tools of the Continental fascists was anathema to them. Ellis Roberts, a clergyman, spoke for many fascists when he said, "I joined [the BUF] because I have been a patriot all my life."[16] The singing of "God Save the King," the National Anthem, was a regular feature at the BUF's meetings and the organization's flag and Union Jack were often displayed side-by-side. Many fascists frequently appeared in public wearing their war decorations. When the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants donated 500 pounds to persons escaping persecution in Spain and Central Europe, the BUF complained that too many people gave their "hard-earned money to a lot of dago crooks... who are coming here to steal the printers' own jobs." [17] "We have starved our own children," complained Action during the Spanish Civil War, "to give milk to foreigners."[18] "Every blot on our lovely island," wrote W.J. Leaper, the Jewish Editor of Blackshirt, "every slum, every dingy back-street, every ill-clad child, every starving mother is a rebuke to our race and our time."[19] When cinemas, music halls, and theatres throughout the country gave a tenth of their earnings to Baldwin's Refugee Fund in 1939, the fascists urged people to give

---

[16] Action, April 9,1936.
[17] Ibid., February 11, 1939.
[18] ibid., August 4, 1936; ibid., October 29, 1938.
[19] Blackshirt, May 3, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

money to their own poor first. [20] "British Unemployed Before Alien Refugees" and "Charity Begins at Home" became fascist rallying cries in 1938-1939.[21] John Warburton, a member from the East End, asserts that the "motivation" for "Mosley's Fascism... went deep down into the past of these islands." [22] The Blackshirts' almost total electoral failure meant they were unable to put any of its proposals into effect. This lent weight to opponents' arguments that it was more of an imitation of Continental fascism than a nationalist movement. The international fascist movement, which opponents suggested the BUF was a significant element of, was much weaker than anti-fascists argued, as Michael Ledeen has shown in Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International. The Italian Fascists, who probably contributed more financially to the BUF than any group, did not see it as a valuable ally, particularly after it lost popularity in the mid-thirties. Neither did the Nazis.

---

[20] "If the cinema proprietors wish really to make a charitable gesture," Action observed, "they should first put their own house in order and pay decent wages, and then with a portion of their large surplus assist the two million British unemployed." (Action, January 7, 1939). Action complained, "WE ARE ASKED TO PROVIDE THE MONEY WITH WHICH TO LOAD THE DICE AGAINST OUR OWN CHILDREN...The 'Baldwin Fund' and other funds of a like nature [will] be used to give 'buns' to Jewish boys while British lads are condemned to the 'gutter.' " (Ibid., January 7, 1939).

[21] ibid., February 4, 1939

[22] Interview with John Warburton, July 6, 1999

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

It has sometimes been easier for students of the BUF to focus on dramatic incidents like the Olympia Hall Meeting and the Battle of Cable Street than to probe the parallels that existed between it and earlier nationalist and xenophobic societies and movements, such as the British Brothers League (BBL), which was formed in 1901 in London, and the British Fascists (BF) which was founded two decades later. As a result the native character of the BUF has usually been obscured and underestimated. There are exceptions to this pattern. For example, Bernard Semmel has asserted, "Despite much obvious emulation of continental older brothers, British fascist doctrine was firmly rooted in native soil."[23] Neill Nugent has stated that the BUF's "patriotism...was intense."[24] D.S. Lewis has noted, "However much Italian money the BUF received...it remained a British movement."[25] Geoffrey G. Field has suggested that the BUF belongs "as part of an English right wing continuum, rather than...as simply a poor imitation of Continental models."[26] Richard Thurlow has noted, "The areas of difference in the

---

[23]Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social Imperial Thought, 1895-1914, Doubleday, Garden City, 1960, p. 24.
[24]Neill Nugent, "The Ideas of the British Union of Fascists,"in Neill Nugent and Roger King, eds. The British Right: Conservative and Right-Wing Politics in Britain, Saxon House, Farnborough, 1977, p. 144
[25]D S. Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987, p. 83.
[26]Geoffrey G. Field, "Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off, Recent Research on England," Wiener Library Bulletin, Special Issue, (1982), p. 26

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

thought of Hitler, Mussolini and Mosley outweigh the similarities." [27] This study will attempt to show that the BUF's British character was stronger than that suggested by its opponents and some scholars.

The historiography of the BUF is, on the whole, not very satisfactory. With the exception of D.S. Lewis' Illusions of Grandeur: Mosley and British Society, 1931-1981 (1987), most of the relatively few studies that exist have given too little attention to the party's international policy, although it was a major element of its program, particularly in the latter half of the 1930s. For example, Robert Benewick in his Political Violence and Public Order incorrectly suggests that this policy consisted primarily of "condoning the aims of German foreign policy."[28] This view ignores the central place the Empire played in the BUF's international program. Many fascists had lived and worked in parts of the Empire, cared deeply about it, and campaigned to keep it intact, as Thomas Linehan has recently suggested. [29]

There is no consensus on several key issues relating to the BUF, such as whether it was based on foreign or native roots, whether anti-Semitism was one of the pillars of

---

[27] Richard C. Thurlow, "Fascism and Nazism--No Siamese Twins, Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1980), p. 7.

[28] Robert Benewick, Political Violence and Public Order, Allen Lane, London, 1969, p. 162.

[29] Thomas Linehan, East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex 1933-1940, Frank Cass, London, 1996, pp. 268-69; 288.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

its ideology or added later because of expediency, and the impact the Public Order Act (1936) had on the organization. Historians can also not agree on the social composition or size of the party's membership. The divergent interpretations scholars hold about the BUF are highlighted in the recent literature on the party, including Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society, (1999), a volume of essays edited by Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman. The book presents conflicting views on how the Left reacted to the BUF and the effect the Public Order Act had on the Blackshirts.

Many writers who have discussed the BUF have labelled it as a reactionary movement with few original ideas and very limited support. This is particularly true when it is considered as part of general surveys of fascism and modern European history. Some of these books sometimes rely on stereotypical images of the organization. For example, Civilization in the West (1998), a textbook widely-used in American colleges and universities, states, "In 1932...Mosley...founded the British Union of Fascists, consisting of goon squads and bodyguards." [30] H.R. Kedward asserts in his survey, Fascism in Western Europe, 1900-1945: "For all its noise and violence, the B.U.F. barely touched the core of British life and politics... Its doctrines seemed nothing more than a sequence

---

[30]Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, and Patricia O'Brien, Civilization in the West, Volume C, Since 1789, Longman, New York, 1997, p. 951.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of eccentricities...Their only tangible policy was anti-Semitism." [31] On the other hand, some scholars have suggested that the BUF was a nationalist movement with a distinctive domestic and international program. For example, Paul Martin has recently argued in History Today, that reactionary tendencies had a long tradition in Britain and Mosley "re-invented" this "tradition" instead of creating a new one. He asserts, "To treat Mosley's fascism as an aberration is dangerously flawed...His British Union of Fascists...should not be demonised in order to distance them from 'people like us.' A closer examination reveals Mosley as the inheritor of an older reactionary tradition which he reinvented as his 'modern movement.'"[32] Based on the extensive study I have made of published and unpublished documents relating to the BUF, Martin's interepretation is the sounder one. Other works that capture the party's nationalist character and recognize its broad social and ethnic make up are Beverley Nichols', The Sweet and Twenties (1958), Robert Skidelsky's Oswald Mosley (1975), an incisive and sympathetic intellectual biography, Neill Nugent and Roger King eds., The British Right, (1977) and D.S. Lewis'scholarly Illusions of Grandeur: Mosley, Fascism, and British Society, 1931-1981 (1987).[33] But none of these books analyzes in any detail the party's views on key issues

---

[31]H.R. Kedward, Fascism in Western Europe, 1900-1945, Blackie, Glasgow, 1969, p. 94
[32]Paul Martin, "Contextualising Mosley," History Today, May 1998, Volume 48, No. 5 (May 1998), p. 62

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

such as immigration, the British Empire, the League of Nations and Collective Security, Soviet expansionism, and the BUF's complex association with Nazi Germany. Nor do they explore in any depth the role several of Mosley's lieutenants played in the organization, including Thomson, Fuller, and Gordon-Canning.

Some books on the BUF have not been very useful. For example, David Shermer's Blackshirts: Fascism in Britain repeats errors about the party. Although Shermer relates some interesting information and anecdotes, his analysis of major issues, such as the movement's ties to Continental fascism, is weak. Fascism inside England (1946), by Frederick Mullally, a former Communist, is a partisan critique of the movement. Mullally allows his left-wing political views to obscure his analysis. For example, he suggests that if Mosley had come to power, Britain would have become "a colony in the German Fascist Empire of Europe."[34] Since he provides little evidence to support his argument it is difficult to accept his conclusions. Some commentators have suggested that the anti-fascists' successful effort to stop the BUF from marching through East London in October 1936 in the so-called "Battle of Cable Street" marked the

---

[33]A.W. Brian Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious: Detention Without Trial in Wartime Britain, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, reveals the fundamentally nationalist character of the BUF, although it deals with a much narrower subject than the other volumes listed.

[34]Frederick Mullally, Fascism Inside England, Claud Morris, London, 1946, p. 83. After completing this short volume Mullally turned to writing fiction, a genre perhaps more suitable to his talents than history.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

beginning of the end of the party's popularity in the East End. And G.C. Webber has argued that after the Munich Agreement in the autumn of 1938 BUF support in the East End "faded rapidly."[35] But, as Thomas Linehan has recently shown, the BUF enjoyed as much support in east London in 1938-1939 as at any time in its history.[36] These are just a few of the errors and half-truths that have cropped up over the years relating to the British fascists. It is one of the goals of the present study to shed light on some of these issues so that a more accurate history of the BUF can be written. Dissertation material is inadequate.[37]

New ground is broken on each of these topics in this thesis. The study attempts to fill in some of the gaps that exist in our knowledge of the party's domestic and international programs, to highlight how earlier patriotic societies such as the BBL helped create a favorable climate in the East End of London for its nativist and anti-Semitic program, and to shed light on several major topics in British political and social history in the

---

[35] G.C. Webber, "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October 1984), p. 44.

[36] Also see Christopher T. Husbands, "The National Front Becalmed," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. 30 New Series Nos. 43/44 (1977), p. 78.

[37] Dissertations in progress include: Mark Burrows, "The Quasi-Socialist Dimension within British Fascist Ideology," Andrew Mitchell, "Fascism in East Anglia, 1932-1940;" Peter R. Pugh, "A Political Biography of Alexander Raven Thomson," all at the University of Sheffield, and John G. Hope, "Ruling Elites: Fascism and the State in Inter-War Britain," at the Open University. Another notable recent work is Adam Usher, "An Indigenous Fascism in Britain? Sir Oswald Mosley , The British Union of Fascists and British Society During the Interwar Period," Master of Arts Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1999

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1930s, such as racial and religious intolerance and the coming dissolution of the Empire.

The study is based on published and unpublished sources, including a variety of newspapers, magazines, letters, and diaries. I have also interviewed more than two dozen individuals who lived in the East End during the thirties or who belonged to the BUF or the Union Movement (UM) which Mosley founded in 1948.

* * * *

The early nineteen-thirties would seem to have been an excellent time to form a new political party in Britain. The economic slump that began in the early twenties and continued into the "devil's decade" was the most severe since the nineteenth century and affected a large proportion of the population, particularly in the industrial heartland: the North of England, Scotland, and South Wales. Joblessness and bankruptcies rose sharply and the decline of traditional industries, such as coal mining, shipbuilding, iron and steel, and textiles accelerated. Both wages and the volume of both foreign and domestic trade fell. It was not until 1937 that average weekly wages reached the level

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

they had in 1924.[38] Between 15 and 30 percent of the population lived at or near the poverty level. The Unemployment Insurance Act of 1931 introduced a Means Test, and reduced benefits to the unemployed. It was bitterly opposed, particularly on the left (although the cuts were later restored in many cases). International conditions were unstable. Crises in China and later in Ethiopia, Spain, and Czechoslovakia threatened the Versailles System which Britain had helped to establish after the First World War.

Although economic conditions did not become as severe as they did in Germany or the United States the impact was still profound, particularly in the North, the industrial heartland, Scotland, and South Wales. Unemployment reached three million in the early thirties. The economic collapse led to the fall of the second Labour Government in the summer of 1931 and to the formation of the Conservative-dominated National Government, which was also comprised of dissident Labour and Liberal politicians. Robert Skidelsky has explored these themes ably in his Politicians and the Slump (1970). Restoring national prosperity became the chief goal of this new administration. Among its most significant acts were abandoning the Gold Standard (1931), adopting a

---

[38]Forest Capie, The Interwar British Economy: A Statistical Abstract, Manchester University Press, Dover, NH, 1983, p. 62. Labour staunchly criticized the government's policies towards the traditional industries. See, for example, Manchester Guardian, March 23, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

protectionist trade policy with the Ottawa Agreement (1932), and re-invigorating the depressed regions in 1934 with the Special Areas Recovery Administration (SARA). But none of these acts represented a break with traditional British capitalism.

The economy began slowly to improve after the National Government's accession to power. For instance, unemployment in the Southeast and Southwest fell by more than twenty percent between 1933 and 1935 and the number of workers employed in key industries such as textiles and iron and steel rose steadily. [39] By the mid-thirties the recovery was well under way. Consequently, the BUF's economic proposals, the core of their domestic program, began to lose much of their relevance. The fascists lost perhaps their best chance of expanding their support. As Sean Glynn and John Oxborrow have noted, "In Britain there was no [prolonged depression] and never any serious possibility that an equivalent of Hitler or Roosevelt would emerge. If the situation had been more serious, then extreme political solutions and charismatic leaders such as Lloyd George and Mosley might have gained more attention."[40] In order to attract

---

[39]B.R. Mitchell, British Historical Statistics, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, pp. 125, 291
[40]Sean Glynn and John Oxborrow, Interwar Britain: A Social and Economic History, Harper & Row, New York, 1976, p. 160.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

followers, the fascists chose to focus on controversial issues such as anti-Semitism and anticommunism. For those fortunate enough to be employed, real income in 1937 was nearly 18 percent higher than it had been ten years earlier.[41] The economy continued to gradually improve for the remainder of the decade. But not all regions shared in the relative prosperity; the North of England, South Wales, and southern Scotland were all mired in a depression. Economic development schemes like SARA had relatively little effect on these areas which lacked business capital, had a large proportion of older, decaying industries and relatively few workers who possessed training in the newer industries like aviation and motor vehicles. Since its inception, the BUF had predicted that an economic crisis more severe than that which had struck in 1931 would soon occur. The best way to prevent this in its view was for the country to adopt corporate economic principles. The BUF was confident that when the renewed crisis came it would become a legitimate contender for power. When the economic crisis did not materialize the BUF lost a most valuable propaganda weapon and some credibility. This, combined with other errors it made, including its anti-Semitic campaign, penchant for street violence, inability to keep the support of powerful allies, and failure to put

---

[41] David R. Shermer, Blackshirts: Fascists in Britain, Ballantine, New York, 1971, p 51.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

virtually any social or economic schemes into effect to help its supporters restricted it to the fringes of the British political scene for its entire nearly-decade long career.

The view presented in the present study is that the BUF's goals were British not foreign-based and that some of its ideas paralleled and drew upon those of native movements, such as the Social Imperialists, Distributists, (a group headed by G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc that railed against international finance and the press), and British Brothers League (BBL), a group that flourished at the turn-of- the-century and right-wing journals, such as the Morning Post and the Spectator. The BUF's failure to convince the electorate of this fact was one of the reasons it never became a mass movement. It will also be argued that the BUF paid too little attention to key domestic issues, such as housing, rearmament, and health care, and too much to issues that lay outside its core philosophy, such as civil order.

* * * *

The study consists of seven chapters. The first examines the reasons why Mosley founded the party and discusses the BUF's economic program, the centerpiece of its domestic program. Questions that are explored in this chapter include the following: Which domestic and international groups helped shape its economic program? What

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

factors caused the vast majority of Britons to reject its economic proposals, although the country had not yet emerged from the most severe slump in the modern era? The second chapter concerns the BUF's membership and seeks to identify the reasons people joined the organization. It also discusses the careers of a host of notable Blackshirts. The next chapter discusses the successes and failures the BUF experienced in the mid-thirties when it took some strides towards becoming a mass movement. Chapter four analyzes the BUF's views towards the Jews, while the fifth explores its international program with special reference to the League of Nations, Collective Security, and communist expansionism, topics which have been little examined in this context. Chapter six analyzes the BUF's attitude towards the Nazis and its little-studied association with the Third Reich, while the seventh and final chapter reviews the major conclusions of this thesis, and seeks to explain what significance these have for students of twentieth-century British political history.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDING OF THE BUF

In the early thirties, the British economy was mired in one of the worst slumps since the late 1800s. Bankruptcies, evictions, and unemployment all rose sharply. Many people, particularly those with low incomes, began to lose patience with the National Government which had been formed in the summer of 1931 to stop the depression. After the First World War, Prime Minister David Lloyd George promised returning servicemen that the government would build "a land fit for heroes." In the early thirties many of these men were jobless, ill-housed, and were losing faith in capitalism and democracy. The best-selling diaries of Lord Knebworth, a young MP killed in an air crash, expressed the sentiments of a growing segment of the population. "The world," he wrote in 1930, "appears to be shaking off the yoke of democracy. The hour is ripe everywhere for a man, and a drive and a policy. I hope the great National Government is

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the last of the ancient regime."[1]

This chapter is concerned with several issues. First, why did Mosley found the BUF and what did he wish to accomplish with it? What were the major elements of the BUF's economic policy, which was the core of its domestic program? Why did the fascists' economic program never become popular with more than a fraction of the electorate?

In the BUF's view, capitalism was outmoded because it gave certain groups, such as financiers and big businesses, unfair advantages over employees. This did not prevent the fascists from accepting contributions from several large firms.[2] In addition, the state's interests were allegedly ignored under capitalism. According to the fascists, intrinsic divisions existed between employers and workers that made cooperation between the two impossible. As a result, wealth was maldistributed, capital sorely needed at home was sent abroad, the majority of peoples' social and economic needs were ignored, and

---

[1]Knebworth, as quoted in Colin Cross, The Fascists in Britain, Barrie and Rockcliff, London, 1961, p 95 Many commentators on both the right and the left questioned the future of democratic capitalism. According to Austin Hopkinson, "Democracy has certainly failed to prove itself an efficient or dignified method of government, and...continuously engenders the microbes which are most fatal to it." (Austin Hopkinson, "Refelections on Fascism," The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 115, No. 686, April 1934, pp. 385-93). Also see F C S. Schiller, "Can Democracy Survive?," Ibid., Vol. 114, No. 680 (September 1933), pp 385-397.

[2]These included Lord Rothermere's Harmsworth Press syndicate and Saunders-Roe, an aviation firm.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

conditions that led to wars were created. Mosley stated that "economic life" in the thirties had "outgrown" Britain's political institutions." [3] According to the Blackshirts, the definition of freedom was the ability to earn a decent living and "enjoy some of the fruits of life." Mosley wrote in The Greater Britain (1932), the handbook of the movement:

> Surely nobody can imagine that the British. are free. The essence of liberty is the freedom to enjoy some of the fruits of life, a reasonable standard of life, a decent house, good wages, reasonable hours of leisure...unmolested private happiness with wife, children and friends and, finally, the hope of material success to set the seal on private ambition. How many possess this liberty today?...The beginning of liberty is the end of economic chaos.[4]

In the early 1930s, Mosley visited Italy several times and met with Mussolini and other Fascist leaders. He observed the first stages of a corporate economy being built partly on the basis of the syndicalist theories of the Frenchman George Sorel, a Frenchman. He was impressed with the economic and social reforms the regime had put into place, such as public works projects and compulsory education programs.[5]

---

[3]Oswald Mosley, The Greater Britain, in Joel H. Wiener, ed., The Lion in Decline, 1914-73, Chelsea House, London, 1974, p. 3241.

[4]Mosley, The Greater Britain, in Wiener, The Lion in Decline, p. 3246. "Greater Britain" was a term proponents of the Empire had used to describe the imperial federation since at least the Victorian Era.

[5]After one visit Mosley stated: "Mussolini's brand of fascism challenges alike the 'Right' and the "Left' of old world politics. It [has] produced not only a new system of government, but also a new type of man who differs from politicians of the old world as men from another planet." For a discussion of the Italian Corporate State, see Fausto Pitigliani, The Italian Corporative State, P S. King, London, 1933, W G. Welk, Fascist Economic Policy: An Analysis of Italy's Economic Experiment, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1938, and Paul Einzig, The Economic Foundations of Fascism, Macmillan, London, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

When he founded the BUF in 1932 he and his advisors were convinced that if Britain adopted a similar model she could build a planned economy, preserve key elements of capitalism, such as private property and the profit motive, and help her citizens live healthier, more productive lives. [6] Mosley was convinced that "the struggle for markets" had been one of the major causes of the First World War which was in his view one of the greatest tragedies in European history. Mosley served in the trenches during the conflict. The war seems to have changed his perspective on life and caused him to abandon whatever religious faith he had. Fascism was for him a way to help to build a better, more peaceful political order. After his visits to Italy he became convinced that if other nations established corporate states they would achieve stable economies and thereby reduce the chances of another catastrophe. The corporate state became the linchpin of the BUF's domestic program. In the fascists' view, it offered the country the best hope of recapturing the prosperity it had enjoyed before the First World War.

---

[6]Mosley, The Greater Britain, BUF Publications, London, 1932, p. 26. Skidelsky explores Mosley's views on the corporate state in his insightful essay, "Reflections on Mosley and British Fascism," in Kenneth Lunn and Richard C. Thurlow, eds., British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Inter-War Britain, Croom Helm, London, 1980.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Action for King and People, the BUF's largest newspaper, vowed that under this model:

> All shall serve the State and none the Faction; all shall work and thus enrich their country and themselves; opportunity shall be open to all, but privilege to none; great position shall be conceded only to great talent; reward shall be accorded only to service. Poverty shall be abolished by the power of modern science released within the organised State; the barriers of class shall be destroyed and the energies of every citizen devoted to the service of the British nation.[7]

The fascists argued that capitalism had failed in Britain. Large businesses and financial institutions had a stranglehold on the economy. Their primary goal was to accumulate profits and they had little or no concern for the consequences their activities had for society. For example, the BUF argued that financiers preferred to make loans to foreign firms rather than domestic ones because the former paid higher rates of interest. The interest on these loans, the fascists noted, were paid in the form of cheap imports like foodstuffs and raw materials. The fascists argued that it was always in the financiers' interest to reject efforts to restrict the volume of these imports in spite of the negative consequences to the domestic economy, such as mass unemployment and

---

[7] Action, April 9, 1936

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the failure of industries. According to the BUF:

> The nation's purchasing power ..can be reduced at any time to suit financial vested interests, but the interminable processes of parliamentary procedure.. must be set in motion before the slightest increase in purchasing power can accrue to the nation...[This is] a fantastic, insane doctrine. .The bankers rule the land, and their international-usury system would be ruined if the millions of underfed, ill-housed, ill-clad and unemployed among our countrymen were enabled to purchase and consume the wealth that they themselves and the genius of their forefathers have won and created.[8]

"Let anyone dare demand a loan to equip British industry," Action complained, "[and] great measures for the relief of unemployment, etc., and the cry goes up that you must not divert money from its normal channels. But if Brazil, Argentina, or some Central European country desires to raise loans, they are oversubscribed."[9] "Only by removing the stranglehold of international finance," Thomson warned, "can we recover... control over our destiny and prevent British industry" from being slowly "starved of capital and credit."[10]

According to the BUF, recent scientific and technical advances had "solved the problem of production."[11] The greatest economic challenges now facing Britain were to find a more equitable means of distributing goods and services and to alleviate the

---

[8]Unsigned, "The Cult of Midas," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 (January-April 1937),. p. 13.
[9]Action, July 23, 1936.
[10] Alexander Raven Thomson, Cotton! Communists and Socialists Exposed, BUF, London, 1935, p. 8, Ibid., The Coming Corporate State, Greater Britain, Westminster, 1937, p. 19.
[11]Oswald Mosley, The British Peace, Greater Britain, London, 1939, p. 6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

conflict between the haves and have-nots. In contrast to socialists and communists, who argued that class conflict was at the root of politics, the Blackshirts held that there was actually only one class: the British people. A person's class affiliation could always change, but not one's nationality. Action stated, "It is by a great effort of class co-operation alone, that the economic problems of the age can be solved."[12] In the BUF's view, economic systems which were based on class distinctions like communism were bound to fail.[13] The BUF argued that by giving the state control of production, distribution, and the financial markets the state would be able to make the most efficient use of its human and material resources and a long period of steady growth would follow.[14] In the corporate state to be the economy would be divided into four sectors: industrial, distributive, administrative, and primary products. These would be sub-divided into two dozen smaller corporations.[15] Each of these corporations would be

---

[12]According to Action, "It is by a great effort of class co-operation alone, that the economic problems of the age can be solved." (Action, September 24, 1936).

[13]According to E.G. "Mick" Clarke, "Class politics are no longer inevitable or useful. 20th century revolutions are being fought on three main points (1) The necessary struggle to defeat class war theory because [it] brings chaos and poverty. (2) The need to break the power and control of international finance... (3)...Class collaboration in securing plentious production and useful distribution of goods. (E.G. Clarke, "Marxism Died with Marx," Blackshirt, May 2, 1936). Henry Gibbs asserted, "Class difference exists only as a nefarious ladder to enable certain politicians to scramble from the gutter into the dustbin." (Ibid., January 18, 1935).

[14]Action, January 21, 1939. For an interesting discussion of the BUF's sanguine views of the future see Philip M. Coupland, "The Blackshirted Utopians," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1998).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

responsible for planning and organizing production and distribution in its particular field and setting wages, prices, and working conditions in tandem with the state. At the head of the corporate state were the National Corporation and the Leader, both charged with guiding the economy and settling disputes between the various corporations. Employers, workers, and consumers would be organized into corporations having equal authority. Measures affecting any of the three could only be taken after each had been consulted and at least two gave their consent. The Leader's duties were never spelled out precisely and this was probably intentional. It was widely assumed that Mosley intended to exercise similar powers to Hitler and Mussolini, a view that opponents on the left, such as the Communists, frequently reiterated.

Under the corporate system, the government would assume "supervision" or "direct management" over industries that had collapsed like ship-building, and coal mining. Strikes and lockouts would be prevented by means of compulsory arbitration and mediation, and a "managed currency" would be established. [16] Workers would help

---

[15] For example, the primary product sector would be comprised of the agricultural, mining, iron and steel, fuel, metal trade, and fishing corporations. (Thomson, The Coming Corporate State, p. 7).

[16] John Beckett, "Fascism and the Trade Unions," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3 (July-September 1935), p. 335. Also see T.U. Chairman, "Fascism and the Trade Unions," Blackshirt, August 12-18, 1933. In the BUF's view strikes were an inefficient, costly, and short-sighted means of dealing with labor disputes that often harmed the interests of those who participated in them "more than those attacked." (Ibid., March 6, 1937). Consult Denys Barrie, "Production Under Blackshirts," ibid., December 16-22, 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

govern industries, higher salaries would be offered in most industries, and one great national union would be established.[17] Firms that "sweated" employees would be penalized and if necessary shut down, while those that served "the nation's interest" --this was never precisely defined--would receive incentives, such as low interest loans.[18] The BUF promised persons "engaged" in smaller enterprises like dairy farming, that it would "allow [them to] conduct" their work "with the minimum of outside interference."[19] It neglected to note that arbitration and mediation mechanisms were already in place in many industries and had not prevented lengthy work stoppages. The fascists also ignored the fact that the Nazis had abolished independent trade unions, seized the unions' funds, and made the employer's decisions binding on employees in all factory matters.[20] The BUF usually did not inform workers that they would be obligated to belong to the corporation overseeing their industry. Nor, as D.S. Lewis has noted, did the fascists mention that disputes between employers and employees would if necessary be broken by the State, which was much more likely to be sympathetic to the former than the latter. Since workers belonging to small industries, like dairy

---

[17] Action, September 3, 1938.
[18] Ibid., June 4, 1936.
[19] ibid., July 23, 1938.
[20] Daily Worker, September 8, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

farming, would be required to join the same Corporation as those belonging to larger ones, their concerns were unlikely to receive primary consideration.

The National Corporation, the "executive and administrative" center, had the task of adjusting consumption to production, settling "all controversies within the individual Corporations according to the public interest," and supervising both the Investment and Foreign Trade Boards.[21] Mosley asserted:

> Trade unions and employers' federations will no longer be the general staffs of opposing armies, but the joint directors of national enterprise... All who pursue a[n] anti-national policy will be opposed by the might of the... State. Profit can be made provided that the activity enriches the nation as well as the individual...[It] may not be made at the expense of the nation and of the working class. [22]

The Investment Board would control the flow of capital throughout the economy while the Foreign Trade Board monitored international trade. "British finance," the fascists complained, "is not nationalist enough" and "the misuse of British credit will be a criminal offence" in the corporate state. [23]

The fascists recognized that they needed to gain the support of businessmen if they hoped to build a mass party. Recruiting businessmen, especially small businessmen, was

---

[21]Thomson, The Coming Corporate State, p. 19; Action, January 14, 1939

[22]Mosley as quoted in R. Palme Dutt, Fascism and Social Revolution, International, New York, 1935, p. 219.

[23]Blackshirt, December 16-December 22, 1933 and Action, May 20, 1939. Mosley vowed that in a BUF regime "British credit shall be used for British purposes" and not foreign ones. (Oswald Mosley, Fascism. 100 Questions Asked and Answered, BUF, London, 1936, Question 47).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one of the BUF's priorities, particularly in the latter half of the thirties. The fascists spoke to many civic and commerical organizations in this period, especially in the Greater London area. Mosley, Thomson, Joyce, and Peter Heyward were among the Blackshirts who addressed these groups. The latter probably made a good impression on the small traders and shopkeepers at the Wealdstone Chamber of Commerce at Harrow in 1935 when he stated:

> Multiple trading should be abolished by law, because it not only threatens the livelihood of small traders, wholesalers and commercial travellers, it is anti-social for it lowers the standard of living by creating monopolies which are against public interests. The only people really capable of controlling trade affairs are those who are actually engaged in trading. A national distributive trades council must be set up representing the interests of employers, workers and consumers, which will have full legislative powers over all questions appertaining to retail distribution.[24]

In March 1938 Mosley addressed a large crowd of shopkeepers at the Victoria Hall in Bethnal Green, one of his favorite venues. Early the next year he spoke to about 1000 small businessmen at the Farringdon Hall in London with Charles Bennet, the ex-mayor of Bethnal Green and Chairman of the local branch of the British Legion, in the chair. In 1939 the British Trader a monthly journal for small traders and shopkeepers, appeared. It recommended ways that these groups could compete with the recent proliferation of chain stores and discount traders. In 1939 the BUF established the British Traders

---

[24] Action, April 1, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bureau with its headquarters on Great Smith Street in London. It organized meetings where members were introduced to the party's economic principles and disseminated information on various practical topics, such as how to raise capital, expand businesses, and compete against combine companies. [25] The BUF pretended that the Bureau was an independent entity. For example, before each of the three parliamentary by-elections it contested in 1940 it announced that the Bureau had decided to endorse the fascist candidates. In fact, the Bureau was always under its control. Heyward, who wrote a regular column in Action in the late thirties on the retail trade industry, served as its chairman. Although the Bureau never attained the size the BUF hoped, it did garner a fair amount of support, particularly among small shopkeepers. In 1939 the fascists also began publishing British Union News (B.U.N.), a monthly they distributed free in East London that appealed especially to local small traders.

The BUF outlined its economic ideas in a host of books and pamphlets such as Jorian Jenks' Land and the People, F.D. Hill's 'Gainst Trust and Monopoly: Commercial Travellers and Shopkeepers Action, and Heyward's Menace of the Chain Store and Shopkeepers Against Trust and Monopoly, and in its newspapers and magazines. Both

---

[25] Action, February 11, 1939; Ibid., April 1, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Blackshirt and Action published regular columns on agricultural issues, such as "Farmer's Notebook," "The British Countryside," "In the Grip of the Octopus," and "The Food Front," all by Jenks, Lt.-Col. H.E. Crocker's "Fascism in Our Village," and "Farmer's Diary."[26]

Giving the Government more authority over the economy was hardly a new idea in Britain in the inter-war era. None of the three major parties wanted a return to free market economics. In fact, each had already drafted plans for expanding the government's role in the economy. [27] In 1928 the Liberals published Britain's Industrial Future, or The Yellow Book. Its authors included several luminaries of the party, including David Lloyd George, the party's leader, J.M. Keynes, whose theories of deficit-spending laid the foundation of the welfare state, and Hubert Henderson, a noted economist. In the authors' view, laissez-faire economics was obsolete.[28] The Yellow Book proposed the creation of an "Economic General Staff" which would

---

[26]For more information on Crocker see Robert Saunders Papers, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, 119/A1/166 (a) and119/A1/209

[27]For the Conservatives see Robert Boothby, Industry & the State, Macmillan: London, 1927 Liberal Industrial Inquiry, Britain's Industrial Future, Ernest Benn, London, 1928, presents the Liberals' case. For Labour see Labour and the Distressed Areas: A Programme for Immediate Action, Labour Research Department, London, 1937

[28] "The theory that private competition, unregulated and unaided, will work out.. to the greatest advantage of the community, is found by experience to be far from the truth." (Liberal Industrial Inquiry, Britain's Industrial Future, p. 455)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

advise the Prime Minister and Cabinet on all economic issues and review the "whole structure" of the economy.[29] The Labour Party reasoned that since only the state possessed the resources and authority to check the power of large private interests, it must be given the power to do so. State control of production, distribution, and consumption was necessary to help create a more equitable economy.[30]

The BUF argued that the country's greatest asset was the Empire and that it should become economically self-contained. Point One of its "Ten Points of British Union" enjoined members to be loyal "to King, Country, and Empire."[31] "Our future lies within the Empire," Action asserted, while Gordon-Canning termed it, "The outlet for all our vital forces and sufficient for full time occupation of British energy."[32] According

---

[29]Liberal Industrial Inquiry, Britain's Industrial Future, p. 428.

[30] Left-wing members of the Labour Party were particularly keen on these ideas, including G D H. Cole, a noted publicist and theoretician, and Stafford Cripps, who helped found the Socialist League. According to Cole:

> The economic life of society needs to be collectively controlled in the common interest, and... this control can only be effective if it extends to the standards and quantity of output, the regulation of prices, and both production and marketing. Collective organizations [must be set up]... and over which it [the government] can exert a steadily increasing authority.

(G.D.H. Cole, The Next Ten Years, Macmillan, London 1929, p. 129). For an interesting discussion of the Labour Party' s economic views from a left-wing perspective see G.R. Murchison, The First Worker's Government, Victor Gollancz, London, 1934.

[31]Action, June 24, 1939.

[32]Ibid., July 23, 1936; Robert Gordon-Canning, Mind Britain's Business, Greater Britain, London, 1938, p. 17.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to the BUF's model, Britain would serve as the manufacturing hub while the colonies provided the raw materials and markets.[33] Mosley asked, "Who is able to deny that we are able to produce within the Empire every commodity that industry may require, and that we are able, with Empire resources alone, vastly to increase our present wealth production provided a stable market is secured for which to produce?" [34] The Empire's assets had been "barely developed to one-tenth of its available capacity." [35] "A natural balance of exchange...exist[ed]" between Britain and its colonies and dominions. "The Dominions are primarily producers of foodstuffs and of raw materials," the BUF stated, while "we are primarily producers of manufactured goods."[36] In Joyce's view, "The industrialist must rely on Home and Empire or prepare to meet his end...The markets

---

[33]Point Six of its ten-point "Blackshirt Policy" stated: "[We] seek to build an entirely self-contained Empire, withdrawn from the international struggle for markets and the economic dislocation and war such struggles mean. Within the Empire we can produce all the goods, foodstuffs and raw materials which we require." (Blackshirt, February 1, 1935).

[34]Action, April 24, 1937

[35]Unsigned, "The Cult of Midas," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3 (January-April, 1937), p. 13

[36]Blackshirt, August 26-September 3, 1933; November 4-November 10, 1933; August 26-September 1, 1933. According to Joyce, "The simplest method of avoiding disastrous competition between Britain and the Dominions is to provide... for the production by them of the foodstuffs and raw materials which Fascist Britain will need." (William Joyce, "Britain's Empire Shall Live," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 January-April 1935, p. 103).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

upon which our...survival must be based, can be found in Britain and the Empire alone."[37] In this context Blackshirt warned: "The choice between the Fascist policy of Empire unity and the policy of giving away the Empire...is a choice of life and death to millions of workers... The Empire is 'Bread and Butter' to the Working Men."[38] According to the fascists, an insulated Empire offered many advantages: guaranteed markets for producers, an uninterrupted supply of raw materials for Britain, wage hikes for workers, and protection against slumps and wars. "Never again should a panic on Wall Street," Thomson stated, "be allowed to throw British industry into depression. Let us insulate ourselves, as Germany has done, against the insane fluctuations of the capitalist world, and plan our affairs in the full knowledge that no unknown factor outside our control can suddenly wreck all that we have done...[The] insulated Empire alone offers security from boom and slump."[39] The autarkic Empire (or scientific protection as the fascists sometimes termed it) was allegedly an advance on the

---

[37]Joyce, "Britain's Empire Shall Live," pp. 98-99. "[In] order to avoid becoming a Portugal or Holland," Fuller cautioned, "we must draw the Empire into closer union with us, and this is impossible without institutions and co-operative machinery." (J.F.C. Fuller, Empire Unity and Defence, Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1934 pp. 289-91). The BUF pointed to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930 in the United States as an example of the rise of protectionism.

[38]Blackshirt, December 21, 1934.

[39]Raven Thomson, "Causes of the Slump," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No.4 (October-December 1937), pp. 42-43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

protectionist policies of the Social Imperialists and Tariff Reformers at the turn-of-the-century since Britain would trade as a bloc and not as individual companies. The fascists warned that unless stronger economic ties with the Empire were forged and "international lending with the toll of debt charges... ended... all parts of the Empire will be driven...to cut themselves free." Foreign powers, particularly the United States and Japan, would fill the vacuum of power. [40]

Another alleged advantage of an "insulated Empire" was that it would bolster national security by strengthening military ties with the colonies and dominions. As commerce between Britain and the latter flourished, a closer association between the armed forces of the Empire would supposedly follow. The fascists often reminded people of the signal contributions the colonies made to the Allied victory in the First World War and suggested that a similar cooperative effort was necessary to restore the Empire to its glory. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Italo-Ethiopian War in 1935-1936, the Nazi re-occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, and the Spanish Civil War which lasted from 1936 to 1939, all demonstrated that in spite of the ideals championed at Versailles many countries still resorted to force to settle their differences. In 1935,

---

[40]W J. Leaper, "The Causes of Breakdown," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I. No. 2 (April-June 1935), p. 190

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

J.F.C. Fuller, a former member of the Imperial General Staff, asserted:

> A self-contained Empire... means a more prosperous Empire... [and] securer Empire, because... it will form so powerful an instrument of peace that it will virtually prohibit war... It is to the advantage of the Empire that world peace be maintained. Therefore it is to its advantage that all its parts co-operate economically, this may mean a loss of foreign investments; but in a short time this loss will be... compensated for by ever increasing prosperity. [41]

Several elements of the BUF's economic model were similar to those espoused by earlier British groups such as the guilds in the medieval era, the Tudors, the Guild Socialists, and Social Imperialists. Notable Social Imperialists included Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary from 1895 to 1903, Robert Blatchford, an influential socialist and popular writer, Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, a leading Liberal MP, Sir J.R. Seeley, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in the late 1800s, the Duke of Marlborough, Sir Charles Crosthwaite, the Chief Commissioner of Burma, Karl Pearson, a leading sociologist, Cecil Rhodes, the noted businessman and Lord Milner, who had helped found the Republic of South Africa. [42] The BUF reveled in the country's past, particularly the Tudor Era and First World War because in its view

---

[41] J.F.C. Fuller, "Fascism and War," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1935), pp. 151-52.

[42] See, for example, Dilke's Problems of Greater Britain, Macmillan, London, 1890, pp. 349-51, 406 and Seeley's The Expansion of England: Two Course of Lectures, Macmillan, London, 1911, pp. 319-321. The first edition of the latter work appeared in 1883. For Milner's views see his The Nation and the Empire, 1913. For Kipling's beliefs see "The White Man's Burden," in The Portable Kipling, ed. Irving Howe, Viking, New York, 1982, pp. 602-603.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in each of these periods Britons had been willing to make considerable individual sacrifices for the benefit of the country. It argued that this spirit of patriotism and self-sacrifice would have to be reinvigorated if the nation ever hoped to recapture its status as Europe's premier power. As Stephen Cullen has noted, "The BUF saw itself as embodying all the essentially British virtues of the past while at the same time holding all the necessary virtues for a truly 'scientific' and modern future." [43] Thomas Linehan has stated, "The BUF's championing of the 'virtuous' and organic 'producers state' of the people in a heroic struggle for supremacy with the invisible hand of 'predatory' laissez-faire capital had strong ideological roots within the British proletariat. It was a powerful and recurring theme in the history of proletarian radicalism since the Chartists."[44] Some of the BUF's older members had been Social Imperialists. For example, Stephen Cullen has noted that "certain ex-Merrie England socialists join[ed] the BUF."[45]

---

[43]Stephen Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists, 1932-40," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 22, No.1 (January 1987), p. 124.

[44]Thomas Linehan, East London for Mosley, Frank Cass, London, 1996, p. 224.

[45]These included at least one member of the Lancaster branch. (Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists," pp 124 and 135)."Merrie England," the title of one of Blatchford's most popular books, was a term some Britons used to describe the ideal British society. The BUF boasted that some of its members had belonged to Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere's United Empire Crusade Party, a small imperialist party that existed from 1930 to 1931. (Blackshirt, September 7, 1934).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

One model for the BUF was merchant and craft guilds, the trade unions of the early modern era. These organizations required each member of an industry to sacrifice certain individual rights for the good of the overall industry. For example, some merchant guilds obliged members to sell their merchandise only in designated areas, just as Alexander Raven Thomson suggested in The Coming Corporate State (1937). Operating under the authority of town councils guild workers completed a wide variety of public works projects, such as churches, roads, and bridges. Foodstuffs, fuels and other vital supplies were regulated by the town authorities. The fascists were impressed with the economic and cultural achievements and territorial acquisitions made during the Early Modern Era, and held it up as a model: "Those who see in Fascism a force destructive of culture, should examine this period of our history... It was an age of popular dictatorship and national integration, an age in which individualism was not allowed to generate into anarchy...and...in this 'barbarous' period...England experienced a cultural Renaissance unequalled in her previous or subsequent history."[46] Richard Thurlow has stated, "Mosley's adoption of the Corporate State concept

---

[46] A.L. Glasfurd, "Fascism and the English Tradition," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3 (July-September 1935), pp. 360-64. According to Glasfurd, "British Fascism [should] seek to creat anew the dynamic spirit of Elizabethan England." Also see E.D. Hart, "Men Who Made the Empire Great," Action, May 15, 1937

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was...strengthened by Mussolini's example, but it probably owes more to his own interest in guild socialism."[47]

Various groups in the late 19th and early 20th century also helped provide the BUF with economic ideas. At the turn-of-the-century the Social Imperialists had called for boosting domestic agricultural production, higher tariffs on imported food, and improving relations between employers and workers. For example, Robert Blatchford, a popular writer and influential socialist, stated:

> We want to produce our own food so as to be independent of foreign nations. We want to get rid of the slums and build houses for the workers. We want to abolish the sweater and shorten hours of labour and raise wages. And we want to place the land and all other instruments of production under the control of the State.[48]

The BUF made raising industrial and food production and immigration restriction two of its major platforms. Action warned: "No country is in a healthy state unless a substantial fraction of its inhabitants derive their living directly from the soil." [49] "The vital issue of to-day and tomorrow," Action asserted, "is neither Spain, nor China, nor Czecholovakia, but FOOD...[for] the common people."[50]

---

[47]Richard C. Thurlow, "Fascism and Nazism--No Siamese Twins," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1980), p. 8. The BUF also had high praise for the Stuarts and Oliver Cromwell, who had both led strong central governments.

[48]Blatchford, Merrie England as quoted in Robert Blatchford, What's All This? Labour Book Service, London, 1942, pp. 103-104.

[49]Action, May 15, 1937.

[50]Ibid., July 16, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Social Imperialists argued that creating a more powerful central government and bolstering trade with the Empire were keys to improving Britain's economy.[51] They made many proposals to strengthen Britain's ties with the Empire like offering proposals to make it economically self-contained and constructing an imperial cable system.[52] Chamberlain proposed establishing an economically self-contained Empire: "If we chose...the Empire might be self-sustaining; it is so wide, its products are so various...there is absolutely nothing which is necessary to our existence... which cannot be produced within the boundaries of the Empire itself."[53] In 1902 he warned: "If we do not take every chance in our our power to keep British trade in British hands, I am certain that we shall deserve the disasters which will infallibly come upon us."[54] He argued that the bonds of "kinship" and sense of "mutual obligation" betweeen Britain and her

---

[51] As Larry Witherell has noted, for the Social Imperialists, "The state could no longer be viewed in nineteenth-century terms as a passive institution. The state possessed both the moral authority and responsibility to define and implement constructive national and imperial programs...[They] believe[d] that only through the construction of a[n]...activist state would the nation and empire be protected." (Larry L Witherell, Rebel on the Right: Henry Page Croft and the Crisis of British Conservatism, 1903-1914, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 1997 p. 209).

[52] Ibid., p. 199 One of their proposals was to set minimum prices for imperial agricultural commodities

[53] Chamberlain, as quoted in George Bennett, ed. The Concept of Empire: Burke to Attlee 1774-1947, A. and C Black, London, 1962, p. 330

[54] Chamberlain, as quoted in Ibid., p. 328

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

overseas possessions outweighed any differences between them. [55] The Fabian Socialists who were led by Sidney and Beatrice Webb and George Bernard Shaw supported many of these ideas. Karl Pearson, one of the foremost imperialist theorists, asserted in The Function of Science in the Modern State (1902) that the interests of the state must prevail over the individual and that the state was best run under the authority of a dictator. He asserted that the responsibility of a nation's leaders was "to lessen, if not to suspend, the internal struggle [between classes], that the nation may be strong externally."[56] Rhodes warned around the turn-of-the-century, "We...must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population [and] to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines."[57] In the early 1900s, Milner's followers, known as his "Kindergarten," founded the Round Table, a journal that urged closer ties between

---

[55] The Boer War, in which several colonies and dominions lent assistance to Britain, gave weight to his argument. Chamberlain's son, Neville, placed less importance on tapping the Empire's resources and was a favorite target of Blackshirt satirists. For example, one cartoon depicted him fishing in a tiny bucket labelled "Foreign Food Help" while schools of large fish swam nearby in a river denoted, "Empire's Resources." (Action, August 6, 1938).

[56] Pearson, as quoted in Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought 1895-1914, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1960, p. 42.

[57] Rhodes, as quoted in C.C. Eldridge, ed. British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, Macmillan, New York, 1984, p. 148. He also stated in 1895:

> I was in the East End of London yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to wild speeches which were just a cry for bread, bread, bread...and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism... as a solution [of] Britain's social problem...The Empire is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war you must become imperialists. (Rhodes, as quoted in Union, November 15, 1952).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Britain and her colonies. Round Table groups were formed to support the Empire across the country. Several of them later became sympathetic to the BUF.[58] Another goal of the Social Imperialists was to boost emigration to the colonies. They held that in this way the supply of low-cost labor and overcrowding in the cities would be reduced, wages for ordinary working-men could be kept high, and relations between employers and workers would improve.[59]

The fascists borrowed from these nationalist leaders when they formulated their plans for an economically self-sufficient Empire.[60] For example, Action argued that the state needed to insure that stable prices for agricultural imports from the Empire were "maintained" and complained that the colonies had "become the dumping place of the world."[61] W.J. Leaper warned: "The Empire, instead of moving forward to the goal of

---

[58]Blackshirt, September 7, 1934.

[59]Consult, for instance, Shaw's Fabianism and the Empire, Fabian Society, London, 1900 and Sydney Webb, Twentieth Century Politics: A Policy of National Efficiency, Fabian Tract No. 108, Fabian Society, London, 1901. Robert Blatchford lamented, "Australia and Canada are hungry for good men, and we are making innocent and helpless babies into bad men by tens of thousands. It is criminal. It is insane." (Robert Blatchford, "Saki's Bowl," as quoted in Blatchford's, What's All This? Labour Book Service, 1942, p. 128). In 1902, Beatrice Webb brought a small group of intellectuals known as the Co-efficients together to analyze imperial policy. Members included Leo Amery, H.G. Wells, and Carlyon Bellairs. The latter became a writer and speaker for the BUF.

[60]Stephen Cullen notes, "Mosley's concept of scientific protection was... a considerable advance on the protectionist policies of Joseph Chamberlain, whose proposals are seen as a precursor of BUF policies." (Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists," p. 120).

[61]Action, November 12, 1938. Ibid., December 10, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one economic unit is developing into many units. The new era must be initated in Britain, and unless Britain realises her mission then the Empire is doomed."[62] Action stated:

> Britain, is more than 'National' Britain is 'Imperial 'We base our economic system upon a world empire which contains every raw product required by the modern science of production... Britain.. must have IMPERIAL SOCIALISM. British Union is. IMPERIAL SOCIALISM spreading the advantages of social co-operation and imperial service to the wealthiest empire the world has ever seen... We shall extend British Union far beyond National Socialism to that IMPERIAL SOCIALISM which will raise the.. Empire to the forefront of modern progress. [63]

Reading the two excerpts that follow--the first from a speech by Chamberlain in 1902 and the second from Mosley's The Greater Britain, 30 years later-- one might think they had been written by the same hand. Chamberlain:

> We must draw closer our internal relations, the ties of sentiment, the ties of sympathy, yes, and the ties of interest [with the colonies]. If by adherence to economic pedantry, to old shibboleths, we are to lose opportunities of closer union which are offered us by our colonies, if we are to put aside occasions now within our grasp, if we do not take every chance in our power to keep British trade in British hands, I am certain that we shall deserve the disasters which will infallibly come upon us. [64]

---

[62] W.J. Leaper, "The Causes of Breakdown," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1935), p. 190

[63] Ibid., March 4, 1939; ibid., March 25, 1939

[64] Chamberlain, as quoted in Bennett, ed., The Concept of Empire, p. 330. Ben Pimlott has noted, "Mosley saw in the Empire the markets for British products and a source for raw materials, and envisaged an economic unit on this basis which could rival the United States in self-sufficiency...[He] was in this respect a follower of Joseph Chamberlain." (Ben Pimlott, Labour and the Left in the 1930s, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p. 63).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mosley:

> No effort should be spared to weld together by consent into a great economic entity the largest and most economically self-contained area in the world, bound together as it is by a common loyalty to the Crown. If this can be achieved, we are indeed on the high-road to an insulated system which would be immune from the chaos of present world conditions. No matter what happened in the rest of the world, this great structure...could weather the storm.[65]

Many Social Imperialists and proponents of the Empire around the turn-of-the-century held that the native peoples of the Empire were not capable of governing themselves. In their view, whites were inherently superior to non-whites.[66] Granting the latter independence would lead to chaos. In 1868 Dilke warned that if Britain left India the latter would fall "into anarchy."[67] In 1910 Marlborough stated, "The British people are called by Providence to govern those who cannot govern themselves."[68] Sir Charles Crosthwaite referred to the Burmese as "primitive people accustomed to corrupt methods" and warned that in India "there...[are] unruly spirits who would gladly exchange the plough for the sword and peace for pillage and rapine."[69] Decades later,

---

[65]Mosley, The Greater Britain, pp. 133-35.

[66]For example, George Bernard Shaw asserted in 1900, "Parliamentary institutions... are, for many reasons, impracticable in India." (Shaw, Fabianism and the Empire, p. 1)

[67]Dilke, as quoted in Bennett, ed. The Concept of Empire, p. 240.

[68]Duke of Marlborough, "The Imperial Problem," United Empire, Vol. I, No. 12 (December 1910), p. 839

[69]Sir Charles Crosthwaite, The Pacification of Burma, Edwin Arnold, London, 1912, p. 338, and Crosthwaite's, "India, Past, Present, and Future,"in C.S. Goldman, ed. The Empire and the Century, A Series of Essays on Imperial Problems and Possibilities by Various Writers, John Murray, London, 1905, pp. 629-30.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the BUF made the same argument. The BUF was convinced that it knew better than the Indians what was best for their country, just as Joseph Chamberlain and Cecil Rhodes thought they knew what was best for the Africans.[70] For example, the fascists suggested that Indians' behavior was governed by emotion instead of reason and that granting India independence would be a grave mistake.

The BUF insisted that there was nothing in the history of the Empire to be ashamed of. Instead, the self-sacrifice and heroism demonstrated by the colonizers should be a source of pride to all Britons. The common ancestry, history, and language of the colonizers and Britons was to be celebrated, not ignored or denied. "We want to see the spirit of Britain, fanned up to the heights of sacrifice," wrote Wilfred "Bill" Risdon, "fanned up to the heights that had made Britain what it had been in the past. We want to give a new spirit to the British people to replace the attitude of defeatism."[71] "The old spirit is awakened again to-day," Blackshirt boasted in early 1934 when BUF membership reached its zenith of approximately 50,000. "The spirit of Drake... and... Clive and Warren Hastings. A spirit which put forth in 1914 efforts unparalleled in the history of the world."[72] The

---

[70] Blackshirt, April 18, 1936. See also Unsigned, "The Fascist Empire," Ibid., August 26-September 1, 1933. "We do not regard countries like India," Mosley asserted, "as something to give away to the financiers, as do the Socialists behind their cant of 'freedom' which really means not 'freedom' for the people, but freedom for the financier to exploit."

[71] Ibid., July 6, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BUF founded branches in many parts of the Empire, including Kenya and Australia. Action featured a regular column on imperial affairs in the late thirties and sarcastically entitled it, "Empire Notes: A Feature For Those Who Remember We Have One." In 1935 the BUF condemned the India Act--which gave limited self-government to some provinces of the subcontinent--because it confirmed the fascists' belief that the National Government was willing to turn its back on "the work of generations" of colonists. [73] The BUF boasted that it was a champion of freedom and peace, but its support for the Empire meant that it denied these values to the millions of indigenous peoples of India, Africa, the West Indies, and other areas of the Empire. This is an example of the racist views many Blackshirts, including Mosley, held toward non-whites. The Blackshirts argued that Britain was steadily improving social and economic conditions for natives in the colonies but offered little evidence in support of this view. A minority of the Blackshirts argued that Britain should strengthen ties with the Continental fascists and not make the Empire the focus of its international policy. For example, Arthur Reade, a minor member, urged the government to forge an alliance with Italy as a means of bolstering national security while William Joyce strove to create closer bonds between

---

[72] Blackshirt, October 5, 1934.
[73] Ibid., May 23, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the BUF and Nazis. [74]

The BUF seldom emphasized the parallels between between its ideas and the Social Imperialists and xenophobes at the turn-of-the-century. For example, Mosley attempted to deny the influence Chamberlain and Blatchford had on himself and his lieutenants.In a letter Mosley wrote to Neill Nugent in the early 1970s he insisted that Blatchford's ideas had had no lasting effect on him. [75] His frequent paraphrasings of these men's ideas, however, make his argument a weak one. As Stephen Cullen notes:

> There are certain similarities between the BUF's policies and Blatchford's ideas, that are perhaps too great for mere coincidence. The famous BUF slogans of 'Britain for the British', and 'Merrie England' seem to have been directly taken from the writings of Blatchford. Mosley and the movement made great play of the 'Merrie England' vision. It was a constant theme of BUF propaganda, and the historical vision of an idealized Elizabethan 'Merrie England' was often drawn upon as a promise for the glorious, ordered and scientific world of twentieth-century fascism a strange contrast that reflected some of the tension between modern and anti-modern themes that was common in other fascist movements.[76]

Bernard Semmel is also probably correct when he notes: "The...speeches and writings of Sir Oswald Mosley...combined virtually all of the salient views of virtually all of the social-imperialists..and to have welded them into a British fascism...Mosley was a

---

[74]Arthur Reade, "Why Reject Italian Friendship?" British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 (January-April 1937). Many other Blackshirts called for closer ties between Britain and Italy, including Gordon-Canning.
[75]Nugent, "The Ideas of the British Union of Fascists," p. 146.
[76]Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists," pp. 123-24.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

compound of Joseph Chamberlain and Robert Blatchford."[77]

Some Blackshirts gave credit to the Social Imperialists for providing intellectual inspiration to their party. Some recognized, for example, that the fascists' calls for raising living standards for ordinary Britons through greater state intervention in the economy, slum clearance schemes, and promoting emigration to the Empire had striking parallels in Robert Blatchford's early writings.[78] Blatchford's argument that "The work of the nation [should] be organized...or 'arranged,' so that no one need be out of work... no useless work need be done...and no work need be done twice where once would serve" was one the BUF fully shared.[79] Those fascists who perceived the intellectual links between their party and the Social Imperialists were relatively few, however. A.L. Glasfurd was one. In an essay published in Fascist Quarterly entitled, "Fascism and the English Tradition," he argued that the BUF's imperial policy represented a direct link with the British past not a break with it. Louise Irvine, a Birmingham teacher, has

---

[77]Semmel, as quoted in Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists," p. 145.

[78]See, for example, Blatchford's Essays on Socialism, Standard, Terre Haute, Indiana, 1910, pp. 17-27, and the same author's Not Guilty: A Defence of the Bottom Dog, Albert and Charles Boni, New York, 1913, pp. 89-93

[79]Blatchford, Essays on Socialism, p. 21

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

recalled:

> We members of the BUF had considerable respect for...Robert Blatchford. We were in almost total agreement [with him] for we too wished to return to a small-scale society to keep the Englishness of England and there was little indeed in his book Merrie England with which we disagreed. Anyone who compares the contents of Blatchford's weekly Clarion in the 1890s with those of our paper Action...will find interesting parallels--attacks on sweated industries, appeals to patriotism. [80]

By giving relatively little attention to its borrowings from the Social Imperialists, an important native source of its ideas, the BUF made its uses of Italian Fascist and Nazi ideas and trappings stand out in greater contrast.[81]

The Distributist League, a small group founded in the early 1900s, also helped provide the BUF with ideas on the economy. The Distributists followed the ideas of G.K.Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, two noted Catholic writers who condemned liberalism, parliamentary democracy, and capitalism. Some of the Distributists' ideas were analagous to those of the Social Credit Party, or Greenshirts, which were based on themes enunciated by Major C.H. Douglas, an engineer and monetary reformer who had

---

[80]Louise Irvine, "The Birmingham Schoolteacher," in Jeffrey Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986, p. 49.

[81]Several scholars have recognized the parallels between the Social Imperialists and BUF, including Skidelsky and Bernard Semmel. See Robert Skidelsky, "Reflections on Mosley and British Fascism," in Lunn and Thurlow, British Fascism p. 96. Bernard Semmel has suggested that Mosley still harbored bitter feelings towards the Chamberlain family which he had competed with as a young MP from the Midlands in the 1920s. He was therefore unable to bring himself to acknowledge Joseph Chamberlain's achievements and admit that the latter had pursued some similar goals as the BUF. Semmel's theory is plausible since Mosley was an egotist who had a habit of holding grudges. See Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform, Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1960, p. 252.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

anti-Semitic views.[82] The Greenshirts attracted similar occupational groups as the BUF as well as many people with anti-Semitic tendencies. BUF members and their followers wrote articles and letters highlighting the similarities between the BUF and the Distributist League which sometimes appeared in the Weekly Review, the League's main organ. [83] W.A.K.J. Chambers-Hunter, the leader of the BUF's Aberdeen branch, wrote a pamphlet entitled, British Union and Social Credit. Some Distributists were sympathetic to the BUF. As one scholar notes, "Various members of the League, believing Sir Oswald Mosley's program to be essentially Distributist, joined the British Union of Fascists."[84] For example, one correspondent wrote to the editor of the Weekly Review: "I beg to add my name to the growing list of those who see in the British Union

---

[82]"The outstanding characteristic," Douglas asserted, "of the Jewish race is parasitism." (Douglas, as quoted in Action, October 15, 1938). He also stated, "The penetration by Jews of the politics of a country and of the agencies of . . law and finance seems to have only one culmination--the subordination of the host to that of the parasite." (Douglas, as quoted in Ibid., September 17, 1938).

[83]These articles included Alexander Raven Thomson, "A Distributist Manifesto," Weekly Review, January 19, 1939, p. 479; Jorian Jenks, "Farmers Aren't Fools," Ibid., Vol. 28, No. 27, pp. 686-87. Jenks was an authority in agricultural issues and ex-serviceman. For a precis of his life see Gordon Beckwell, "The First Green," Comrade, Newsletter of Friends of O.M. Vol. 4, No. 20 (August-September 1989), p. 3. See Douglas' article on the Jews in Social Credit, August 26, 1938, for a sample of Social Credit's anti-Semitism. Also see Thomson's, "British Fascism and Douglas Social Credit," The Age of Plenty: A Quarterly Journal of British Fascist Economics, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July-September) 1934

[84]Jay P. Corrin, as quoted in Kenneth Lunn, "Political Anti-Semitism before 1914: Fascism's Heritage?" in Lunn and Thurlow, British Fascism, p. 34.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the one hope of getting something like Distributism and Peace in our time."[85] But many distrusted the BUF and feared that its corporate state model was actually a ruse by which it intended to establish a dictatorship.[86] It is likely that the majority of Britons shared this view. The BUF's ability to borrow from British tradition helps explain why it attracted support throughout the country from its inception until it was banned in 1940.[87]

The BUF also borrowed ideas for its economic program from John Maynard Keynes, a Liberal economist and friend of Mosley's who pioneered the concept of deficit spending. Keynes helped teach Mosley that production and consumption needed to be monitored and sometimes regulated by the state. Otherwise, some industrialists would

---

[85] Weekly Review, October 20, 1938. Action boasted, "Many who made a profound study of the theories of social credit and considered the possibility of their application...have landed themselves into the ranks of Fascist ideology, including Odon Por, Ezra Pound, the late Arthur Kitson and others." (Action, October 15, 1938).

[86] Some Greenshirts feared and disliked the BUF. For example, in February 1934 several attempted to vandalize the headquarters of the Women's Branch in London. (Manchester Guardian, February 20, 1934).

[87] As Martin Pugh notes:

> In the early 1930s the most compelling and coherent alternative [to the government] was that offered by the British Union of Fascists. Not only did Mosley appear to have a bolder grasp of economic and social problems than the conventional politicians, he and his movement also posed a dire electoral challenge to the National Government and...threatened to undermine Baldwin's entire strategy. With hindsight it is comfortingly easy to assume the inevitability of the BUF's failure. Yet it was not until 1936 that the government felt confident enough that the fascists were losing public sympathy to take legislative action to control their activities. Up to that time the politicians were highly apprehensive of Mosley's capacity to win adherents right across the political spectrum

(Martin Pugh, The Making of Modern British Politics, Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, pp. 275-76).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

use technological breakthroughs to raise production without giving corresponding financial rewards to workers which would lead to imbalances between production and consumption. Mosley borrowed some of Keynes' ideas when he drafted the Mosley Memoranda. Keynes saw some value in economic nationalism. [88] After the New Party was formed in 1931, Keynes became disturbed by its quasi-fascist tendencies, such as the formation of an elite defense force known as the "Biff Boys," and shortly afterwards he dissolved the friendship.[89]

There were several problems with the BUF's economic analysis. First, there was no conspiracy to destroy domestic manufactures as the BUF alleged. Domestic industries were failing because they were becoming less competitive not because there was any organized effort to undermine them. Secondly, the fascists failed to explain how traditional economic liberties could be preserved in an authoritarian state. The Communists asserted that an autarkic economy would still be a

---

[88]"I sympathize," he wrote, "with those who would minimise rather than those who would maximise economic entanglement between nations. Ideas, knowledge, art, hospitality, travel--these are things which should of their nature be international. But let goods be homespun whenever it is reasonably and conveniently possible; and above all, let finance be primarily national." (Robert Skidelsky, Keynes: The Economist as Saviour, 1920-1937, Viking, New York, 1992, p. 428).

[89]In 1933 Mosley congratulated Keynes on an article he had published which implied that the government should take a more direct role in the economy. The Cambridge don replied bitingly that he expressed the views he did, "not to embrace you but to save the country from you." (Keynes, as quoted in Robert Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1975, pp. 305-6)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

capitalist one and that economic planning in a free market economy was not possible.[90] In addition, the fascists did not say that no major power pursuing isolationist economic policies had prospered in modern times. Nor did the BUF mention that a self-sufficient Empire would create an economy as protectionist as any to be found in Europe or America. It also did not acknowledge that with the sharp rise of independence sentiment in the colonies armed conflicts were possible in these possessions in the future if it colonial model was adopted. Both the colonies and dominions had high rates of unemployment in the 1930s and were often unwilling to accept Britons as permanent residents, as the BUF advocated. For decades the dominions had pursued an independent economic path, especially Canada. An increasing proportion of the latter's trade was with the United States not Britain, partly because the latter could not provide the capital Canada required at competitive rates of interest. The BUF's proposal to prevent British

---

[90]Scott Nearing, an American who later abandoned his communist beliefs, averred. "Fascism must discover an area in which self-sufficiency is workable, [but] modern large-scale profit economy know no such area." (Nearing, as quoted in Ellen Wilkinson and Edward Conze, Why Fascism?, Selwyn and Blount, London, 1934, p. 169). John Strachey, one of the leading Marxist theoreticians in the thirties, asserted:

> Fascism cannot really do much to put into practice its policy of economic self-sufficiency. Fascist States cannot possibly draw off from the ever-sharpening imperialist conflict. True, they will try to limit imports in order to increase their strength for resisting blockade in war, but they will, and do, all try to push up their exports by every possible means. A true policy of economic self-sufficiency, of autarchy, would curtail exports as much as imports. And the Fascists never dream of suggesting this. (John Strachey, The Menace of Fascism, Covici, New York, 1933, p. 146).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

colonists from trading outside the Empire and making Britain the manufacturing hub of the system suggested that it intended to give the latter more privileges than the colonies. Unlike the BUF, the Left recognized that the colonies were unwilling to accept this.[91] For example, J.T. Murphy, an influential Communist noted that "the restriction of imports must lead to restriction of exports," a situation that the colonies, dependent as they were on the export of wood, grain, coffee, tea, and other commodities to Britain, could not accept.[92]

In most sections of the country the economy steadily improved during the 1930s, particularly in the South and West. The recovery picked up steam in the latter half of

---

[91] Ellen Wilkinson, the Labour MP for Jarrow, and Edward Conze, a German socialist, asserted:

> The industries in the Dominions represent the solid economic interests of powerful people. Trade unionists as well as employers. Are they going back to the land because it would be very nice for Great Britain if they did? Does...Mosley really think that a fascist Canada would be more likely to heed the claims of Great Britain to be the wealthy workshop of the Empire than a Liberal Canada? Who has the big industry has the power in war-time. Has Sir Oswald some means of bluffing the Canadian or South African fascist out of that piece of useful knowledge? (Wilkinson and Conze, Why Fascism?, pp. 274-75).

Wilkinson and Conze also stated:

> Mosley sees quite clearly that big and important parts of the Empire belong to other economic units. He gives the figures for example of the extent to which Canada buys her manufactured goods from...the U.S.A.. Can such strong economic trends be altered by administrative measures? Sentiments of loyalty to the Crown and the feeling of Britain as 'home' are very real sentiments among the British elements in Canadian life...but, no one, least of all the Canadians... have ever suggested that these would stand in the way of business advantage. (Ibid.). (See also Robert Saunders Papers 119/A1/344.)

[92] J.T. Murphy, Fascism! The Socialist Answer, The Socialist League, London, 1934, p. 6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the decade, thanks partly to rearmament orders. In this more optimistic environment few people wished to try a solution as radical as the corporate state. Besides, many elements of the corporate model represented a sharp break with British cultural tradition, like its proposals to concentrate political power in the executive, ban rival parties, drastically reduce imports, outlaw strikes and lockouts, and elect MPs on an occupational basis. The Commons had enjoyed significant power for hundreds of years. The country had never had much economic planning, with the exception of the First World War, when the state had intervened in a variety of areas, such as establishing national factories under the authority of the Ministry of Munitions.[93] Labourites argued that Britons would reject autarky because it gave the state and large corporations too much power. In their penetrating volume Why Fascism?, Wilkinson and Edward Conze observed:

> [Autarky] is still capitalism because of the persistence of the essential antagonism between the owners of the means of production and the workers who are excluded from any control of production.

---

[93]Nearly 250 of these facilities making a wide variety of items for the war effort had been established at the Armistice. (Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940, Methuen, London, 1955, p. 29).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> There may be theoretically, no difference between the material well-being of the workers under the two systems, but under the Fascist scheme the workers will depend for their material welfare not on their own planning and control of the means by which such benefits are secured but on the goodwill of a class which however benevolently inclined...considers the well-being of the workers as [nothing more than] a necessary part of the general stability [94]

Few Britons saw much value in the BUF's economic proposals. [95] There was something in the BUF's economic program for everyone; intellectual consistency was not one of its hallmarks. This gave the fascists' opponents the chance to argue that Mosley and other BUF leaders were demagogues.[96] Another reason its economic program appealed to relatively few is that it appeared to be borrowed from Italy. For centuries Britons had prided themselves on their "splendid isolation" from the Continent. The

---

[94]Wilkinson and Conze, Why Fascism?, pp. 142-43. In the same volume Wilkinson and Conze compared consumer spending in Britain, France, and Italy, which had introduced some autarkic elements in its economy during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, and demonstrated that the consumption of meat, sugar, and cotton were much higher in Britain and France than under Mussolini's regime. Wilkinson was a prominent figure on the left in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1937, she helped found Tribune, a leading left-wing newsweekly, with Sir Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan.

[95]Scholars were also slow to see merit in the BUF's economic program. It was not until after the war that some saw value in the fascists' proposals. For instance, A.J.P. Taylor wrote, "Mosley produced unaided, a programme of economic reconstruction which surpassed anything offered even by Lloyd George." (A.J.P. Taylor as quoted in Melvyn David Higginbotham, Intellectuals and British Fascism: A Study of British Fascism, Janus, London, 1992, p.1). Several parties on the Left had also proposed curbing the slump through deficit-spending schemes.

[96]John D. Brewer writes, "The BUF became an indiscriminate hotch potch of promises made of all sections of the community. It told workers it would give them employment and higher wages; it told the housewife it would give her a new and decent home; it told school leavers it would give them work; it told the old and weary it would give them early retirement and a pension; and it told the children that it would give them milk." (John D. Brewer, Mosley's Men: The British Union of Fascists in the West Midlands, Gower, Aldershot, 1984, p. 100).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

notion that a model that had been barely tried in Italy could restore prosperity to Britain was one the majority of people were, quite understandably, unwilling to accept.[97] In spite of the economic collapse in the 1930s, few people wished to replace capitalism with a largely untested corporate model, particularly one based in large part on foreign ideas. Obtaining inexpensive goods from foreign markets was not difficult for most Britons in the 1930s. Most people were less concerned with whether their goods were made at home or abroad than if they were well-made and reasonably priced. Therefore, few were inclined to take much interest in proposals as radical as the BUF's autarkic empire, especially if they led to higher prices for most goods. The notion of replacing the Empire with a Commonwealth-- an idea popularized by the Round Table group- was becoming increasingly popular. Besides, the Ottawa Act and Import Duties Act of 1932 had already erected a protectionist wall around the Empire. These acts provided that about 25 percent of imports were tariff free, 50 percent paid a duty over 20 percent, and the remainder were covered by tariffs passed by earlier legislation.

---

[97] Leo Amery, MP, a leading spokesman of the right-wing of the Conservative Party, was correct when he observed, "What... Mosley does not seem to appreciate...is that what is possible in Italy or in Russia is not possible with a people like ours...Fascism could [not] be carried through against an English opposition without a civil war." (Leo Amery, The Forward View, G. Bles, London, 1935, p. 155).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In addition, by the 1930s the Empire had lost much of its popularity. Many Britons in the thirties seem to have preferred a "Little England" to the Greater Britain imperialists had championed for generations. Most people apparently preferred to see the Empire decay rather than support a major, costly effort to preserve it such as a war. As Asa Briggs has observed, "The public knew too little about the Empire--as little as they know about the Argentine Republic or the Italian Renaissance--to really care about it.[98]

Another reason the BUF failed to garner more support for its economic program was that it paid too little attention to several key issues, such as unemployment, housing, the demise of traditional industries like shipbuilding, coal mining, and agriculture. Joblessness was the major domestic problem throughout the decade, particularly in areas where traditional industries like mining, textiles, and were severely depressed. Over two million persons were unemployed between 1932 and 1935 and in areas like industrial Scotland and South Wales unemployment ranged between 20 and 40 percent for much of the decade. The Means Test, which cut unemployment benefits in the early thirties and was initially supported by the Labour Party, gave the BUF a potentially

---

[98]Asa Briggs, A Social History of England, Viking, New York, 1983, p. 275. Some Conservatives continued to call for a strong Empire in the inter-war period, such as Lords Melchett, Beaverbrook, and Rothermere, and Churchill, Amery, and Sir Henry Page-Croft. See Melchett's Imperial Economic Unity, George C. Harrap, London, 1930 and Martin S. Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill Volume V Companion Part 2 Documents: The Wilderness Years 1929-1935, Heinemann, London, 1981, p. 256.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

powerful issue. Much of what the fascists said on unemployment, however, was vague. Therefore, an opportunity to embarrass the government was largely lost.[99] Occasionally, the fascists treated the issue in a more practical and effective fashion. For example, Action offered advice to job-seekers and published free ads from unemployed members in search of work in the late thirties while the Fascist Union of British Workers (FUBW), an auxiliary organization, helped the jobless obtain unemployment benefits.[100] Many people were not receiving the nutrition they required to maintain good health in the thirties. For instance, John Boyd Orr, an authority in the field, estimated that approximately "twenty million people [were] living below the economic level which ensures an adequate diet and proper health."[101] The government took little action besides giving schoolchildren subsidized or free milk. Still, the fascists did not give much attention to this issue.[102]

---

[99]For example, in 1933 instead of offering practical schemes to create jobs the party observed. "There are untold numbers of desperate men... who... must be... given work at whatever cost. It is better, surely, that we should all sacrifice together ...than that the present ghastly state of things should be allowed to continue any longer."(Blackshirt, May 1933).

[100]Action, March 12, 1936.

[101]Sir John Boyd Orr, as quoted in Wal Hannington, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, Gollancz, London, 1937, p. 192. It was not until 1942 that the Beveridge Plan advocating a system of national health insurance was issued and four years after that that the National Insurance Act, which put many of Beveridge's ideas into law, was passed.

[102]In 1939, however, a column entitled "Medical Notes" appeared in Action.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF also gave little notice to the housing shortage which affected a significant portion of the populace. The Housing Act of 1933 had left the development of low-income housing largely up to private industry which did not build nearly fast enough to satisfy the demand. [103] Extensive slums existed in many of the largest cities, such as London, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, and Bristol.[104] More than 240,000 houses were demolished or evacuated in England and Wales between 1934 and 1939 by public and private authorities.[105] The Rent Act of 1938, which eliminated rent control from houses worth more than 135 pounds in London and 20 pounds in the provinces, exacerbated the problem. Although some of the BUF's biggest support came from overcrowded

---

[103]M.P.s from all of the major parties questioned the ability of private industry to provide adequate housing for lower-income workers when the Housing Act was debated in 1933 (Manchester Guardian, March 7, 1933). Also refer to Fred Berry, Housing: The Great British Failure, C. Knight, London, 1974, pps. 44, 61; Marian Bowley, Housing and the State, 1919-1944, G. Allen & Unwin, London, 1945; Arthur Peter Becker, "Housing in England and Wales During the Business Depression of the 1930s," Economic History Review, Vol.III, 2nd Ser., (1950-1), pp. 321-41. Between 1933 and 1939 an average of more than 300,000 new houses were built each year. Nevertheless, overcrowding remained a major problem in many cities for years to come.

[104]These areas were unhealthy and usually overcrowded. In the 1920s, for example, a government committee estimated that of nearly 75,000 back-to-back houses in Leeds only one-sixth had good sanitation (Manchester Guardian, February 16, 1933). According to The Nineteenth Century and After, a leading journal, "The number of houses in England and Wales which are beyond hope of reconditioning and should be demolished as soon as it is humanly possible to provide rehousing accommodation cannot be short of half a million." (Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 114, No. 680, October 1933, p. 432). Vera Leff and G.H. Blunden have noted, "Throughout [the thirties]... bad housing was still the permanent sore (and eyesore) of East London. "(Vera Leff and G.H. Blunden, The Story of Tower Hamlets, Research Writers, London, 1967, p. 68).

[105]A.H. Halsey, ed. Trends in British Society Since 1900, Macmillan, London, 1971, p. 312.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

communities, such as Shoreditich in the East End of London, the Blackshirts did not attempt to establish tenants associations or organize rent strikes.[106] In contrast, the Communists made housing one of their chief issues and helped lead rent strikes and organized tenants associations in the East End, Lancashire, and Birmingham.[107] Few of the many cheap pamphlets the BUF published dealt with this key issue. The BUF, which was strongest in urban areas, generally gave more attention to less significant issues, such as aviation and anti-Semitism, than to housing in its press. Sometimes the fascists gave the topic the type of attention that it warranted. For example, James Shepherd, the parliamentary candidate for Islington, discussed the subject at length in speeches he delivered in 1938 and a leader in Blackshirt in 1935 lamented the lack of "Flats for the

---

[106]The BUF published dozens of these pamphlets which ranged in price from 1d. to 3d. The Ministry of Health reported that more than 17 percent of the families in Shoreditch lived in overcrowded dwellings (Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, p. 507).

[107]See, for example, Daily Worker, March 27, 1934 and F. Allen, "The Rent Restriction Acts," Discussion, Vol. II, No. 8 (January 1938), pp. 7-9. Also consult Searchlight, Vol. 22, No.256 (October 1996). Kevin Morgan discusses Birmingham Communists' attempt to exploit the housing issue in Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-1941, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989, pp. 280-88.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Poor." [108]

Another reason Britons showed little interest in the BUF's economic proposals was that the fascists sometimes presented their economic ideas in convoluted terms. A good example is James Drennan's volume B.U.F.: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism, which appeared in early 1934.[109] "James Drennan" was the *nom de plume* of W.E.D. Allen, an old friend of Mosley's and ex-Unionist MP who was born in 1901. The chairman of David Allen and Sons, a large advertising firm, he wrote on a wide range of topics for the BUF press. The following is a typical passage from his book which could hardly

---

[108]For example, he told an Islington audience in North London:

> The Chairman of the Housing committee [in Islington] has recently issued figures which are intended to refute my charge that little or nothing has been done for Islington workers. He gave a list of nearly two thousand families 'rehoused.' On analysis, however, we find that only 259 families have actually been rehoused by the Borough council [which was dominated by Labour] in the four years of their control in Islington. The rest of the figures are made up of schemes, many of which are not yet in hand, and the larger portion deals with sites for which even the lands have not yet been prepared. Labour rests its case upon subterfuge and trickery. Overcrowding is just as bad to-day as four years ago. Over 34,000 people live in overcrowding conditions in Islington, and nothing is being done for the poorer sections of the population. (Action, November 12, 1938).

The fascists praised John Wheatley's Housing Act of 1923, an innovative bill which proposed building 2.5 million low cost housing units in 15 years. Wheatley's scheme was similar in many respects to the BUF's proposals on this issue. (Action, May 28, 1936; Blackshirt, December 6, 1935). Wheatley, the ILP leader who died in 1930, was popular with some Blackshirts, including John Beckett, his close friend. Francis Beckett, John's son, refers to Wheatley as Beckett's "second political hero." The first was Clement Attlee. (John Beckett, The Rebel Who Lost His Cause: The Tragedy of John Beckett, MP, London House, London, 1999, photo caption between pp. 96-97). Another indication that at least some fascists were concerned with this issue was a review of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's book, I Lived in a Slum in Action, March 19, 1936.

[109]W.E.D. Allen wrote many articles under the *nom de plume*, "Lucifer."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

have made much sense to the ordinary person:

> Our present European civilization, as the master of great scientific resources which were not available to previous 'world-civilizations,' can overcome the diseases inherent in its hitherto uncontrolled development...The great problem of the twentieth century is a problem of integration.... Only when the control of the State has passed into the hands of those of its citizens who are prepared...to sacrifice their own individual interests utterly to the service of the nation, only then can these masters of the State turn to the more formidable problem of the mastery of the machine--and the process of mastering the machine implies of course the complete subordination of capital, which is, in fact, the machine, in so far as the machine is conscious, functioning and alive.[110]

The BUF did, however, offer some practical proposals on a host of pressing economic issues, such as co-operative buying schemes and discount loans for small businessmen, job training programs, and schemes to convert coal to oil. The BUF's economic proposals were more comprehensive and specific on many of these issues than what any of the Continental fascists offered, as several scholars have noted, such as A.J.P. Taylor and D.S. Lewis. The proposals by Mosley and Thomson for stemming the decline of the textile industry are another example. Thomson suggested removing Indian tariffs against British textiles, forcing mill-owners on the subcontinent to raise wages, construct better housing and improve working conditions for their operatives, proscribing the

---

[110]James Drennan, BUF: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism, John Murray, London, 1934, p. 17. An highly critical review of the book is Stuart Hodgson, "The March of Fascism," The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 115, No. 686 (April 1934), p. viii.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

import of Japanese textiles into India, and "banning loans to Japanese textile firms."[111] These were precisely the type of proposals the BUF needed to advance to demonstrate that it was concerned with ordinary peoples' problems and that it pursued a path independent of the Continental fascists.

The BUF's corporate model proposed sweeping political changes as well. In the 1932 edition of The Greater Britain Mosley favored preserving Parliament's authority to censure and remove the government. In the edition published two years later, however, he suggested taking this authority away. Its principal function now was to review the work of the government. Parliamentary elections were to be held at the government's discretion. In order to make the House of Commons more efficient and to better reflect the diverse make-up of the electorate, the fascists called for the election of MPs on an occupational basis. They argued that in this way Parliament would become a body of experts selected by experts.[112] Opponents warned that it would become a club for the wealthy, a cogent criticism given the cosy relations that existed in Fascist Italy, Nazi

---

[111]Thomson, Cotton! Communists and Socialists Exposed, pp. 5-6. Also consult Action, March 6, 1936

[112]Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999. "Parliament," Blackshirt promised, "will be a workshop instead of a talkshop, with specialists who know their subjects dealing with national problems." (Blackshirt, July 22-July 28, 1933). "All members of every industry," Thomson boasted, "will have their share in the control of the great economic factors of their daily life." (Thomson, The Coming Corporate State, p. 9).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Germany and Nationalist Spain between fascist regimes and the affluent classes. In addition, the fascists proposed replacing the House of Lords with a "House of Notables" comprised of distinguished citizens from a wide range of professions. [113] "The life of the Government," promised Action, " will depend...on direct votes of the whole people taken at intervals of not longer than five years. In practice we shall probably ask for a vote of the people even more frequently because to carry through the British Union revolution we shall want always to know that we have... the enthusiastic support of the people behind us." [114] The BUF vow to ban competing political parties made this pledge hollow. Some of Mosley's followers suggested that the public was not "intelligent" enough to select the most qualified people to represent them and to evaluate the government's performance, which was hardly a way to generate support from the

---

[113] E.D Hart, Review of Thomson's The Coming Corporate State in British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No.2 (April-June 1937), pp. 103-104; Blackshirt, February 9-February 15, 1934

[114] Blackshirt, August 26, 1939. Neither the Nazis nor the Italian Fascists made a similar pledge. The BUF, which was seen as an imitation or tool of the Continental fascists almost from its inception, neglected to point this out and thus lost an opportunity to highlight its differences with them on a major issue.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

masses. [115] John Beckett, the Director of Publications and a former ILP MP andWhip, referred to Westminster as "a gigantic humbug smoothing the path of office for puppets who have to do the bidding of their financial masters."[116]

Most Britons cherished their liberties. The fear that the fascists might limit these freedoms caused many people to dismiss them as a legitimate contender for power. In spite of high unemployment and the unstable international political climate, Britons showed no interest in following Italy and Germany's lead and setting up an authoritarian regime. Clearly, several elements of the corporate state model ran directly counter to the country's liberal and democratic tradition, such as the decision to give the state authority over production and distribution, and to ban competing political parties, labor unions, and strikes. Stanley Baldwin, who succeeded Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister in 1935, spoke for many people when he said, "There are things which we in England...esteem far more than money and those are freedom of speech and liberty of

---

[115] For example, the Rev. H.E.B. Nye, Rector of Scampton in Lincolnshire, stated, "Modern problems are much too intricate and abstruse for uninformed and ignorant handling. Our own Houses of Parliament are a painful example of democratic ineptitude... They reflect nothing at all except the skill of politicians in playing upon the momentary passions of the masses." (Blackshirt, November 12, 1938). Nye also stated "Every civilization has ended in Democracy, and every Democracy has betrayed its Civilisation." (Rev. H.E.B. Nye, "Fascism versus Democracy," Fascist Europe: An Anglo-Italian Symposium, National Institute of Fascist Culture of Pavia, Milan, 1939, p. 77) "Corporations could not work if political parties were muddling in an everlasting conflict," warned John A. Celli. "Political parties must therefore, be cleared out of the way altogether." (Blackshirt, July 6, 1934).

[116] John Beckett, "Facts About Parliament," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, (1936), p. 519

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

conscience."[117]

The BUF had considerable difficulty carving a niche for itself in the crowded political field of the 1930s. The Conservatives were generally regarded as the champions of capital while Labour was seen as the undisputed defender of the workers.[118] Meanwhile, the Liberals tried to steer a middle ground. The National Government, which encompassed representatives from all three parties, appealed to a wide cross-section of the populace. Its popularity diminished, however, as the decade wore on. For example, its margin of victory over Labour declined from nearly eight million votes in 1931 to less than three-and a-half million four years later and its share of the poll fell from 67 percent in 1931 to less than 54 percent four years later.[119] Nearly 160 Labourites were elected in the General Election in November 1935 compared with less than 50 four years earlier.[120] The Liberals, who left the National Government soon after its formation except for a

---

[117] Times, February 15, 1934. Walter Elliot, Minister of Agriculture, told an audience at Hull: "Who wants to be dragooned into clicking his heels when he sees any kind of shirt coming down the street? You do a lot of shirt-making in Yorkshire, but it is shirt-making for freemen." (Manchester Guardian, July 6, 1934). "Our workers," averred an East London newspaper, "have no need to threaten revolution by force, because here there is no constitutional bar to their progress or gradual realization of individual interest." (City and East London Observer, July 22, 1933).

[118] As one scholar noted, "About four-fifths of the votes cast for Labour, come from the manual wage class." (John Bonham, The Middle Class Vote, Faber and Faber, London, 1954, p. 172).

[119] D. M. Butler and Anne Sloman, British Political Facts,1900-1975, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1975, pp. 183-84.

[120] In the 18 by-elections held between the 1935 General Election and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, Conservatives lost all but one of them.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

small rump, won nearly 1.5 million votes in the 1935 General Election. The British Communists enjoyed modest growth in the latter half of the decade and by the outbreak of the war boasted approximately 50,000 members.[121]

Clearly, many people were convinced that the National Government did not have solutions to the problems that vexed the country. But at no time in its career was the BUF able to persuade more than a small segment of these disaffected voters that it deserved their backing. George Thayer has estimated that at the height of the BUF's strength in the early thirties only 15% of the electorate sympathized with the fascists. In view of the importance of winning elections in the British political system, it is surprising that Mosley did not invest more resources into this effort. His decision not to compete in local races in the early thirties was a critical error. The turn-out in local elections was often quite light, particularly in by-elections. For example, just 9 percent of the electors voted in the by- election in the Thornhill Ward in Islington in July 1935 and only 22.5 percent of the registered voters in Hackney cast their ballots in the LCC election held there a year later. [122] Many candidates in these local elections ran

---

[121]The Communists argued that the National Government was an ally of the BUF They offered very little evidence in support of this view, however, besides the police protection the government provided at fascist meetings and demonstrations in order to maintain order.

[122]The Ratepayer, Vol. 16, No. 2 (February 1936), p. 386.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unopposed. The BUF might have captured at least a few of these seats if it invested more resources on winning in areas where it was relatively strong, such as in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Mosley, who had vivid memories of the humiliating defeat the New Party had suffered in the General Election of 1931, was quite cautious about investing the party's limited resources in local electoral contests. Initially, he set his sights higher. In 1934, he implored a Birmingham audience "to return a fascist majority at the [next] General Election." [123] But when the contest was held in the following year, the party did not contend for any seats and adopted the slogan, "Fascism Next Time." Indeed, the fascists fought only three parliamentary by-elections in their nearly decade-long existence. The best chance minor parties like the BUF had to win a contest was probably in the local by-elections An effective campaign could be waged for relatively little money. In addition, turnout was oftentimes low and a major, concentrated effort could yield impressive results.[124] The BUF was soundly defeated in all of the races it entered in Greater London and the provinces with the exception of the London County Council and several local provincial contests.

---

[123] New Leader, January 22, 1934.

[124] For example, in the LCC by-election in 1935 in Hackney North and Central Divisions , West Ward, only 22 per cent of the electors cast ballots. (The Ratepayer, Vol. 15, No. 7, July 1935, pp. 196-97).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There were 124 Councillors and 20 Aldermen on the LCC in the thirties. The BUF failed to elect a single member to this Labour-dominated body in its nearly decade-long career just as it was unable to gain a single seat in Parliament. However, in several LCC races in March 1937 in the East End it captured nearly 20 percent of the vote. Its best showing came in the Bethnal Green North-East contest in which it obtained nearly 25 percent of the vote and outpolled all candidates but the Labour one. The six BUF candidates garnered a total of more than 15,000 votes in these races and finished second only to Labour in two contests. In contrast, 22 Communist challengers collected only 9825 votes. Fascist candidates captured a significant share of the poll in three Stepney wards in November 1937: Limehouse North, Mile End Old Town Centre, and Mile End Old Town South East. The combined population of Bethnal Green and Stepney in the thirties was approximately 380,000. It is probable that if the war had not intervened the party would have won its first significant electoral victory in Bethnal Green, where many of its most dedicated and enthusiastic followers lived and where the Liberal Party, which had formerly dominated politics there, was in decline.[125] Many Liberals there either became BUF members or supporters such as Charles Bennet, the ex-Vice President of the

---

[125]For an interesting discussion of the Communists' reaction to the BUF's success in the East End see Pat Devine, "Fascist Votes." Discussion, Vol. II, No.14 (April 1937).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bethnal Green Chamber of Commerce. BUF speakers consistently attracted large crowds in Bethnal Green. For example, Mosley spoke to a crowd of 12,000 in Bethnal Green's Victoria Park in October 1936.[126] With double-digit unemployment, a history of xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and a large proportion of young electors who found the BUF's programs appealing, inner East End boroughs such as Bethnal Green--particularly the North and East wards--Stepney, and Shoreditch, served as a prime recruiting ground for the BUF throughout the decade. It appears that the fascists made a mistake by not fielding more candidates in elections in the East End. The fascists enjoyed success in a few of the Municipal Elections held in the next several years. For example, one candidate garnered nearly 40% of the poll in Bridgnorth's Castle Ward in November 1937. But the party's electoral record was dismal, on the whole, in the late thirties. For example, in the municipal elections held outside Greater London in 1938 22 BUF candidates garnered less than 3,000 votes.

Certainly elections were a better method of publicizing itself than using force against opponents and disseminating racist rhetoric. This was true in spite of the absence of a system of proportional representation. Had the latter been in place it is possible that the

---

[126]Times, March 1, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BUF might have been able to build at least a small base of power in Parliament. (A proportional system of representation had been one of the keys to the Nazis growth in Germany a few years before).[127] The next chapter will explore why people joined the BUF and why certain social and economic groups were attracted to it.

---

[127]For more information on this topic see Independent, December 15, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER II: THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BUF

In this chapter the membership of the BUF will be examined. Among the questions that will be explored are the following. Why did people join the BUF? Which social and economic groups tended to support the Blackshirts? Why was the turnover in party membership so high and what effects did this have on the organization?

The BUF used the "big tent" approach in recruiting; namely, it sought to attract the largest possible number of persons. Consequently, its members came from a very wide range of occupations: small shopkeepers and big businessmen, agricultural workers and dockworkers, manual laborers and supervisors, and the unemployed and the independently wealthy. As Nellie Driver, a weaver who became the Women's District Leader in Nelson noted in 1935, "Our members were a mixed crowd."[1] No extensive scholarly study of BUF membership has been conducted yet. A few surveys of the party's membership have been completed, but none has examined more than a fraction

---

[1] Stuart Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," in Kenneth Lunn and Richard Thurlow, eds. British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Inter-war Britain Croom Helm, London, 1979, p. 154.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the party's members. For example, John D. Brewer's study published in 1980 surveyed only 15 men. As a result, we do not know precisely how many persons belonged to the organization or what the exact social, economic, and ethnic composition was, although several scholars have professed to know the size of the membership, such as Andrew Thorpe.[2] This is in contrast to the detailed examination other extreme right-wing parties in Britain have received, such as the National Front.[3] Membership lists were seized by the Security Service during the war and have not yet been released. These documents are of limited value in any case, however, since in order to protect the identity of non-active members, only active members, who comprised but a fraction of the overall membership, were listed on them. Prior to his death in 1980, Mosley refused to release the records he possessed relating to this topic and they have not been discharged since. The disrepute that the BUF suffered from and the collapse of fascism after the Second World War has caused many ex-Blackshirts to deny their fascist past. Few Blackshirts are still living today and among these there are many who are unwilling to discuss their work in the party. In addition, some see it with rose-colored glasses. For

---

[2]For example, Thorpe confidently states that the party roster rose from 16,500 in December 1938 to 22,5000 nine months later but does not provide any documentation. (Andrew Thorpe, Britain in the 1930s. The Deceptive Decade, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, p. 57).

[3]See Nigel Fielding, The National Front, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981, and Michael Billig, Fascists: A Social Psychological View of the National Front, Academic Press, London, 1978.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

example, some maintain that social distinctions were erased in the movement, a view that is not supported by the facts.[4]

Britons joined the BUF for a wide variety of reasons.[5] Anti-Semitism was certainly one reason people were attracted to the organization, but there were others as well, including anticommunism, patriotism, and the comradeship offered by membership in a group. Several books and articles published in the last several decades shed some light on the membership issue.[6] Thomas Linehan, who has recently studied the BUF's growth in the East End of London and South-West Essex is correct when he states, "Any attempts to define local joiners in terms of a single ideological or psychological 'type'

---

[4]Interview with Ronald F. Webb, January 18, 2000. For instance, the party gave preferential treatment to the wealthy and titled in the selection of parliamentary candidates. In the late thirties, Sir Lionel Berkeley-Haworth and Vice-Admiral R. St. P. Parry were chosen as parliamentary candidates although both had given much less service to the party than other candidates who were not as well-connected.

[5]One of the best analyses of the topic, James T. Robb, Working-Class Anti-Semite, Tavistock, London, 1954, is now nearly a half-century old. In contrast, several fine studies have explored why Britons became Communists, including Kenneth Newton, The Sociology of British Communism, Allen Lane, London, 1969 and D.T. Denver and J.M. Bochel, "The Political Socialization of Activists in the British Communist Party," British Journal of Political Science, Volume 3, Part I (January 1973). A recent thesis from Australia that sheds some light on this topic is Michael Adrian Spurr, BA (Hons), "Becoming Blackshirts. Ideology, Culture, and the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940."

[6]These include John D. Brewer's "The British Union of Fascists: Some Tentative Conclusions on Its Membership" in Stein Larsen, et al eds, Who Were the Fascists?, Universitetsforlaget, Bergen, 1980, p. 546, and G.C. Webber's "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October 1984). Another useful study is Thomas Linehan's local study, East London for Mosley, The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex Frank Cass, London, 1996. Some ex-fascists hold a low opinion of this book. They contend that Linehan is in error when he argues that anti-Semitism was a greater factor than the economic program in attracting East Londoners to the party

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

are...crude, essentialist and misplaced."[7] Gordon Beckford, a member of the Friends of Oswald Mosley (F.O.M.), a small group founded in the 1980s to perpetuate Mosley's ideas, is also on target when he recalls:

> People were motivated to join [the] BUF for all kinds of reasons including bad working conditions, unemployment and want. Disillusionment with the Old Parties and the positive belief that... [the] British Union alone could stop Britain's economic and political decline, and opposition to the looming future war was another reason. Often there was not any reason but just a gut feeling for British Union. It gave hope when there had been none.[8]

Persons from all classes and a wide variety of professions joined the BUF, such as medicine, education, law, journalism, and sports. George Thayer has observed: "The general characteristics of the individuals who populate fringe groups vary considerably."[9] This is an accurate description of BUF membership. The diverse social make-up a member recalls in her Birmingham branch in the passage below was found in many

---

[7]Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 304.
[8]Comrade, Vol. VIII, No. 39 (May-July 1993), p. 7
[9]George Thayer, The British Political Fringe, Anthony Blond, London, 1965, p. 243. Stuart Rawnsley, a British scholar, has noted: "The salient feature of the membership of the BUF...in the North [was] its heterogeneity." (Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," p. 157)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

branches:

> What kind of people belonged to Birmingham Branch? A wide cross-section of the community. One member was a son of one of the oldest and largest brewers in Birmingham while another was a well-known independent brewer; a well-to-do coal merchant belonged to our Branch, while we also had solicitors, teachers...doctors, bank clerks, newspapermen (both reporters and technical staff), large and small restaurant owners, many small factory owners...office workers, skilled and unskilled factory workers, railway workers (their pay was abominable in the 1930s), shop keepers and shop assistants and busmen.[10]

John Charnley, the leader of the Hull branch, recalls: "We attracted the widest possible range of people into the Hull branch...There were small businessmen, a couple of solicitors, even a barrister, two dentists, two or three doctors--the widest spectrum of the community.[11] The Blackshirts interned during the Second World War under Defence Regulation 18b reflected the party's diverse class composition. As one internee recalled, "Very few people realise that 18b has drawn a representative cross section of the British public...the Admirals, Colonels, Majors, and other officers and many rankers and ex-servicemen, doctors, dentists, solicitors, school and college tutors, manufacturers, journalists, geologists, steel workers, soldiers, sailors, airmen, civil defence workers, laboratory technicians, farmers, labourers, pathologists."[12] Perhaps if the BUF had

---

[10]Louise Irvine, "The Birmingham Schoolteacher," in Jeffrey Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986, pp. 46-47.

[11]John Charnley, Blackshirts and Roses: An Autobiography, Brockingday Publications, London, 1990, p. 77.

[12]John Wynn, It Might Have Happened to You, Strickland, Glasgow, 1943, p. 13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

focussed on a narrower band of groups it might have enjoyed more success.

The middle class appears to have constituted the largest single economic group in the BUF. Colin Cross asserted, "lower-middle-class white collar workers...formed the backbone of Sir Oswald Mosley's pre-war Blackshirts."[13] Richard Thurlow, who has studied the organization for more than two decades, recently stated, "The best reconstructed samples suggest that there were more middle and lower middle class than working-class members."[14] Recently, two historians have noted, "Outside the East End where there appears to have been a genuine working-class following members were mainly lower middle class."[15] In a small study he conducted after the war, John D. Brewer found that two out of every three individuals he surveyed belonged to the middle class.[16] Using Home Office files released at the Public Record Office in the mid-1980s G. C. Webber discovered that middle-class persons comprised a larger share of the membership than had previously been thought. In a survey he conducted of 79 members and active supporters in South-West Essex between 1933 and 1940 Thomas Linehan

---

[13]Cross, as quoted in Kenneth Newton, The Sociology of British Communism, Allen Lane, London, 1969, p. 38

[14]Written interview with Richard Thurlow, January 7, 2000.

[15]Malcolm Pearce and Geoffrey Stewart, British Political History, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 408-409

[16]John Brewer, "The British Union of Fascists: Some Tentative Conclusions on Its Membership," in Stein Larsen, et al, eds., Who Were the Fascists?, Universitetsforlaget, Bergen, 1980, p. 544

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

found that 22.36% had lower-middle and middle class positions, like salesman,and commercial travellers.[17] Commentators in the thirties came to the same conclusion. George Lansbury, the veteran Labour Party leader, observed in 1934: "Mosley is recruiting a number of men, mainly of the middle class."[18] Fred C. Browner, an American, reported: "[The BUF] is already making a bid for support to the British middle classes... with promises of 'reducing costs,' "ending competition," having "industrial peace," [and] "cooperation between the employer and the employee." [19] The BUF's pledges to dismantle the financial industry, reduce the volume of chain-stores, and restrict immigration drew support from these groups which had difficulty making ends meet during the slump. It appears that the proportion of middle-class members rose in the latter half of the decade.[20] A reporter at the BUF's massive meeting at the Earls Court two months before the war observed, "My impression was that most of those present were middle...class." [21] Economic distress and social dislocation were major

---

[17]Linehan, East London for Mosley, pp. 215, 229

[18]Lansbury, as quoted in Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," in Lunn and Thurlow, British Fascism, p. 150

[19]Fred Browner, "Fascism in Britain," The Class Struggle, Vol. IV, No. 38 (June-July 1934).

[20]G.C. Webber states, "As the BUF recovered its strength in the [latter half of the 1930s], the balance between the classes became more uncertain, and by 1939 it was the middle classes who appeared to have gained the upper hand. " (Webber, "Patterns of Membership," p. 593).

[21]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reasons middle-income persons were attracted to the BUF just as they were important factors that led middle-class Germans to join the NSDAP. Many lower middle class people were not covered by the national unemployment insurance scheme that went into effect in 1911 and was expanded in 1916 and 1920. Many felt threatened by large firms, particularly small business owners who faced intense competition from chain-stores and department stores. When economic conditions worsened after the brief post-war boom, this group suffered more than most. With its promises of wage and price controls, protected markets, and restrictions on the financial industry, the BUF appealed to some of these people.

The BUF attracted persons in certain occupations in fairly large numbers. These included small shopkeepers, clerks, and soldiers. The fascists had much less success recruiting persons with high incomes such as lawyers, financiers, bankers, and owners of large businesses. Aristocrats, intellectuals, and suburbanites also gave little support to the Blackshirts. The class antagonisms that the BUF promised to eliminate were not very strong in most suburbs which helps helps explain the party's lack of popularity in these areas. Kate Caffrey has noted, "The suburban temperament seems ill adapted to the use

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of political agitation...[Suburbs are] by their very nature peaceful places."[22] In his fine local study East London for Mosley, Thomas Linehan found that the fascists had little success recruiting "elite, or 'upper-middle class' groups," such as higher civil servants, entrepreneurs, and academic professionals. In a survey he conducted in South Essex after the war he found that only 7.59% belonged to the upper class and professional category.[23] John D. Brewer found that few upper-class people joined in either urban or rural communities.[24] Margaret George, an historian has noted, "Mosley's organization was not the political vehicle to draw widespread upperclass approval. It was too raw, too crude in its propaganda against Liberalism and the parliamentary system, too fanatic in its hatred of the Left for the taste of most respectable Britons."[25] Intellectuals were alienated by its anti-intellectualism and bigotry.[26] The few intellectuals who joined the party often had a utopian vision. These individuals argued that each generation laid a higher foundation for the next and that through constant struggle a fitter race of Britons

---

[22]Kate Caffrey, '37-39: Last Look Round, Gordon & Cremonesi, London, 1979, p. 157

[23]Linehan, East London for Mosley, pp. 215, 229

[24]Brewer, "The British Union of Fascists," p. 545

[25]Margaret George, The Warped Vision: British Foreign Policy, 1933-1939, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1965, p. 128.

[26]For example, one fascist intellectual from Bloomsbury complained: "One of the chief claims of Fascism is the breaking down of class barriers. How can this be effected while the official Fascist paper [Blackshirt] is continually belittling...intellectuals. (Letter to the editor, Blackshirt, December 16-22, 1933).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was gradually being developed. These members, such as Thomson, were convinced that whether the party triumphed or was vanquished, it was helping to promote this process. In their view, this made the BUF the most revolutionary of all parties.[27] This helps explain why some Blackshirts intensely disliked egalitarian ideologies, such as socialism and communism, and why they do not seem to have become very discouraged at the many setbacks the party experienced.

The occupational and class composition of the BUF does not appear to have changed much over the years. Most of the groups who lent support to the fascists in the late 1930s had backed them earlier in the decade. One possible exception is businessmen affiliated with medium-sized firms. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a fair number of them joined the organization in the latter half of the decade partly because of its anti-war stance and pledges to bolster the economy. Solly Kaye, a Stepney resident in the 1930s recalls that the fascists' support came from "drifting types, unorganised, no loyalty to anything."[28] Another aspect of the BUF's membership that seems to have remained much the same was that many fascists appear to have lacked direction and to be

---

[27] Many BUF writings explored this theme, including Mosley's, "The Philosophy of Fascism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 (January 1935), Thomson's The Coming Corporate State, Greater Britain, Westminster, 1937, Joyce's, "The Spirit of Man is Supreme," Blackshirt, January 4, 1935, and L V H., "Chief Scout Pays Tribute to Fascism," Ibid., October 5, 1934.

[28] Solly Kaye, as quoted in Searchlight, Vol. 25, No. 256 (October 1999).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

searching for someone or something to help them attain a more satisfying life. In many instances the BUF helped to fill this void in their life.[29] The BUF's opponents often portrayed the typical Blackshirt as a manual wage worker or unemployed thug. This image was misleading. Table 2.1 below presents some BUF professionals and the occupation they held. (PPC refers to Prospective Parliamentary Candidate and DL denotes District Leader).

TABLE 2.1 PROFESSIONALS IN THE BUF

MEMBER	POSITION IN BUF	OCCUPATION
Mary Allen	Women's Division leader	supervisor of police
Montague Yates-Allen	member	clergyman
W.E.D. Allen	writer	advertising executive
Capt. W.F. Avery	PPC/Southampton	accountant
Jack Austin	DL/East Briston	accountant
W.G. Barlow	member	racing car driver
G.C. Barry	PPC/Wavertree	engineer
James Battersby	DL/Stockport	hat manufacturer
John Beckett	Director of Publications	politician
Maurice Lee Braddell	PPC/Streatham	actor
Frederick Burdett	DL/Peckham	writer
H.T. Brock-Griggs	member	architect

[29]There is more than a little truth to the following observation by John Tyndall, the British National Party leader: "An unusual display of charisma in an individual can attract a slavish category of follower, won over essentially to the glamour of the person rather than the soundness or otherwise of the ideas he represents. I always found a much higher-than-average portion of people like this among Mosley's supporters: the types who would almost be prepared to march off a high clifftop if he had given them the order to so--which, in the political sense, was exactly what he did." (John Tyndall, "Mosley," Spearhead, No. 350, April 1998, p. 6).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 2.1 (CONTINUED)

MEMBER	POSITION	OCCUPATION
Dr. Cawood	Area Organiser, York	scientist
A.K. Chesterton	editor, Blackshirt	journalist
James T. Cousins	member	social worker
W.T. Dakin Mart	member	medical doctor
S.F. Darwin-Fox	member	professor
B.E.D. Donovan	Asst. Dir.-General (South)	teacher
Geoffrey Dorman	Asst. Editor, Action	journalist
L.E. Cameron-Walker	PPC/Islington North	accountant
Kenneth T. Duffield	member	writer
G.H. Dymock	speaker	clergyman
Richard Faulkner	PPC/Leeds South	real estate agent
Robert Forgan	Deputy-Leader	medical doctor
Henry J. Gibbs	writer	commercial artist
Claude Gouldesborough	PPC/Acton	medical doctor
G.G. Gray	member	journalist
Leonard Gueroult	Organiser/South London	teacher
Frank Hamley	DL/Sheffield	teacher
Sir L.B.H. Haworth	PPC/Chelsea	diplomat
Flo Hayes	speaker	teacher
F.D. Hill	Business Mgr., Blackshirt	editor
John Hone	Asst. Director-General	engineer
J.P. Horne	National Inspecting Officer	film salesman
Louise Irvine	member	teacher
Derek Jackson	member	scientist
Ralph Gladwyn Jebb	PPC/Dorset West	writer
Jorian Jenks	writer	farmer and writer
Theo Lang	Art Editor, Action	journalist
F.H. Lawton	PPC/Hammersmith North	barrister
W.J. Leaper	editor, Blackshirt	journalist
C.C. Lewis	legal adviser	attorney
Robert Ling	DL/Ealing	accountant
Bertram F. Lister	DL/Leeds West	engineer

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 2.1 (CONTINUED)

MEMBER	POSITION	OCCUPATION
J.A. MacNab	editor, Fascist Quarterly	teacher
Hector G. McKechnie	National Meetings Organiser	diplomat
Major E. Matthews	Public Works Adviser	engineer
Leonard A. Mohan	PPC/Epsom	editor
Capt. Mott	member	captain of ocean liner
H.E.B. Nye	writer and speaker	clergyman
E.C. Opie	member	clergyman
Elsie S.C. Orrin	member	teacher
A. Palmer	writer	clergyman
H.A. Patrick	PPC/Bradford	businessman
J. Pierce Butler	Youth Leader/Southampton	clergyman
Eric Hamilton Piercy	Chief, "I" Squad	insurance agent
Cuthbert Reaveley	Director of Music	musician
Ellis G. Roberts	writer	clergyman
Sir Alliott Verdon Roe	member	manufacturer
E.G. Mandeville Roe	PPC/Balham and Tooting	teacher
Harold Ayer Scott Turner	DL/Leytonstone	journalist
D.R. Stuckey	Chief, F.B.U.F.A.	lawyer
G.S. Sutton	Mosley's secretary	university instructor
Fay Taylour	member	race car driver
Rafe Temple-Cotton	PPC/Exeter	horticulturist
G.E. Thomas	PPC/Wood Green	businessman
John V. Thomas	member	clergyman
Rex Tremlett	Deputy-Dir. of Publications	journalist
C.F. Wegg-Prosser	DL/Shoreditch	attorney
Henry Williamson	member	writer
Hugh Ross Williamson	member	editor
W.W. Wilson	Accountant, BUF Ltd.,	accountant
F.C. Wiseman	District Treasurer/Worcester	teacher
Domford Yates	member	writer

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF had little success attracting skilled workers of all types, including miners, ship-builders, and workers in the baking, textile, transport, plumbing, and iron and steel industries.[30] Most of these groups were already affiliated with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). The BUF spent considerable resources recruiting among trade unionists. It established Industrial Groups in many industries. In an effort to attract more workers, the BUF established a labor exchange in the early thirties known as the Fascist Union of British Workers (F.U.B.W.) The latter attempted to organize workers in various industries and match the jobless with employers. Based in Battersea, its aims were: "'To protect the interests of the workers whether in employment or unemployed;' 'to fight against wage cuts and all reductions in the standard of life;' 'to fight the Means Test and all measures to bully the unemployed.'"[31] Among its leaders were J.P.D. Paton, a former local N.U.W.M. leader, J. Barney, a branch chairman for the National Union of Clerks, and Michael Goulding,

---

[30]Stuart Rawnsley states, "Very little headway was made in recruiting members from the highly-unionised engineering industry or from coal mining...The working-class recruit was typically one who had not been educated into the labour movement by trade union or Labour Party membership." (Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," p. 160).

[31]Blackshirt, May 18-May 24, 1934. Also see William Parsons, "What Was the F.U.B.W.?," Comrade Vol.VI, No. 30 (June-August 1991), p. 7

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

who became a foremost BUF speaker and writer on international affairs later in the decade. Subsequently, Charles Bradford, an ex-Communist steel worker from Battersea, headed the group.[32]

Originally, the F.U.B.W. was an independent organisation and persons could join without belonging to the BUF. Unlike the trade unions, it attempted to recruit members from outside their work site. The fascists seem to have thought that it was too difficult to recruit workers in most factories and shops. Like its parent organization, the F.U.B.W. argued that unions were less effective than corporations in improving the conditions of workers. Members wore a brown uniform and paid a minimum subscription of 1d a week. After it became a full-fledged unit of the BUF in 1934, members sported a cloth badge on their arm to signify membership and carried their own flag. One of the F.U.B.W.'s primary efforts was to represent workers at Public Assistance Committees (P.A.C.s) and Courts of Referees which determined whether workers were entitled to

---

[32]Bradford was intensely disliked by Communists, partly because he physically attacked one of their colleagues at a fascist meeting at the Royal Albert Hall in 1934. For example, one Communist recalled in a letter to the Daily Worker:

> He used to tell his mates that every time he heard the National Anthem it gave him a pain in the guts. The last time I saw him he was marching in the protest demonstration against the unemployment acts in 1931. He was so impatient that he wanted do something. I pointed out to him that he was already doing something along with his fellow-workers and that our job was to get more on the streets to win back the cuts. But Charlie wanted something else--that was too slow...Blacklegs are not unknown. They do the dirty work of the Mosleys. (Daily Worker, April 26, 1934).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unemployment assistance and other benefits. The organization became involved in scores of such cases.[33] Captain Cecil Courtney Lewis, its legal advisor, played a key role in this work. F.U.B.W. officials often milled outside labour exchanges where they gave the unemployed advice and cigarettes. The F.U.B.W.'s stronghold was Greater London. Several of its most active branches were in this area, including Edmonton, Uxbridge, Islington, Battersea, Streatham, Croydon, and Ealing. However, it appears to have attracted few members outside the metropolis. In the winter of 1934 it arranged for Birmingham workers to take tours of Nazi Germany in cooperation with the British Legion.[34] In July 1934, apparently at Mosley's order, the F.U.B.W. merged with the Industrial Section of the Propaganda Department of the BUF, or "Z" section. [35] After the amalgamation, the BUF gave the F.U.B.W. little attention. By the latter half of the decade, the F.U.B.W. seems to have existed in name only. The merger may have been an error since the fascist union was probably able to attract more workers as an auxiliary group of the BUF than an official arm of the organization, particularly after the party's reputation was damaged after Olympia.

---

[33] For example, in August 1934 the F.U.B.W. had a woman's unemployment case reversed before the Sunderland Court of Referees. (Blackshirt, August 17, 1934).
[34] Daily Worker, February 16, 1934.
[35] Parsons, "What Was the F.U.B.W.?" p. 7. Also see John D. Brewer, Mosley's Men, p. 77 and A.C. Miles, Mosley in Motley, Ex-Servicemen's National Movement, London, 1937, p. 12.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The fascists disseminated a large volume of written and spoken propaganda throughout the country in order to recruit trade unionists, such as collieries, Ford Motor Company factories, and Whitehead's Torpedo Works. For example, in 1938 it sent copies of Action as well as copies of Risdon's Strike Action or Power Action and Mosley's latest book, Tomorrow We Live to nearly 500 T.U.C. branches.[36] Written propaganda specifically targeted to trade unionists included the following books, pamphlets, and articles: F.D. Hill's Power Action or Strike Action, Thomson's The Economics of British Fascism (1933), Beckett's "Fascism and Trade Unionism," (1936) Towards Freedom: Its History and Future by H.W. Kenyon, a former trade unionist, and an unsigned pamphlet entitled, Trade Unionists! You are the Victims (1938).[37] According to the BUF, most union leaders were radical socialists who were corrupt and more concerned about helping workers abroad than at home.[38] "The demagogues, careerists, and prattlers, who are living well on the proceeds of political Trade

---

[36]Action, August 13, 1938.

[37]All of these works were published by the BUF. If not given the date of publication is not available. For Beckett's article see Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 3 (July 1936).

[38]Alexander Raven Thomson, "British Union and Trade Unions," Blackshirt, August 28, 1937. Also see Action, September 17, 1938, and Ibid., May 6, 1939. Action complained that H.H. Elvin, the President of the Trades Union Congress, sought "to plunge...[workers] into misery and disaster by involving them in a European war" rather than helping them "obtain better [working] conditions." (ibid., August 27, 1938).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Unionism," Blackshirt asserted, "must be swept from the coalfields. Their political and industrial records are so vile that they no longer enjoy confidence."[39] During the Spanish Civil War, Action complained that the unions sent money to Spain that was "badly needed in Britain."[40] The BUF also accused T.U.C. leaders of "openly working with Jewish international interests." In truth, only a minority of labor leaders were actually left-wing radicals. Most were moderates, such as Sir Walter Citrine, the T.U.C. General Secretary, and Ernest Bevin, the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, the largest union. The electorate recognized this.

The fascists' recruiting efforts among trade unionists bore little fruit. Fascist speakers and recruiters were often heckled or physically threatened in communities where trade unionists comprised a sizeable portion of the population. Two particularly hostile areas were South Wales and southern Scotland, areas with high unemployment that were Labour (and to a much lesser extent) Communist strongholds.[41] "The Fascists," reported the Times accurately in 1934, "have [not] yet made an effective...footing in the unions or in the local and national councils."As one trade union

---

[39]Blackshirt, March 6, 1937
[40]Action, July 23, 1938.
[41]Nina Fishman, The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions, Scolar, Aldershot, 1995, p. 356

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

member recently recalled, "Trade unionists were not interested in what the BUF had to say."[42] As Richard Thurlow notes, "The vast majority [of workers] preferred Britain's slow economic decline to the utopian programmes of political extremists of the... right."[43] And some unions banned Blackshirts from their ranks, including the National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers.[44] Many unionists had still not forgiven Mosley, who had enjoyed a wide following among them in the late twenties and early thirties, for breaking with the Labour Party and forming the semi-fascist New Party. This convinced many trade unionists that he could not be trusted.[45] Very few union members seem to have perceived Blackshirt to be the "Patriotic Workers' Paper," as it advertised.[46] The BUF's apparent ties to Continental fascism caused many of these workers to reject the fascists.[47] Most unionized workers apparently tended to see the

---

[42]Interview with anonymous resident of Bethnal Green, April 11, 1999

[43]Richard Thurlow, "The Failure of British Fascism, 1932-1940," in Andrew Thorpe, ed., The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-War Britain, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 1989, p. 69

[44]Action, March 11, 1939.

[45]As one Bethnal Green trade unionist recalled, "The Blackshirts had nothing to do with unions. They had money. They were not anyone you could trust." (Interview with anonymous respondent in Bethnal Green, April 11, 1999).

[46]Blackshirt, August 12-August 18, 1933.

[47]For example, David Mayall has written: "The operatives of the North-West, as elsewhere, were suspicious of a party which... was associated with Mussolini and Hitler." (David Mayall, "Rescued from the Shadows of Exile: Nellie Driver, Autobiography and the British Union of Fascists," Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, eds. The Politics of Marginality: Race, The Radical Right and Minorities in Twentieth Century Britain, Frank Cass, London, 1990, pp. 29-30).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BUF either as a tool of employers or as a British version of Italian Fascism and Nazism and not as the vehicle for a rebirth of the economy.[48] Trade unionists put little stock in the fascists' pledge to establish a partnership between employers and employees. Union leaders constantly reminded workers that the corporate state had not fulfilled its promises in a single state. They also argued that fascism would aggravate "class antagonisms," by favoring employers over employees and those with ties to the fascist party over those who lacked such an association. [49] As a result, many trade unionists quite rightly felt that they would get the short end of the stick in this arrangement. For example, the Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen alleged that the fascists intended to establish a private army and seize control of Parliament. Although this was untrue, it was precisely the type of rumor which many trade unionists-- and ordinary people--were willing to believe.[50] Each of the parties on the left portrayed the fascists' motives in the darkest terms and warned that they intended to cut wages, ban independent unions, imprison union leaders, allow working conditions to become more

---

[48] As Stuart Rawnsley notes, "The working-class recruit was typically one who had not been educated into the labour movement by trade union or Labour Party membership. (Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," p. 160). Also see Webber, "Patterns of Membership," p. 591

[49] Lord Citrine, Men and Work, Hutchinson, London, 1964, pp. 304-5.

[50] Richard Thurlow, "State Management of the BUF in the 1930s," in Mike Cronin, ed., The Failure of British Fascism, St. Martin's, New York, 1996, p. 33.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unsafe, and, ultimately, establish a one-party state.[51] "Fascism," the CPGB warned, "means death to the British working class--it means fascist murder gangs stalking the streets of Britain."[52] "The Fascist promises," according to the ILP, "are...[a] scrap of paper. The blank cheque is filled in by the industrialists, and the workers foot the bill."[53] The BUF's willingness to use violence against its opponents probably hurt its recruiting efforts among workers. The impression it seems to have given these people was that it preferred to achieve its objectives by force which was not the case. Various commentators cited the organization's use of violence against hecklers at Olympia and other meetings as a key reason why it had difficulties attracting workers.[54] One London

---

[51] Ernest Bevin, For instance, one of their pamphlets stated:

> The British fascists are compelled sometimes to give their talks and writings a faint appearance of sympathy with the working man, because otherwise they would get no support at all. But their real feeling towards organised labour is evident in the recent articles written in their journal , rankly abusing and libelling officials of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, for which they were ordered to pay considerable damages. The fascists will stop at no mean tactic to secure followers; they will even use the term 'Socialist' to fool the workers into supporting them. Hitler and his men did that when they called themselves 'National Socialists'--and thousands of Germans now miserably realise just what that was worth.

(Labour Research Department, Fascism: Fight It Now, Labour Research Department, London, 1937, pp. 30-31). Also see Ernest Bevin, The Balance Sheet of the Future, R. McBride, New York, 1941, p. 205

[52] R. Palme Dutt, Fascism and Social Revolution, International, London, 1935, p. 219

[53] New Leader, January 25, 1935. "Let every Trade Unionist note carefully," the official ILP organ warned, "that the very root of Trade Unionism itself, the right to withdraw Labour-power from the labour market in order to force up its price...is threatened by Fascism." (New Leader, February 2, 1934). Also see Bevin, The Balance Sheet of the Future, p. 205

[54] See, for example, New Republic, August 22, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

busman probably spoke for many of his colleagues when he posted the following message in his garage:

> The Fascist Party is supposed to be a workers party, but who leads them and who is behind them. British Fascists. Led by Sir Oswald Moseley [sic]. What is he a worker? No He is an aristocrat, a landlord, a capitalist. Lived on rents, dividends, profits all his life Never done a days work. What has he got in common with the workers. At the Albert Hall on Sunday last there was over 200 Rolls Royces and Damliers [sic] (to say nothing of other makes) in which his supporters arrived. What were they? Workers. Or were they the people who are providing the money. Greatest supporter--in Britain Lord Rothermere with his Daily Mail helped by Sunday Dispatch, Evening News etc. What is he? A capitalist or a worker. And are these workers papers. There are only two sides. The Employers (Capitalist) and the Employees (worker).[55]

The party's failure to recruit enough trade unionists to exert influence over any single industry prevented it from putting even a few of its ideas into effect and building a record it could defend at elections. It also seems to have taken a toll on the morale of BUF members, perhaps especially workers.

In the thirties, many Britons, particularly urbanites with lower incomes, complained that immigrants were taking jobs and housing from them, depressing wages, wrestling away control of small industries such as furniture making and tailoring, and by

---

[55]This passage is presented as it appears in the Daily Worker, May 24, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

practicing poor sanitation turning healthy neighborhoods into slums.[56] Writers of letters to the editor columns in Action and Blackshirt complained that they were unable to find employment because they had been "victimised by aliens" and because the latter were "obtaining jobs in the country, before they even settle in it."[57] Owing to the slump, many small shopkeepers and traders had difficulty obtaining capital. In addition, they faced increasing competition as recent immigrants opened shops and chain stores and department stores proliferated.[58] In 1936 the Sunday Trading Restricton Act, or Shops Act, was passed which permitted observant Jews to conduct business until 2 p.m. on Sunday if they shut their shops on Saturdays. Christians complained that Jewish merchants broke the law by selling their goods at public markets on Saturday and keeping their shops open past 2 o'clock on Sunday, which gave them seven days of

---

[56]For example, a shopkeeper from Morecambe complained.

> We have suffered considerably recently from the onslaught of the multiple stores and combines...The Mayor of the town has publicly ... observed that the entry of these combines reflected coming prosperity. I wonder for whom? I joined the Movement following a recent meeting of the British Union here, and I know that many will follow in my steps now that we know that we shall have the opportunity of voting for a British Union candidate at the next election. (Letter to editor, Action, March 6, 1937).

[57]Ibid., July 8, 1939; ibid., January 28, 1939. Action asked, "What about the British Doctors and Dentists whose livelihood is being threatened by an invasion of Jews from Austria?" (ibid., July 23, 1938).

[58]Nearly 90,000 Jews emigrated to Britain between 1929 and 1940, about two-thirds of whom were from Germany and Austria. (John Solomos, Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1989, p. 35).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

trading to six for the Gentiles.

The BUF was able to exploit the issues of immigration and unemployment to help it become one of the leading parties in the East End of London. Like the BBL, the BUF contended that Jews and other aliens took jobs from natives, debased public morals, violated the provisions of the Sunday trading laws, and engaged in cut-rate pricing. [59] For example, the fascists scored the Shops Act as "the most meddlesome piece of democratic legislation that has ever been issued." Action asserted:

> The British people have stood a lot, but are not prepared to see their liberties destroyed by laws introduced for an alien section of the community Only through the British Union is it possible to smash once and for all the barrier of high finance which is gradually crushing the small man and...strangling the economic life of the whole nation.[60]

Like the BBL, the BUF argued that although some immigrants deserved assistance, any help-- whether public or private--should be given to natives first.

> British Union is not indifferent to the distress of foreign refugees We have always urged that the nations of the world meet together and allocate a suitable area for providing Jewry with a national home....But the people for whom Britain are primarily responsible are the people of Britain...We have no right, while a single Briton is unemployed, while a single British child is under-nourished, to squander our resources for the benefit of aliens.[61]

---

[59] Action, May 20, 1939

[60] Ibid., May 22, 1937. The BUF reported violations of the Shops Act in its press (ibid February 29, 1940).

[61] "If you attend Cinema, Theatre, Circus or Music Hall," Action asserted, "you will be helping in this crime and risking your own job." (ibid., January 14, 1939).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF argued that the democratic system made it quite difficult for small businessmen, traders, and non-unionized workers to gain power in any constituency due to their limited economic resources. In its words non-unionized workers were "caught between the millstone of trustification and the millstone of unionization." [62] In contrast, the corporate state, which elected representatives on a strictly occupational basis, insured them a voice in the government.[63]

In the latter half of the thirties the fascists intensified their efforts to recruit non-unionized workers and small businessmen. This may have been partly due to their failure to recruit trade unionists. For instance, they held rallies for small retailers in London in 1937-38 and analyzed the peculiar problems they faced in regular columns in Blackshirt and Action, such as "Shopkeepers Action."[64] The fascists offered many proposals to improve the economic condition of both of these groups, such as wage and price fixing, immigration restriction, higher tariffs, protected markets, co-operative buying schemes, trade associations, low interest loans, and the elimination of "cut-rate" stores and department stores, such as Marks and Spencer and Woolworth's, many of

---

[62] Action, May 21, 1936.
[63] Ibid., March 4, 1939
[64] ibid., April 10, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

which were owned by Jewish immigrants.[65] In the mid-1930s the fascists led protests against local taxes in several rural areas, including East Anglia and Worcestershire. The fascists felled trees, dug trenches, and erected barbed-wire fences to prevent the local authorities, who were auctioning off the property of farmers who had not paid their taxes, to gain access to the property.[66] Most of the Blackshirts were arrested, including R.A. Plathen, the party's first National Meetings Organiser, who led the undertaking. Some local growers encouraged the fascists' efforts, but most apparently did not seek their assistance. Many farmers apparently felt that the Blackshirts, who were mostly from distant urban areas, were more interested in embarrassing the authorities and obtaining publicity than in helping them. [67] Most farmers apparently favored the Conservatives to the fascists. The Conservatives stood for many of the values that the

---

[65] Blackshirt, March 6, 1936, Action, October 22, 1938, Oswald Mosley, Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered, BUF, London, 1936, Question 68. Thomson promised that the BUF "would license all shops...Every shopkeeper, with the exception of a... limited number of department stores in the centre of each city, and, of course, village shops, would be compelled to restrict his trading to some particular line of business. In return he would be assured that the number of competitors in his line of business would be strictly controlled, and their premises spread out as far as possible." (Action, March 3, 1936).

[66] Bellamy, "We Marched with Mosley," p. 90. For an interesting discussion of these events from the BUF's perspective see George Hoggarth, "The Essex Farmworker," in Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, pp. 42-45 and Blackshirt, August 19-25, 1933

[67] "We may not feel so sure as...Mosley," observed a farmers' journal, " that the influence of Finance is always consciously vicious, but it has the world in charge, the world is sick and it is reasonable to lay that sickness largely at the door of Financial power." (Dairyman, March 25, 1939). See also the editorial in the trade journal Poultry, March 25, 1939

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

farmers did.[68]

The BUF enjoyed some success recruiting non-unionized workers and small businessmen. Hotel and restaurant workers, cab drivers, office clerks, taxi-drivers, farmers, small shopkeepers, and traders and the unemployed all joined the BUF in fair numbers.[69] Several shopkeepers and retail trading associations in Greater London invited BUF representatives to address their organizations throughout the decade, including those from Stoke Newington, Bethnal Green, and Ilford. [70] Small businessmen represented a considerable segment of BUF voters. In comparison, less than 10 % of the 13.5 million votes cast for Conservatives in the 1951 General Election came from small working proprietors.[71] The BUF attracted a modest number of unemployed, particularly in the cities. For example, R.R. Bellamy, a Lancashire member recalled, "Most members [in Blackburn] were unemployed millhands and mechanics."[72]

Non-unionized workers and small businessmen seem to have joined the BUF for several

---

[68]For example, after the war nearly 10% of the Conservative MPs were farmers. S.E. Finer as quoted in Samuel H. Beer, Modern British Politics: Parties and Pressure Groups in the British Collectivist Age, Norton, New York, 1982, p. 375

[69]Action, July 2, 1938 The Robert Saunders Papers at the University of Sheffield contains membership applications from dozens of members in the Devon area and demonstrates the appeal the party had among shopkeepers and traders. For example, in these papers consult B.U.F. applications for James Reginald Wreford Bragg, grocer; Reginald Richard Slater, hotel proprietor, and David Elwyn Williams, chemist.

[70] Action, July 23, 1938.

[71]John Bonham, The Middle Class Vote, Faber and Faber, London, 1954, p.172.

[72]R.R. Bellamy, "The Norfolk Bailiff" in Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, p.64.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reasons. Some shared the fascist's view that the state must wield more power in order to improve conditions for lower and middle-income citizens. Others felt that the mainstream parties ignored their interests and feared that socialists threatened to slap more regulations on their industries.[73] Still others were dissatisfied with their wages and lacked the benefits most unionized employees enjoyed. Some were receptive to the BUF's appeal because they did not share in the recovery, such as farmers. [74]

Since the BUF's inception, socialists and Communists had contended that it was a tool of wealthy financiers and businessmen, such as Lord Rothermere, owner of the Harmsworth publishing empire, and William Morris (later Lord Nuffield), the automobile manufacturer. [75] The BUF was allegedly "a private army" that did the dirty work of

---

[73]This helps explain why some small businessmen across the country were attracted to the BUF, such as the formation in Cardiff of a BUF front organization known as the National Traders' Protection Society, later known as the National Corporate Movement. (Stephen M. Cullen, "Political Violence: The Case of the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 28, No. 2, April 1993, p. 255).

[74]In the thirties farmers had difficulty obtaining loans, saw overseas markets contract while foreign producers captured a larger share of the domestic market, and, in some cases, paid a considerable portion of their income in taxes to local churches. Notable farmers who joined the BUF were Jorian Jenks, an Oxford University alumnus who wrote extensively on agricultural and health issues, Robert Saunders, District Leader for Dorchester, C. Pertwee, PPC for Swansea West, E.J. Crawford, PPC for Tonbridge, R.R. Bellamy, PPC for Blackley, and Sydney Allen, who was defeated in his quest to become MP for Leeds North-East during the war.

[75] Tom Driberg, Mosley? No!. W.H. Allen, London., 1948, p. 160. Some Blackshirts, apparently upset at articles Driberg wrote, alleged that he was a Jew posing as a Christian. In fact, he was not Jewish. Also consult Labour Research Department, Who Backs Mosley? Labour Research Department, London, 1934; and Dutt, Fascism and Social Revolution.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wealthy capitalists and the National Government with which it supposedly had a secret agreement. [76] The BUF's opponents never offered any evidence, however, to support these allegations. The BUF's championing of the interests of farmers, shopkeepers, and other lower and middle income groups was one way to attempt to refute this argument.

In the final analysis, the number of non-unionized workers and small businessmen who became BUF members or followers was not large. Robert Skidelsky is certainly incorrect when he states that the BUF's efforts to recruit non-unionized employees "paid off handsomely."[77] The fascists might have appealed to more of these individuals if they had promised them the kinds of economic insurance and social support the trade unions extended to craft workers.

The popular notion that the BUF was mostly a collection of poorly-educated, manual workers is not accurate. While many members fit this description, a considerable proportion of fascists were educated and had pursued studies at a university at a time

---

[76] World News and Views, the Communist newsweekly, termed the Government "the aider and abbettor [sic] of Mosley fascism," while R. Palme Dutt, a member of the CPGB's Central Committee, claimed that the BUF had "established its position... mainly, because of its overwhelming financial support from influential sources [such as]... the million-tentacled Rothermere Press." (World News and Views, October 31, 1936; Dutt, Fascism and Social Revolution, p. 284). Also see "Rothermere's Other Baby Has Big Vote," Daily Worker, February 8, 1935 and Labour Research Department, Who Backs Mosley?

[77] Robert Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, New York, 1975, p. 328.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

when only a small minority of Britons did. The BUF had some success recruiting professionals, such as physicians, university instructors, teachers, and journalists.[78] For example, 24.6% of 77 BUF Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) listed in Action the late thirties had attended university. In comparison, in 1945 less than 35% of the Labour MPs had done so. In 1945 nearly 45% of the Labour MPs possessed only an elementary education. In contrast, most fascist PPCs appear to have had one. [79] Table 2.2 below presents a list of nearly 80 BUF PPCs and the occupations they held. An asterisk after the member's name indicates that he or she attended a university.

TABLE 2.2 OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF BUF PROSPECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES

PPC	OCCUPATION	SERVICE	OFFICER
Adams, Eric	clerk		
Adams, W.R.	officer	Navy	
Avery, Capt. W.F.*	accountant	Army	X
Bailey J.A.	woodworker	Army	
Barrington, M.	welfare worker		

[78]Many teachers felt that did not receive fair remuneration for the hours they served and the training they possessed.

[79]Colin Mellors, The British MP: A Socioeconomic Study of the House of Commons, Saxon House, 1978, pp. 47-48. In contrast, in 1945 131 of the 211 Conservative MPs had attended university (Ibid., p 41).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Barry, G.C.	engineer	Army	
Beauclerk, Charles*	student		
Bell, Doreen	?		
Bentink-Budd, C.H.*	officer	Army	X
Berkeley-Haworth, Sir Lionel	diplomat		
Blacker, C.H.*	businessman	R.A.F.	
Brock-Griggs, Anne	housewife?		
Bruning, Clement	salesman		
Cameron Walker, L.E.	accountant		
Capell Asham R.H.	sailor	Navy	
Chambers-Hunter, W.E.A.	farmer	Army	
Charnley, John	baker		
Clarke, E.G.	furniture worker		
Cotton, R.T.*	florist		
Crawford, E.J.*	farmer		
Dowty, John	farmer	Army	
Davies, Thos.	?	Army	
Downe Lady	magistrate		
Dunn, S.T.	bus driver		
Eaton, W G.	store clerk		
Elam, Norah	factory worker		
Faulkner, Richard	real estate		
Frisby, H.H.	office worker		
Fuller, J.F.C.	general	Army	X
Gibbs, Henry	commercial artist		
Gouldesborough, Claude*	physician	Army	
Goulding, Michael	?		
Gray, J. Maxfield	farmer		
Griffith, L.H.	manager		

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 2.2 (CONTINUED)

PPC	OCCUPATION	SERVICE	OFFICER
Hammond, C.H.	?	Navy	
Hawks, Olive	editorial asst.		
Heyworth, Y.H.	businessman	Army	
Howe, B.L.	watchmaker	Army	
Hudson C.E.*	commander	Navy	X
Ilett, A.E.	manufacturer		
Jebb, R.G.	farmer		
Jenks, Jorian *	farmer	Army	
Jones, R.	decorator	Army	
Kennedy, Noel	laundry manager		
Kenyon, Herbert	railway clerk		
King, L.A.	newspaper mgr	Navy	
Lawton F.H.*	barrister		
Lister Bertram	engineer		
Macnab, J.A.*	teacher		
Mandeville-Roe, E.G.*	teacher		
Mohan, L.A.	journalist		X
Moran, Thomas	?	Navy	
Morris, Sylvia	journalist		
Parkyn, R.T.*	civil servant	Army	
Patrick, H.A.*	businessman		
Pearson, Lady	volunteer		
Pertwee, C.	farmer		
Powell, G.B.	admiral	Navy	X
Reeve, L.M.	real estate sales		
Reynell-Bellamy, R.	farmer		
R. St. P., Parry	admiral	Navy	X
Sandemann, Malcolm	officer	Army	X
Sheville, R.*	?		
Steele, Charles H.	officer	Army	X

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 2.2 (CONTINUED)

PPC	OCCUPATION	SERVICE	OFFICER
Thomson, Raven*	writer		
Walsh, James	officer	Army	X
Wegg-Prosser, Charles*	barrister		
Whinfield, Muriel	?		
Wittam, P.*	Army		
Whinfield, Edward	mechanic		
Woodruffe, J.S.	officer	Army	X
Wright, L.	?	Army	X

BUF propagandists frequently made reference to the necessity of keeping the Empire intact, the sacrifices Britons had made for their nation and the Empire, and the need to prevent the nation from becoming too insular.[80] In July 1933 the BUF attempted to establish a common fascist front in the Empire with the creation of the New Empire Union. This organization attracted very little support and seems to have been scrapped by the latter half of the decade.[81] Many of the short stories and excerpts from books published by the BUF press dealt with the military exploits of the British people. An example was the installments from Henry Williamson's volume Everyman's War: 1914-1918 reprinted in Action in the summer of 1939. In the late thirties Action featured

---

[80]See, for instance, H.A. Harvey, "The English Renaissance," Blackshirt, October 5, 1934.
[81]For more information on the New Empire Union see Ibid., August 26-September 1, 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a column devoted to Empire affairs entitled "Empire Notes." The public was seemingly uninterested, however, in imperial affairs. On the other hand, the Empire had a strong appeal for many current and former servicemen. Continental fascist parties also attracted veterans in large numbers. In the BUF with its paramilitary organization and declarations in favor of boosting military spending and strengthening ties with the colonies some veterans perceived a fresh and appealing alternative to the major parties.[82] As G.C. Webber notes, "a disproportionate number of... BUF activists" were ex-officers.[83] Prominent officers who joined the BUF included Air Commodore Sir J.A. Chamier, who had served as Director of Technical Development at the Air Ministry, Director of Vickers Aviation Ltd. and Secretary-General of the Air League of the British Empire; Geoffrey Dorman, an ex-Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) officer and Air Correspondent for the Evening News who became editor of Action in the late thirties; Col. Norman Thwaites, Chairman of the January Club, an organization the BUF helped establish in the mid-thirties to foster closer ties with businessmen; and Majors Francis Yeats-Brown, who had saw action in the Middle East during the First World War and wrote a history of

---

[82] Veterans were attracted to extreme right-wing parties after the Second World War , such as the National Front which A.K. Chesterton helped found in the mid-1960s. See Billig, Fascists, 1978, p. 260

[83] Webber, "Patterns of Membership," p. 590. Also see Stephen Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 1987), pp. 125-26.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Army in World War II, and Harold A. de Laessoe, who served with distinction in the First World War.[84] Most of these men served in the Army, but the Navy also was well represented by, among others, Vice-Admiral G.B. Powell, a recipient of the Gold Distinction Award, the party's highest honor, and Commanders Carlyon Bellairs and Charles Hudson. Powell, who was born in 1871, was one of the party's oldest members. Leonard Wise, an East London shopkeeper who served as a recruiter for the party and later District Leader of its Leytonstone branch, recalls that he joined the BUF partly because of its progam "for...military preparedness."[85] An ex-member told John Brewer after the war: "I joined the BUF because it was the only movement to put the interests of Britain and the Commonwealth first."[86] Seven of the nine candidates the BUF fielded in the Bethnal Green North East wards in the 1937 London County Council (LCC) elections were ex-servicemen.[87] Many BUF meetings were held especially for veterans. For example, William Phillips, one of the several dozen East End residents I

---

[84]For Yeats see letter from Leonard Wise to Prof. Richard Thurlow, 1996. British Union Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield. For more information on the Club consult Ted Grant, The Menace of Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It, Revolutionary Communist Party, London, 1948, pp. 4-7. Thwaites also served as chairman of the selection committee of the Right Book Club which appears to have been set up by the Conservative Central Office.

[85]Leonard Wise, "The East London Shopkeeper," in Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, p. 1

[86]John D. Brewer, Mosley's Men: The BUF in the West Midlands, Gower, Aldershot, 1984, p. 79

[87]Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 68.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

interviewed in 1999, recalls an enthusiastic meeting at the Sailors' Home in Stepney in 1936.[88] Selling poppies in commemoration of the dead of the First World War, laying wreaths on the graves of veterans and "national heroes" such as Shakespeare, singing "God Save the King" at meetings, and publishing passages from native writers who shared its anti-individualist philosophy became party customs.[89] A survey I have made from data compiled by W.F. Mandle indicates that out of a total of 103 prominent Blackshirts 60.9 percent had served in the military, including many of its most influential figures, such as Mosley, Joyce, Chesterton, and Fuller. [90] Table 2.3 below highlights some of the most prominent officers who joined the movement and the positions they attained while Table 2.4 lists notable BUF ex-servicemen. With the possible exception of a roster compiled by W.F. Mandle in 1966, these are the most comprehensive lists on this topic compiled to date.[91] Clearly, the BUF appealed to a

---

[88] Interview with William Phillips, April 11, 1999

[89] For example, Action quoted Oliver Goldsmith:

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
> Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade,
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

[90] W F. Mandle,"The Leadership of the British Union of Fascists," Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. XII, No. 12 (December 1966), pp. 370-83

[91] Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wide range of current and former military personnel. With the exception of the Conservatives, none of the major parties in the 1930s appears to have boasted as high a proportion of military personnel as members as the BUF.[92]

TABLE 2.3 NOTED BUF MEMBERS WHO SERVED AS MILITARY OFFICERS

Officer	*Position in the BUF*
Lt. W.R. Adams	PPC for Brighton
Commander J.H. Aitken	Administrative Officer, Dept. of Organisation
Capt. Erskine Athereley	Adminstrative Officer (Electoral)
Commander Carlyon Bellairs	Speaker and Writer
Capt. Charles Bentinck-Budd	National Inspector
Capt. Champney	Chief, Defense Force, Bournemouth
Capt. Vincent Collier	National Propaganda Officer, Scotland
Lt.-Col. H.E. Crocker	Officer in Charge of Home Counties East
Admiral Sir Barry Domville	Writer
Lt. Ian Hope Dundas	Chief of Staff
Capt. E.L.H. Dunkerton	Asst. National Inspecting Officer
Major-Gen. J.F.C. Fuller	Military Affairs Advisor and Writer
Commander T. Godman	Area Organiser for Gloucestershire
Capt. Robert Gordon-Canning	Foreign Affairs editor, Action
Lt. A.V. Gough	Sub-Branch Officer/Bristol
Capt. C.H.Green	PPC for Reading
Capt. H.B. Hammond	County Propaganda Officer, Devon

[92]The Conservatives seem to have had a comparable or greater number of military officers in their ranks. In the interwar era, many Conservative MPs belonged to the military. For example, in 1918 12 percent of the Conservative MPs were ex-servicemen. (Hew Strachan, The Politics of the British Army, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 33) In 1945, 30 of the 213 Conservatives elected to the Commons had made their living in the armed services. (Mellors, The British MP, p. 62).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 2.3 NOTED BUF MEMBERS WHO SERVED AS MILITARY OFFICERS (CONTINUED)

Officer	*Position in the BUF*
Capt. Frederick Haslam	PPC for Middleton
Capt. Urghuid A. Hick	Senior Administrator of London
Capt. Humphrey	District Leader/ Cheltenham
Commander C.E. Hudson	District Leader/Bognor Regis
Major Jocelyn Lucas	Writer
Maj.-Gen. Sir George MacMunn	Advisor, Indian Affairs
Vice-Admiral R. St. P. Parry	PPC for Westminster (Abbey)
Vice-Admiral G.B. Powell	PPC for Portsmouth
Capt. E.G.B. Priestley	Organiser/Brighton &Hove
Capt. H.E.B. Priestley	National Inspecting Officer, Yorkshire
Major Malcolm G. Sandeman	PPC for Colchester
Lt. Col. David Smith	member
Lt.-Col. C.S. Sharpe	Assistant Director-General of Organisation
Capt. Charles H. Steele	PPC for Guildford
Capt. J.H. Thomas	Organiser/Burgess Hill
Maj. Francis Yeats-Brown	member
Lt.-Col. James Walsh	PPC for West Lewisham
Lt.-Col. J.S. Woodruffe	PPC for Reading

TABLE 2.4 NOTED BUF EX-SERVICEMEN

Veteran	*Position in the BUF*
Sydney Allen	PPC for Leeds North-East
R.H. Asham Capell	PPC for Ecclesall
James A. "Bill" Bailey	LCC Candidate, Shoreditch
John Beckett	Director of Publications
C.H. Blacker	PPC for Chelmsford
Alex Broad	Speaker
W.K.A.J. Chambers-Hunter	PPC for Aberdeen North
Thomas Davies	PPC for Gorton
Reginald C. Globe	PPC for Nottingham East
Charles H. Hammond	PPC for Norwich

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 2.4 NOTED BUF EX-SERVICEMEN (CONTINUED)

Veteran	*Position in the BUF*
Y.H. Heyworth	PPC for Ashford
B.L. Howe	PPC for Liverpool (Walton)
William Hutton	District Treasurer/Edgbaston
R.G. Jebb	PPC for Dorset West
R. Jones	PPC for Stockport
Tommy Moran	National Organiser, Wales
R.T. Parkyn	PPC for Hulme
H.E.B. Priestley	National Inspecting Officer for Devon & Cornwall
Wilfred Risdon	Asst. Director of Organisation (Electoral)
J.R. Smeaton-Stuart	PPC for Southend
W.H. Symes	National Inspecting Officer for South Coast
Henry Williamson	member
L.A. Wright	Asst. National Inspecting Officer for Lancashire[93]

The British military class did not have a history of serving foreign interests. The presence of so many veterans in the BUF may have undermined to some extent the argument that the party served Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.[94]

Some of the BUF's economic proposals were similar to ones that had been offered many years earlier by late nineteenth and early twentieth century nativists and reformers, such as the Social Imperialists .[95] For decades, patriotic and xenophobic groups such as

---

[93]Chambers-Hunter won the Gold Distinction Award and Hammond earned the Bronze Distinction Award.
[94]Hew Strachan, The Politics of the British Army, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997, p 263

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the British Brothers League which was founded in the East End of London at the turn of the century had argued that immigrants, who tended to come from the lower-middle class and artisan strata were having a negative effect on ordinary Britons' standard of living.[96] Immigrants allegedly took jobs from native workers, undermined the native standard of living by working for lower wages, enjoyed unfair business advantages as a result of the Sunday Trading Laws, were gaining control of an increasing number of industries, represented a menace to the country's culture, and were unassimilable.[97] For example, in 1911 M.J. Landa observed in The Alien Problem and Its Remedy: "Immigrants...are... not merely a pest, but a pestilence--that they are flooding the country, evicting the English from home and industry, overcrowding the slums, turning whole districts into foreign colonies, engaging in sweated labour, underselling native products, undercutting native

---

[95]For example, Blatchford wrote in 1899: "Let us rule the people we have, let us teach the people we have, let us feed and clothe the people we have, let us save the people we have." (Robert Blatchford, Dismal England, Walter Scott, London, 1899, p. 110).

[96]The BBL was founded by Captain William Stanley Shaw, a London clerk.

[97]Arnold Henry White, a writer and BBL supporter who lived from 1848 to 1925, asserted, "As a promoter or expert in the flotation of companies, in deluding the public by inflating worthless securities with an artifical and effervescent value, and in the art of using smart society, there is no equal to the Jew...His power... is non-moral and immense." (Arnold White, Efficiency and Empire, Methuen, London, 1901, p. 81). White, who, like most BUF leaders, was extremely concerned about the future of the Empire also wrote, "The influence of bad foreign Jews on society is so real a danger to the Empire that it would be miraculous that the Press had ignored it, but for the remorseless control exercised... by Jews over the expression of public opinion hostile to them." (Ibid., p. 80).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

workers, filling the prisons, the workhouses, the asylums, and spreading disease.[98]

William Eden Evans Gordon, a backbench Conservative MP for Stepney from 1900 to 1907 and BBL leader, was one of the foremost proponents of restriction. He travelled to Eastern Europe and Russia to investigate the issue and in 1903 published his conclusions in a volume entitled The Alien Immigrant. In 1902 he told the Commons:

> Not a day passes but English families are ruthlessly turned out to make room for foreign invaders. Out they go to make room for Rumanians, Russians, and Poles. Rents are raised 50 to 100 per cent and a house, which formerly contained a couple of families living in comparative decency is made to contain four or five families living under conditions which baffle description...Among the thousands who came here there is a considerable proportion of bad characters and the competition with home industries extends to burglary and other cognate crimes...
>
> The working classes know that new buildings are erected not for them but for strangers from abroad; they see notices that no English need apply placarded on vacant rooms; they see the schools crowded with foreign children and the very posters and advertisements on the walls in a foreign tongue.[99]

In 1903, an English carpenter probably spoke for many manual workers when he asserted that the aliens were like "the waves of the sea, they simply keep spreading."[100] In June an anti-Jewish riot broke out in Bethnal Green in the inner East End of London, a

---

[98]M.J. Landa, The Alien Problem and Its Remedy, P.S. King, London, 1911, p. 29

[99]Evans Gordon, as quoted in Paul Foot, Immigration and Race in British Politics, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965, pp. 88-89.

[100]Anonymous carpenter, as quoted in in Theo Barker and Michael Drake, eds. Population and Society in Britain 1850-1980, New York University Press, New York, 1982, p. 178

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

borough where the BBL enjoyed considerable support.[101] Similar incidents occured in Leeds and Salford. In 1901 a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate immigration under the chairmanship of Lord James of Hereford, who came from a prominent East End family. Evans Gordon sat on the Commission which convened for two months in the spring of 1902 and interviewed nearly 200 witnesses, including James W. Johnson, the chairman of the BBL, Robert Parker, the ex-Deputy Chairman of the organization, and Theodor Herzl, the Zionist leader.[102] The Commission concluded:

> It is beyond dispute that many of the Aliens who arrive in this country are unskilled and without adequate means, and they are compelled to submit to conditions of labour which must have some influence in producing cheapness of price. The continuous stream of fresh arrivals produces a glut in the unskilled labour market, and a very severe competition in the lower grades of alien labour itself.[103]

The Commission recommended the passage of an Aliens Act which required immigrants to demonstrate that they had the financial means to establish themselves in the country, and make provisions for the hiring of more officials to monitor the flow of immigration. The Aliens Act went into effect in 1905. Two additional alien restriction

---

[101]Riots against the Jews occured in this borough in 1907 and 1917 as well. Many Conservatives also held a negative opinion towards the immigrants, especially the Jews. For example, Joseph Chamberlain, one of the most powerful figures in the party, asserted, "It is on the unskilled labourer that [the Jewish] immigrant produces the greatest mischief."

[102]Great Britain. Report of Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, Vol. III, London, 1903, p 292.

[103]Ibid., p 19

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

bills were enacted in 1914 and 1919. The BBL disintegrated shortly after the passage of the first Aliens Act.[104] The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the establishment of short-lived communist regimes in Bavaria and Hungary after the First World War, raised fears about the Jews' revolutionary propensities among British anti-Semites partly because many Communist leaders were Jews, such as Leon Trotsky, Gregori Zinoviev, the head of the Communist International, and Bela Kun, the Hungarian Communist leader.[105] Many xenophobes neglected to note that the majority of Jews in Britain supported the mainstream liberal parties.

These turn-of-the-century xenophobes helped to create a climate of fear, distrust, and hostility towards Jews and immigrants in the East End of London which still existed when the BUF made immigration restriction and anti-Semitism two of its major planks three decades later. The fascists used the slogan "Britain for the British" just as the

---

[104] Shortly before the passage of the Aliens Act, two of the BBL's leading supporters, Evans-Gordon and Sir Howard Vincent, MP, formed the Immigration Reform Association. Some BBL members followed them into this organization.

[105] In 1919 Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for War, sent to the Cabinet a letter from a businessman who had recently returned from the Soviet Union. It stated that Bolshevism was "engineered and managed by astute Jews, many of them criminals, and nearly every commissar in Russia is a Jew." (Anonymous businessman, as quoted in Gisela Lebzelter, "The Protocols in England," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. XXXI New Series, Nos. 47/48, 1978, p. 112). Five years later, Lord Curzon told a Leicester audience: "The Russian Government is...a small gang...most of them Jews in origin, who are preying like vultures on the bodies of that unhappy people." (Curzon, as quoted in Ibid., p. 117)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

British Brothers had used "England for the English."[106] It seems likely that one reason the BUF enjoyed such rapid growth in the inner boroughs of the East End of London was due to the xenophobic and anti-Semitic spirit that had existed there since at least the nineteenth century. The fascists might have been wise to lay greater stress on the ideological parallels it had with xenophobic and nationalist Britons in the past. For example, both the BUF and BBL used populist and nationalist themes to attract supporters. Both were founded during periods of massive immigration from Central Europe Both wrapped themselves in the flag. Both welcomed Britons of all social classes to their anti-alien cause. Both fostered an attitude of "us" vs. "them." Both enjoyed their greatest support in the East End among lower middle-class and middle-class natives. Both made reducing government corruption and bolstering social welfare programs goals.[107]

Several leading nativists who participated in the immigration restriction campaign in the early 1900s later wrote for BUF journals or became admirers of the party. These men included Joseph Banister, Arthur Kitson, and Lt. Col. A.H. Lane. None became official

---

[106]The National Front employed the same slogan in the 1970s. For a brief analysis of racism in the East End see Christopher Husbands, " East End Racism," The London Journal, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Summer 1982), p. 13

[107] More than 60,000 Jewish immigrants obtained work permits between 1933 and 1937 (Action, October 29, 1938).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

members of the BUF, but each made intellectual contributions to the nativist tradition that the BUF embraced. Banister wrote many books and articles attacking Jews and immigrants, such as England Under the Jews (1901), Jews and the White Slave Traffic (1921), Our Judaeo-Irish Labour Party (1923), Our Alien Makers of Revolution (1925), London's Hyphenated Press, (1926), The Nasalite Plot Succeeds, (1931),and Foreign Ingrates: More British Blood and Money to be Squandered in their Defence. With the exception of a few volumes, these works were personally published.

Very little is known about his life, but since one of his first books was published in 1901, he was probably at least in his fifth or sixth decade in the 1930s.A long-time resident of London, he was still living in the metropolis until at least 1938. Banister seems to have found the fascists' positions on immigration and the Jews appealing. Like the BUF, Banister argued that Jews were revolutionists intent on overthrowing the British government and at the same time wealthy capitalists. Like the fascists, he seems to have found no contradiction in this argument. Banister was particularly concerned with the allegedly harmful effects that Jews had on culture, morals, and public sanitation. "The Semite," he wrote in England Under the Jews, "is chiefly noted for his blackmailing disposition, and his readiness to give publicity to swindling and to indecent

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

advertisements...If a disreputable play is produced it is invariably by some Jew."[108] Three decades later, the BUF asserted: "If imported Jewish films were banned and local Jewish producers...were prevented from distributing plays or indulging in propaganda and absurdities in the screen or stage...the entertainment world, including the entertainers and the entertained would be gainers."[109] Like the BUF, Banister blamed anti-Semitism on the Jews. In 1901, a year when Jewish immigrants were physically attacked in the East End, Banister observed:

> It is the Jews who are trying to start an anti-Semitic crusade in England. When they place themselves in opposition to the interests of the British people, as they have done in resisting the movement for stopping the importation of their unsavoury compatriots, and the consignments of trachoma, spotted fever,cancer lupus, leprosy, and favus they bring with them, it is the duty of every Englishman to place himself in opposition to the Jews. They are fond of describing themselves as a nation. This, of course, is exactly what they are.[110]

In the extensive survey I have made of the published and unpublished material relating to the BUF, I discovered that Banister, who lived in London in the late thirties, sent nearly a dozen letters on nativist and anti-Semitic topics to the editors of Blackshirt and

---

[108]Banister, England Under the Jews, p. 32. Banister also asserted, "The introduction of foreign women for immoral purposes is carried on, as is the white slave traffic everywhere, chiefly, if not entirely, by Jews."(Banister, England Under the Jews, as quoted in Panikos Panayi, Immigration, Ethnicity, and Racism in Britain, 1815-1945, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994, p. 154).

[109]Blackshirt, February 15, 1935.

[110]For accounts of these anti-Semitic riots in the East End and the parallels they have to the disorder the BUF instigated in East London, see, for example, the Eastern Post, May-December 1901

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Action.[111] These letters were published without comment in the letters to the editor section of these newspapers. In 1936, he wrote: "As our Government has never able or willing to stop the migration of Jews, even of the least desirable sort, to this country, the Arabs can hardly expect it to stop the jewish influx into Palestine."[112] In a letter published the following year he asserted, "No Jewish or coloured doctors should be allowed to be present at operations on, or have anything to do with English or other white women patients. No jewish or coloured students should be allowed in the women's wards, and no jews be allowed to serve on hospital commitees." I have also found that some Blackshirts read his books.[113] Curiously, few scholars have explored the parallels between the ideas of this prolific xenophobe and the British fascists. This is surprising in view of the similar opinions Banister and the BUF held on a variety of topics such as immigration, race, international finance, and Britain's declining status as an international

---

[111] Letters he wrote appeared in Blackshirt, November 27, 1937, and Action, August 6, September 3, and November 5, 1938. Although Banister seems to have had a favorable opinion of Mosley in the thirties, he condemned him in 1925 for meeting Jews of the Russian Embassy. (Joseph Banister, Our Alien Makers of Revolution, Joseph Banister, London, 1925, p. 7)

[112] Action, July 30, 1936.

[113] For example, Henry J.H. Bartlett, a member from Devon wrote to a fellow member: "Will you be good enough to send me the following book. Jews and the White Slave Traffic, 2d." (Letter from Bartlett to an unidentified member dated April 1936 in Robert Saunders Papers).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

power.[114]

Kitson, who was born in America in 1860, was a successful engineer and manufacturer who assailed capitalism and international financiers in a host of books and articles. These included A Scientific Solution of the Money Question (1895), A Fraudulent Standard: An Exposure of the Fraudulent Character of Our Monetary Standard (1917), and Unemployment, The Cause and a Remedy (1921). He later served as President of the British Banking and Currency Reform League. Some of his ideas foreshadowed the BUF's. For example, in Trade Fallacies (1917) Kitson stated that businesses "should be directed by the State, the Capital-owner and Labour."[115] In the same volume he argued

---

[114]A few scholars have analyzed Banister's career. See Kenneth Lunn, "Political Anti-Semitism Before 1914. Fascism's Heritage," in Lunn and Thurlow, eds. British Fascism, pp. 20-40 and Colin Holmes, "Champion of 'English Race Feeling' Joseph Banister's Anti-Semitism," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 4, No. 4 (July-August 1970).

[115]Arthur Kitson, Trade Fallacies: A Criticism of Existing Mehods and Suggestions for a Reform Towards National Prosperity, P.S. King, London, 1917, pp. 21-12. In 1913 he stated:

> The world's masters of to-day are not found wearing epauletes, swords, and cocked hats, riding at the head of armies... The world's rulers are men mainly conspicuous by their noses, who occupy quiet offices at the backs of the great banking houses of London, Paris, New York, Berlin, and Vienna... Your modern Napoleon is a moneylender, a credit dealer, a direct descendant of those whom Christ drove from the Temple!... By the imposition of the gold standard--which the Jew moneylenders have fastened upon the world within the past 40 years--trade has...degenerated into a merciless struggle for gold.

(Arthur Kitson, "The 20th Century Napoleon," New Age, July 24, 1913, pp. 357, 359). A biography of Kitson is L. Wise, Arthur Kitson, Holborn, London, 1946. Also consult Richard C. Thurlow, "The Return of Jeremiah: The Rejected Knowledge of Sir Oswald Mosley in the 1930s," in Lunn and Thurlow, eds. British Fascism, pp. 104-105.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that "consumption, demand and supply [should]increase in the same proportion."[116] The ideal economic system was one that utilized the efficiency of individuals and the organizing powers of the state, a view the BUF shared: "Every industrial establishment should...be directed by a representative of the State, the Capital-owner and Labour respectively."[117] Many of Kitson's letters and articles appeared in the New Age, an avant-garde literary journal edited by A.J. Orage and The Age of Plenty, an economics journal sympathetic to fascism which was published from 1926 until the mid-thirties.[118] He wrote at least one article for Blackshirt entitled, "A Conspiracy of War: Arthur Kitson Examines the Anti-German Press."[119] BUF bookshops--which were located in many major cities--carried several of his works, including The Bankers' Conspiracy! Which Started the World Crisis. [120] When he died in 1937, the obituary published by the BUF praised him as an original and notable thinker.

---

[116]Kitson, Trade Fallacies, p. 263
[117]Ibid., p. 211
[118]See, for example, "The Money God," Age of Plenty, Vol. II, No. 1 (January-March 1935) Also consult "The Morass of Currency Problems," Blackshirt, February 4, 1935. For more information on the New Age see Wallace Martin, The New Age under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1967
[119]Blackshirt, December 7, 1934.
[120]Action, May 29, 1937

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Colonel Arthur Henry Lane, who had served with Lord Milner in South Africa in the early 1900s, produced several nativist and anti-semitic books and pamphlets in the inter-war years, including The Alien Menace (1928), which went into five editions and attracted attention both inside and outside Parliament. One reason the BUF may have appealed to Lane and other military men was that it offered a feeling of community that they felt was lacking in civilian life.[121] Lane, who was born in 1868, was a former member of the Britons, a small ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic organization founded by Henry Hamilton Beamish in 1919. He wrote many leters to the BUF which were printed in its press attacking Jews, Communists, and Freemasons. In his view these groups sought to destroy British institutions and establish a world government with themselves

---

[121] Some veterans at the turn-of-the-century had felt the same way about the BL which also had success reruiting ex-servicemen. One veteran asserted: "The Government might have forgotten the men who died for Britain: the Blackshirts have not." (Blackshirt, March 8, 1935). The first verse of the BUF 'Marching Song' gave expression to this theme:

> Comrades: the voices of the dead battalions
> Of those who fell that Britain might be great
> Join in our song, for they still march in spirit with us
> And urge us on to win the People's State

Remembrance Day, the day when those who had fallen in war were honored, was one of the cardinal dates in the fascist calendar, and images and stories about war memorials were often published in the BUF press, particularly during the war

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

at the head:

> The whole fabric of British life and inspiration is being steadily undermined by the effect of the Aliens' presence, his propaganda, and the practice which he has brought with him. In many cases... he is an undesirable or a criminal in his own country, from which he has been forced to flee in order to avoid punishment... So he comes here... and by his activities to deluge the country with a flood of bitterness and class-hatred, and to create industrial unrest, strikes, Socialism and Communism.[122]

In a letter to Blackshirt he complained: "Parliament has recently voted 1,500,000 pounds will be available each year for fifteen years to promote *emigration*. Why do we spend so much money in emigrating our best British people when, on the other hand, we admit the scum of Eastern Europe?"[123] In 1935 the BUF praised Lane as one of its "oldest supporters" and thanked him for his "great service" to the party.[124]

Another group the BUF had some success attracting were urban youths. The BUF published several regular columns on young people in Blackshirt and Action. An example was "On the Student Front," which appeared in the latter. The BUF's slogan, "Opportunity to all, but privilege to none" was not without appeal, especially to urban

---

[122]A.H. Lane, The Alien Menace: A Statement of the Case, A.H. King, London, 1933, p. 1. The 1933 edition was the fourth edition published in six years. Other volumes published in this period with a nativist theme were Lane's The Hidden Hand: A Plain Statement for the Man in the Street, M.C.B., London, 1917, and W.H. Wilkins, The Alien Invasion, 1892.

[123]Blackshirt, February 20, 1937. Italics used in the original text. The need to promote emigration was the theme the BUF emphasized as well. For example, Thomson held that it was only by "emigration from the overcrowded old Homeland of Britain to the under-populated new Homeland of Australia" that the latter could achieve "economic and military security." (Action, May 15, 1937)

[124]Blackshirt, January 25, 1935. Lane died in 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

youths from lower-income families.[125] Martin Pugh, an interpreter of modern British politics, has noted that in the early 1930s both Conservatives and National Labour MPs were "alarmed at seeing large numbers of younger people going over to the BUF." [126] Many youths discovered that at a time of high unemployment they possessed skills the party needed, such as the ability to break up opponents' meetings, defend BUF speakers, and disseminate literature. The BUF Youth Corps gave youngsters the opportunity to belong to a group and to feel valued for perhaps the first time in their lives. "It is up to us, the youth of Britain," one youngster wrote proudly, "to stand firm by our Leader in the fight against International Finance, its democratic puppets, and the world-wide menace of Communism" [127] "Youth," stated R.S. Arthur, the co-leader of the Youth Corps, "is tired of being bandied about by petty little political opportunists. It wants a better and a greater order of things, to go forward into a new era."[128]

---

[125] As one Labour Party journal observed, many Blackshirts were young, "discontented, disillusioned [members of the] "working-class." (R.P.D., "Notes of the Month," Labour Monthly, October 1933).

[126] Martin Pugh, The Making of Modern British Politics, Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, p. 281. All of the major political parties had already founded youth organizations. The CPGB's Young Communist League (Y.C.L.) was quite active in the East End of London, and published a newspaper called Challenge. Y.C.L. members were not required to join the Communist Party. The Communists also established the Young Pioneers of Great Britain for children. The Labour Party vastly expanded its recruiting among youth in the mid-thirties. The Labour League of Youth (LYY) was approximately 12,000 members-strong in the mid-1930s. (Discussion, Vol. I, No. 10, December 1936, p. 27). The Guild of Youth was the ILP's youth group. The League of Nations Union also boasted a youth organization.

[127] Blackshirt, July 24, 1937. Also see Peter Rossiter, "British Union Will End Class Snobbery," Action, March 25, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Many BUF branches were so anxious to recruit new members that they sometimes were unaware of, or admitted anyway, individuals with criminal backgrounds.[129] Some youngsters joined the BUF more for the camaraderie and socializing it offered than for what it stood for. Boisterous behavior and excessive use of alcohol were common in some branches, including several in the Midlands and the one in Shoreditch. These individuals helped give the BUF a well-deserved reputation for brutality. One miner recalled: "I saw the Mosleyites...the type of chap they attracted were what we call 'the corner ends.' the chap who would be standing around on the street corner. This type of chap had been used again and again. They were used during the 1926 stoppage. They were put in the uniform of 'Special Constable.' We know all about their antics. Fellas with no opinion at all, bruisers."[130] Terence Monaghan, a manual laborer, recalled in the 1970s: " The [Blackshirts]... I saw on Tyneside... were all known for what they were--they were a lot of villains." [131] Clement Attlee warned the Commons in 1934: "Sir Oswald Mosley is really introducing into this country ideas and methods that are

---

[128]Blackshirt, February 20, 1937?
[129]Robert Benewick, Political Violence and Public Order, Allen Lane, London, 1969, p 97
[130]Keith Armstrong and Huw Beynon eds., Hello?, Are You Working? Memories of the Thirties in the North East of England, Strong Words, South Wellfield, 1977, p. 63. The "stoppage" the miner refers to was the General Strike of 1926 which nearly shut the country down for several days.
[131]Ibid., p 15.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

entirely foreign to us... His is really the Italian method. It is the method of the gang."[132] The New Leader, the ILP paper, published a poem entitled, "Join the Fascists and Don't Think."[133]

The BUF had some success attracting several religious groups, such as Nonconformists and Catholics. People joined the BUF for a wide variety of reasons, some of which were not particularly well-thought out, one of the major points Thomas Linehan has made in his recent study, East London for Mosley. Catholics appear to have been no different than others in this respect. The BUF took pride in its ability to attract Catholics from all levels of society and it rejected suggestions that it appealed only to those from the lower classes. The fascists appear to have recruited a higher proportion of Catholics than any of the major parties with the possible exception of Labour. The BUF was particularly successful in recruiting Catholics in Lancashire, where Mosley owned

---

[132]Hansard, June 14, 1934, pp. 1929-32. Ernest Brown, the Secretary for Mines, termed the fascists "bullies." (Times, June 11, 1934). F C. Watkins, a Labour MP, told the House: "The BUF do not merely attack the Jews but anyone they see fit to pick a quarrel." (Hansard, Vol. 309, March 5, 1936, p. 1634).
[133]New Leader, March 2, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

considerable real estate, Yorkshire, and the East End of London.[134] A survey the BUF conducted in 1935 found that 12 percent of its leaders were Catholics, slightly less than the proportion of Catholics in the general population.[135] The actual percentage may have been higher since some individuals did not wish to reveal their religion. Some people believe that Catholics comprised a larger element in the party than the approximately ten percent usually reported. For instance, Bulwark, a Scottish paper, mistakenly wrote that the majority of "key" men in the BUF in 1935 were Catholics. Many Catholic members traced their ancestry back to Ireland. Fascists of Irish descent included Joyce, E.G. "Mick" Clarke, B.D.E. Donovan, and Arthur Mason, leader of the Limehouse branch. The BUF established branches in Northern Ireland, although they remained small and

---

134 Stuart Rawnsley, who has completed a valuable study of BUF membership, states:

> The... percentage of Catholics was much higher [in the North] than the population as a whole. The leaders of Hull, Blackburn, and Bolton [three Northern cities] were Catholics, as was the leader in North Leeds. Several of the local leaders in Manchester were Catholics and the leader of the Arnside branch and the founder of the Nelson branch were both converts to Catholicism... Mosley's knickname [in the Leeds area] ... was 'the Pope.' Most of the members in Lancaster and Preston were Catholics. In fact, Protestants were said to be reluctant to join the movement in Preston because of the high numbers of Catholic members and in Liverpool there were even 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' branches. (Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," in Lunn and Thurlow, British Fascism, pp. 161-62.)

R. Coppock, a Labourite who was elected to the London County Council for Limehouse in March 1937 claimed that most people who voted for the BUF in Limehouse "were Catholics." (R. Coppock, as quoted in Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 83).

135 Blackshirt, May 17, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had very little impact on the politics of the region.[136] Many Catholics attained influential positions in the party, including Tommy Moran, an organizer in South Wales who led the organization after Mosley was interned in 1940, J.A. MacNab, sometime editor of The Fascist Quarterly, Charles Wegg-Prosser, leader of the Shoreditch branch and speaker, Clement "Peter" Bruning, a writer and popular speaker in the South, Leonard A. Mohan, the PPC for Epsom, Edward T. Ring, Assistant District Leader for Propaganda in Ilford, John Francis Sutherland, the parliamentary candidate for Finsbury and recipient of the Bronze Union Award, and John Charmley, leader of the Hull branch.[137]

The BUF used various strategies to attract Catholics. In his doctoral dissertation, Stuart Rawnsley argues that the attacks the Republicans and their allies, such as the Anarchists, made on the Catholic Church during the Spanish Civil War and the Blackshirts' support for the rebels caused some Catholics to join the BUF.[138] Rawnsley's argument appears to be correct and is consistent with what other scholars have found

---

[136]See James Loughlin, "Northern Ireland and British Fascism in the Inter-War Years," Irish Historical Studies, Vol. 29, No. 116 (November 1995), pp. 537-52.

[137]Mandle, "The Leadership of the British Union of Fascists," pp. 371-81.

[138] Stuart Rawnsley, "Fascism and Fascists in the 1930s--A Case Study of Fascism in the North of England in a Period of Political and Economic Change," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bradford, 1983. Also see his, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," in Lunn and Thurlow, British Fascism, and A.J. Hoover, God, Britain, and Hitler in World War II, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 1999, p. 71

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

about the relationship between fascism and the Catholic Church, including Seymour Martin Lipset.[139] A modest number of Catholic clergy joined the BUF, particularly during the Spanish Civil War. Perhaps another reason Catholics supported the BUF was that it promised Church representatives seats in the House of Notables which it wanted to establish in lieu of the House of Lords.[140]

Some Catholic clerics were unsympathetic to the BUF. For example, Monsignore Canon Ring of Stepney in the East End of London asserted that it was an "outrage on the Catholic Church to associate it with the repulsive 'isms' of fanatic champions, or to imply it has any sympathy for race hatred."[141] Cardinal Arthur Hinsley warned, "If...Catholics...belong to the British Union of Fascists, their duty is to make sure in conscience that they do not accept or favour...the pagan principle that the State is supreme."[142] Many Blackshirts, including Mosley, were either agnostics or atheists. The BUF does not seem to have paid much attention to the religious affiliation of its members with the exception of Jews.

---

[139]Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man: Social Bases of Politics, Doubleday, Garden City, 1960.
[140]Action, October 29, 1938.
[141]Ring, as quoted in Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 88.
[142]Hinsley, as quoted in Hoover, God, Britain and Hitler, p. 71. Also see James Flint, "Must God Be Fascist? English Catholic Opinion," Church History, Vol. 56, No. 9 (September 1987)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mosley ruled the party with a firm hand. He formulated strategy, supervised virtually all of its major activities closely, and personally hired many subordinates. There was never any question where ultimate authority lay. The party's errors, such as its argument that a greater economic crisis than the one which struck in the late 1920s was imminent, can be laid at his door. However, the BUF did not speak with one voice. Mosley permitted his followers to freely exchange ideas on a myriad number of issues. His lieutenants sometimes took contradictory positions on a variety of topics. For instance, while Mosley favored giving the proposed Investment Board considerable authority Raven Thomson advocated a less powerful body in his book, The Coming Corporate State. And while Mosley suggested that the Leader of the proposed fascist state should share power with his lieutenants, Thomson and Joyce proposed giving him more authority. Some members were in favor of women working outside the home, such as Thomson, while others were against it. Some fascists called for forging closer ties with the Conservatives, like Dr. Robert Forgan, the Deputy-Director, while others condemned the Conservatives as a party of reaction, such as Thomson and Beckett. Some Blackshirts opposed helping the Jews establish a homeland in Palestine like Capt. Robert Gordon-Canning, the Foreign Affairs Editor of Action, while others favored setting up Jewish states in the Mideast and Uganda, such as Clement Bruning, the Parliamentary

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Candidate for Wood Green.

One reason BUF officials occasionally took divergent positions on issues is that they hailed from a wide range of social, political, and economic backgrounds. It will be useful here to give a sketch of several of Mosley's lieutenants, some of whom enjoyed his confidence while others did not. These men have up to now not received the attention they deserve. For example, no biographies of these individuals have yet appeared, with the exception of Thomson and Chesterton.

Alexander Raven Thomson, a short, chubby Scot born in 1900, was one of Mosley's closest and most trusted advisors. He possessed an independent income that permitted him to follow his intellectual pursuits. Prior to joining the BUF in 1933 he had studied economics in several German and American universities. Thomson had an extroverted personality and eclectic academic interests. Few Blackshirts possessed his intellectual curiosity and breadth of learning. He was particularly fond of economics and philosophy. He was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Oswald Spengler and in 1932, he published a study based partly on Spengler's philosophy, which he entitled Civilisation as Divine Superman. Thomson outlined his economic views in a wide range of articles and short pamphlets, including The Economics of British Fascism (1933), Cotton, Communists and Socialists Exposed (1935), and Big Fish and Little Fish:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Finance, Democracy and the Shopkeeper (1937). He was the party's leading authority on corporate economics with the possible exception of Mosley. His The Coming Corporate State (1937) is the most comprehensive discussion of the corporate state by any British fascist. Thomson began his career in the BUF as an unpaid speaker in London. His oratorical skills, energy, and learning won him wide respect, particularly in the East End. Like many fascists, he was sympathetic to the plight of low-income workers, which helps to explain his popularity there. His ascent in the party was rapid. In January 1934 he became Deputy Director of Publicity and later that year was appointed Director of Policy and a member of the Policy Directorate, the party's highest-ranking body. [143] In March 1937 he was one of only six Blackshirts selected to run in the party's first major electoral contest, for a seat on the London County Council. He became the editor of the British Union Quarterly, its leading journal, after J.A. MacNab was expelled from the organization in 1937, and he also edited Action in the late thirties. Although his editorial duties demanded a large share of his time after 1937, Thomson continued to give speeches across the country. In 1940, he had an affair with

---

[143] Besides Mosley and Thomson, the members of this body in 1935 were. E. Atherley, John Beckett, B.E.D "Bill" Donovan, Ian Dundas, Neil Francis-Hawkins, Robert Gordon-Canning, J.H. Hone, William Joyce, W.J. Leaper, E. Hamilton Piercy, R.A. Plathen, Wilfred "Bill" Risdon, and C.S Sharpe.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Olive Hawks, an attractive woman born in 1919 or 1920, who became the last Chief Women's Organiser. He was one of the first members detained during the Second World War under Defence Regulation 18B. He married a German woman and had a son and daughter from this union.[144] Unlike most ex-BUF officials, he joined the post-World War Two Union Movement (UM), which was patterned after the BUF, and he edited Union, one of its newspapers. Although his association with Mosley spanned more than two decades, Thomson seems to have had no serious disagreements with Mosley. The latter, who did not usually praise his lieutenants, spoke very highly of him. [145] Thomson's health declined sharply in the fifties--perhaps owing partly to his wartime confinement. He suffered a heart attack and possibly a nervous breakdown in this period. On October 30, 1955 he died of cancer.

A.K. Chesterton, who was born in South Africa in 1899, was another key Blackshirt. Prior to joining the party in late 1933, he had served with distinction in the First World War in France and in German East and Central Africa for which he received the Military Cross. As Robert Skidelsky notes, Chesterton's life "offered...[an] example of

---

[144]His son Eric was a pilot in the R.A.F. and was killed in action over Belgium in 1941 The latter's death apparently affected him profoundly.

[145]Consult the obituary of Thomson by Mosley in Union, November 5, 1955

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that passionate...patriotism so characteristic of the B.U.F."[146] After the war Chesterton, who was the cousin of G.K. Chesterton, worked as a literary critic and journalist in Devon and later as public relations officer at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. His first position in the BUF was Officer in Charge of the Midlands, a post he discharged with energy and dedication.[147] Chesterton contributed many articles and editorials on a wide range of topics to BUF periodicals between 1933 and 1937. In 1935 he became National Press Officer of the BUF, in 1936 editor of Blackshirt, and in 1937 editor of Action. Chesterton was a racial anti-Semite and vigorous proponent of the Empire, who saw the latter as one of the foundations of peace and civilization in the world. He suggested that by forging closer ties with the Empire, Britain could recapture its position as the leading economic and naval power in the world. His rhetoric about British altruism in the colonies, however, ignored the fact that with colonial aspirations for independence on the rise wars were required to maintain Britain's domination of these overseas territories. Chesterton took extreme stances on many issues. He was convinced,

---

[146] Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, p. 343.

[147] The title Officer in Charge was changed in 1934 to Branch Officer. In 1937 the term Branch Officer was changed to District Officer as part of the party's overall effort to demilitarize the organization in order to avoid further censure after passage of the Public Order Act in 1936. District Officers were also known as District Leaders.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for instance, that Jews had allied themselves with the Communists to destroy the British Empire and to set up a world government of their own, an argument which the Morning Post and reactionaries like the Duke of Northumberland and Mrs. Nesta Webster had made since the First World War.[148] He also suggested that if the BUF came to power it should deal very harshly with its enemies. Chesterton suffered from alcoholism, which he seems to have acquired during the war. The units he served in engaged in fierce combat with the Germans and he witnessed many atrocities. Like many soldiers, he seems to have used alcohol to help numb the mental anguish he felt. Mosley paid for his treatment, a sign of the high regard he had for him. In the late thirties, Chesterton became embittered by the growing influence of a BUF faction led by Neil Francis-Hawkins, the Director-General who held executive authority over all administrative and political structures as head of the Department of Organisation which was created in January 1936.[149] Chesterton almost resigned in 1937, but changed his mind when the party suffered a series of setbacks, including the enactment of the Public

---

[148]For example, H.A. Gwynne, the paper's editor, asserted in 1920: "The Jews are trying to wreck the British Empire." (Gwynne, as quoted in Gisela Lebzelter, "Anti-Semitism and the British Radical Right," Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nichols, eds., Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany Before 1914, Macmillan, London, 1981, p. 98). Also see Morning Post, July 26, 1920.

[149]There were three Assistant Director-Generals under this new scheme. Of these Donovan, was the closest to Mosley. One of Francis-Hawkins' many significant contributions was organizing meetings at major halls across the country, such as Olympia and the Royal Albert Hall.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Order Act, which prevented its members from wearing their distinctive black shirt. He finally left the organization in April 1938. After the war Chesterton became literary advisor to Lord Beaverbrook, the press mogul, and served on the editorial staff of Truth, a popular monthly. In the fifties, he founded the United Empire Loyalists, a small fascist group, and in 1966, he became the first chairman of the National Front (NF), an ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic organization that briefly, in the 1970s, became the fourth-largest party in the country. Many ex-Blackshirts joined the NF.

Robert Forgan, a Scot who was born in 1891, became the Deputy-Director of the BUF when it was founded. Forgan, a medical doctor and expert on venereal diseases, had been one of five Labour MPs who left the party in early 1931 and helped Mosley found the New Party. Forgan served as one of Mosley's advisors in the New Party and as the latter's candidate in the Renfrew West constituency in the 1931 General Election. His major interest appears to have been administration not ideology, and he helped establish the BUF organizational framework. He was a key figure in establishing the party in Scotland. Forgan resigned from the BUF in the latter half of 1934, according to his own testimony because of the rise of anti-Semitism in its ranks. The Special Branch suggested that the real reason he left was because he was dissatisfied with the way the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

party organized its finances.[150] John Beckett's son, Francis, has suggested that he was disgusted with Mosley's leadership, a view he bases on Security Service reports.[151] The BUF press, which typically put the best spin on internal matters, stated that Forgan resigned because he was ill. Forgan's concern with the rise of anti-Semitism in the party may have been the major reason he left the organization. In 1934 Forgan privately held talks with Jewish leaders in London in an effort to resolve differences between the Jews and fascists. The talks bore no fruit.

Forgan's successor, was Ian Hope Dundas, the ex-Director of Finance and Publicity, who served from 1934 to 1936. Francis-Hawkins, who replaced Dundas, held relatively moderate views and was more interested in administrative issues than political ones. An ex-opthalmic instrument maker, he suffered from bronchial asthma, seldom spoke in public, and preferred to work behind-the-scenes. Francis-Hawkins was an extremely hard worker and had a humorless personality. Under his leadership, party regulations were enforced more strictly and many members were either disciplined or expelled. Blackshirts complained that Francis-Hawkins, or "Steel Distinction" as he was also known, acted like a martinet. For example, in October 1934, several Bristol members

---

[150]Public Record Office , HO144/2014.
[151]Francis Beckett, "The Rebel Who Lost His Cause," History Today, Vol. 44, No. 5 (May 1994), p. 42.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

resigned in protest over the harsh discipline, including A.V. Gough, the deputy administrative officer. Forgan had a more easy-going nature.[152]

Major-General J.F.C. Fuller, who was born in 1878 was educated at Malvern and the Royal Military College at Sandhurst and joined the Army in 1898. After serving as chief general staff officer of the Tank Corps in the First World War, Fuller became military assistant to the chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1926 and senior staff officer in the 2nd Division. A noted military theorist, he published many books on military strategy and history , including The Reformation of War (1923), Generalship: Its Diseases and Their Cure (1932-33), and The First of the League Wars: Its Lesson and Omens (1936). [153] In 1930 he was promoted to major general. Two years later he resigned from the Army and joined the BUF, quickly becoming one of Mosley's most

---

[152]R.R. Bellamy, who sometimes used the *nom de plume* "Pluto," has left a revealing portrait of "the Doctor" in his official history of the party which is still unpublished.

> At heart [Forgan] remained a democrat, [who] was getting more and more out of his depth in this fascist movement with its authority and discipline, and administrative methods more akin to those of an army orderly room than to a political office He was a kind man, who lacked judgment of character...It was said by the humorists that if someone minus a seat to his pants and soles to his shoes, with a load of debt, several convictions for fraud, and abandoned wife and children who had been substituted by someone else's wife, could manage to get past the orderlies into [his] office, he would emerge again in due course with senior staff appointment and, for those days, a substantial salary

(R.R.Bellamy, "We Marched with Mosley," pp. 60-61). The manuscript, which is quite lengthy, is held at the Special Collections Department, University of Sheffield.

[153]The editor of the Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette stated that he was "generally acknowledged to be the greatest military writer in the world to-day." (Capt. J R. Kennedy, as quoted in Action, April 23, 1936)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

valuable advisors and the fascists' defense expert. In 1935 he became military correspondent for the Daily Mail and reported on events in Ethiopia, Spain, Germany, and elsewhere for the mainstream and BUF press. Like Chesterton and Joyce, he was an outspoken champion of the Empire and called for strengthening ties with it in many books and articles, including, Empire Unity and Defence (1934) and What the British Union Has to Offer (1937). Fuller was a long-time associate of Alistair Crowley, the English mystical poet and student of the occult. He was also a virulent anti-Semite who was convinced that Jews and Communists were working together to destroy the Empire and substitute for it a world state.[154] Fuller had a keen mind and "impatience [for] his intellectual inferiors."[155] Mosley recognized his abilities and attempted to find ways for him to improve the BUF. [156] In January 1935 Fuller and F.M. Box, the Director of Organisation, recommended that the party centralize its organization and take a more moderate stance on most issues. Their goal was to make the party more appealing to a

---

[154] In Fuller's racist view, "Wherever the Jews have gone, Satan has followed to heel." Fuller, as quoted in Kenneth Lunn, ed. Hosts, Immigrants, and Minorities. Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society. St. Martin's, New York, 1980, p. 43.

[155] Trevor N. Dupuy and Arnold C Dupuy, "J F C. Fuller," in Trevor N. Dupuy, Curt Johnson, and David L. Bongard, The Harper Encyclopedia of Military Biography. Harper Collins, New York, 1992, p. 268

[156] For instance, he told Fuller in the early thirties: "You can help immensely, not only in our Organisation, but in the development of our policy, and I would very much like to have your detailed criticism of it." (Mosley, as quoted in Anthony John Trythall, 'Boney' Fuller: The Intellectual General 1878-1966. Cassell, London, 1977, p. 182).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wider segment of the electorate. Mosley, who was always searching for ways to expand the party's following, accepted their suggestions, but was either unwilling or unable to put them into effect. Henceforth the boundaries of party districts corresponded roughly with parliamentary constituencies which simplified the party's electoral efforts. In 1937 Fuller was selected to run against Duff Cooper, the Minister of War, in the St. George's (Westminster) parliamentary constituency, but he resigned in the late thirties before the election was held because he felt, quite rightly, that the party had done too little to moderate its image and that Mosley ran the organization in too authoritarian a fashion.[157]

Charles Wegg-Prosser was another prominent Blackshirt. Educated at Oxford and the holder of a law degree, he was the descendant of a distinguished Catholic family. A tall, well-spoken man with a refined personality, he was, unlike most prominent Blackshirts, a fairly appealing figure. In 1936 Wegg- Prosser was appointed District Organiser in Shoreditch, one of several boroughs in the East End of London where the party obtained won a wide following. However, he had difficulty asserting his authority in this district which was torn with ethnic violence and had quite a few rough

---

[157]Forgan and Chesterton shared this view as well.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

characters.[158] Owing to opposition to him in the district-- particularly among the rougher element--National Party Headquarters (NHQ) replaced him with W. A. Clarkson in the summer of 1936. The following year Wegg-Prosser became one of only six members selected to run in the London County Council elections. His fellow candidate in Limehouse was Anne Brock Griggs, the Women's Section propaganda leader. They obtained nearly 20 percent of the poll, one of the best results in the party's history. On the heels of this effort, Wegg-Prosser, Raven Thomson, Bill Risdon, the Chief Election Agent and first Director of Propaganda, Clement Bruning, and E.G. "Mick" Clarke, a young manual worker who had helped organize the party in the East End of London, embarked on a speaking tour throughout the country.[159] Mosley intended to select Wegg-Prosser as a parliamentary candidate, but the latter resigned in late 1937 or early 1938. In his letter of resignation, Wegg-Prosser alleged that Mosley and his advisors were more interested in blaming Jews for the country's problems than finding solutions to them. After his break with the Blackshirts, Wegg-Prosser married a Jewish woman and wrote a short pamphlet highly critical of the Blackshirts. Probably in hopes of

---

[158]These included criminals like Harry Gold, who had been convicted of housebreaking, assault, and larceny, Ernest Williams, with eight convictions for larceny and receiving, and William Cox, who was guilty of larceny and housebreaking.On one occasion several angry fascists hurled Wegg-Prosser through a window.

[159]Action, June 5, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

embarassing the fascists, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the most influential Jewish organization in the country, published the work.

Capt. Robert Gordon-Canning, a tall, handsome aristocrat with a no-nonsense demeanor and somewhat aloof personality, was a descendant of George Canning, the nineteenth-century Prime Minister, and of Lord Byron. Born in 1888, he was educated at Eton and Sandhurst, Mosley's alma mater. He possessed a deep knowledge of international affairs, especially the Middle East, from his service as an officer in the Army when he won the Military Cross. He was very sympathetic to the Arab cause. Indeed, in the early 1920s he volunteered to serve in the forces of Abd-El-Krim, a Moroccan rebel leader, and later worked on his staff. Gordon-Canning joined the party in January 1934 apparently after reading The Greater Britain.[160] Previously, he belonged to the Conservative Party. He wrote many articles and short pamphlets for the organization. Among his works were Saviours of England (1933), a short play, The Inward Strength of a National Socialist, (probably 1936) and Mind Britain's Business (1938). In the mid-thirties, he became foreign editor of Action and Blackshirt. Gordon-Canning does not seem to have taken part in many of the public activities of the

---

[160]Program of Fourth Leader Meeting, Royal Albert Hall, Spring 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

party nor to have been very popular with his colleagues. Unlike many BUF officials, he apparently gave few public speeches. In the late thirties he married an Australian woman with whom he had a child. Around the same time he quarreled with Mosley, left the BUF, and joined the British People's Party, a small organization founded by Lord Tavistock, a proponent of social credit theories. During the war he was detained under Defence Regulation 18B.[161]

Many Blackshirts were former socialists. These included John Beckett, John Scanlon, a friend of ILP Leader Jimmy Maxton from Glasgow, Wilfred Risdon, an ex-member of the South Wales Miners Federation, W.J. Leaper, the assistant editor of Fascist Week and editor of Blackshirt, Henry J. Gibbs, who reviewed books for Action, G.J. Sutton, the head of the Research Department who had served as Mosley's Private Secretary since 1920, and Charles H. Hammond, a prominent Norfolk member.[162] In the early twenties Beckett had shared a house with Clement Attlee, then an MP for Limehouse, and had served on his campaign staff. Later in the decade Beckett had become Labour MP for Gateshead and then Peckham.

---

[161]The child became ill during this period, but the authorities did not permit him to leave the detention center to care for it. It died shortly afterwards. (Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 13, 1999)

[162]The Decline and Fall of the Labour Party traced the fall of the Second Labour Government. In this volume Scanlon explored one of the central themes of BUF domestic policy, namely that workers should not place their trust in the Labour Party.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Some BUF leaders were former Communists. Among these were Thomson, Francis-Hawkins, J.L. Shepherd, the Circulation Manager for Action and the parliamentary candidate for Islington West, Cyril Pertwee, the parliamentary candidate for Swansea West, Thomas C. Waters, the East End Area Propaganda Officer, Thomas Davies, the parliamentary candidate for Gorton, Frank R. Hawke, the District Leader of Norwood in South London, and Arthur Beavan, a member of Mosley's elite bodyguard known as the "I" Squad.

Mosley was not a good judge of character. More than a few of the assistants he chose were either poorly qualified, disloyal, or brought disrepute to the organization.[163] Robert Skidelsky described Mosley as "a soft sell for any adventurer or petty criminal hoping to use the movement for personal gain or personal satisfaction.[164] Jeff Wallder, a

---

[163]Among the fascists who were ill-suited for their positions were Anne Brock-Griggs, Chief Women's Organiser, who was relieved of her duties due to "incompetence" shortly before the war and Charles Wegg-Prosser, the District Leader for Shoreditch, who was unable to maintain order in his branch.

[164]Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, p. 342. An anecdote Wallder shared with me supports this view

> O.M. liked the work of an able, loyal man in the UM movement. It was rumoured... that the man, named [L.A. "Alf"] Flockhart [the Organising Secretary of UM], had been sexually molesting young boys in the Drum Corps. People were taking their sons out of the organization because of this. A newspaper printed this information. The paper printed the facts. O.M. read the newspaper reports and dismissed them believing that this was another newpaper out to to get him and his friends. When the trial came up O.M. defended this individual as a character reference. Flockhart was found guilty... He eventually got out [of prison] and committed the same criminal acts again. It was only after [he] was sent to prison a second time that O.M. admitted he had been a fool.

(Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 11, 1999). Also see Union Incorporating Action, December 2, 1950

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

member of the post-war Union Movement (UM) and of the Friends of Oswald Mosley (F.O.M.), the group UM members founded after Mosley's death in 1980, has termed the latter's inability to judge character "one of the great problems of his life," which is no exaggeration. [165] William Joyce, who some members hoped would succeed Mosley, is an example of Mosley's knack for selecting dubious characters to help him lead the BUF. Born in Brooklyn in 1904 , he and his family moved shortly afterwards to England. His parents, who were working-class Irish, sent him to a Jesuit school in Galway. He later attended Birkbeck College, London University, where he served as President of the Conservative Society and graduated with an honors degree in English Literature. During the Irish Rebellion he served as a Black and Tan. In the twenties he joined the British Fascists (BF), an organization formed by Miss Rotha Lintorn-Orman, a young spinster who admired Mussolini and was the granddaughter of a Field Marshal. Lintorn-Orman, a dairy farmer from Somerset, founded the BF in 1923 in order to combat communism, the Jews, and atheism. The BF was the largest fascist organization in the country before the BUF. Unlike the Blackshirts, the BF did not organize itself in a paramilitary fashion

---

[165]Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 11, 1999

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

or borrow many symbols from the Continental fascists. The BF published several newspapers and a host of books and pamphlets by influential figures on the extreme right, such as Nora Webster, the author of The Need for Fascism in Great Britain and a frequent contributor to the Morning Post, a far-right daily paper. Many British Fascists became Blackshirts besides Joyce, including Neil Francis Hawkins, a member of its Grand Council, who became the Director of Organisation, E. Mandeville Roe, an authority on the corporate economy who had edited the BF newspaper, and Millicent Bullivant, the West Ham Women's District Leader. As Kenneth Lunn notes, the BF "created a basis from which the BUF was able to launch its own political programme in the 1930s."[166] The BF dissolved in the mid-thirties partly due to the exodus of so many of its members to the BUF.[167] In 1925 Joyce broke with the British Fascists and joined the Conservative Party. Some reports suggest that he had contacts with the domestic Security Service (MI5) around this time. He gradually became convinced that the Conservatives served the interests of international financiers. He left the Conservatives in 1931 and joined the BUF in March 1933. Joyce's mother was an Irish Protestant and he

---

[166]Kenneth Lunn, "British Fascism Revisited: A Failure of Imagination?" in Cronin, ed. The Failure of British Fascism, p. 171.

[167]The BUF obtained the BF's membership lists in the early thirties, which naturally helped its efforts to recruit British Fascists.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had a great admiration for British institutions, particularly the Empire. In his view, Jews and communists posed a dire threat to the British way of life and he attacked them relentlessly in print and on platforms across the country. Like Chesterton and Gordon-Canning, he was convinced that Jews were biologically inferior to Christians and were damaging the country's genetic pool and culture through intermarriages and the relaxation of informal social restrictions against them. While stewarding a BF meeting in 1924, Joyce was slashed across the face with a knife, allegedly by a Jew. He had a lively intelligence with interests that included philology, psychology, and political science. He also possessed outstanding oratorical skills, and rose rapidly in the organization. Joyce became the chief instructor of speakers and one of the leaders of the Research Department. In the mid-thirties the party employed more than a half-dozen paid speakers, one of them being Joyce. He also wrote many articles for Blackshirt and Action, and penned several columns in Action, including "Searchlight over Britain" and "The World, The Flesh--and Financial Democracy." In 1934, he succeeded Risdon as Director of Propaganda, a post he was well suited for by ability and temperament. By the mid-thirties, Joyce had become the party's most popular speaker next to Mosley, sometimes appearing on platforms five or six nights a week. A short, muscular man with an aggressive personality and acerbic wit, he became a favorite of racial

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

anti-Semites and those who felt that Mosley was too concerned with staying within the boundaries of the law. In the mid-thirties, Joyce's relationship with Mosley-- which was never very close--soured. He and two of his anti-Semitic colleagues, Beckett and J.A. MacNab, who joined the party in April 1934, urged Mosley to take a more aggressive stance towards Jews, including organizing physical attacks on them if necessary. Mosley, who always intended to come to power legally and who seems to have had no strong feelings against Jews in spite of what he said about them publicly, rejected their advice. He does not seem to have had a high opinion of either Joyce or Beckett. [168] Mosley was no racial anti-Semite and he counted many Jews among his friends, including Harold Laski, the political scientist, and Sir Alfred Mond (later Lord Melchett), the former First Commissioner of Works and Zionist leader. As Gisela Lebzelter asserts, Mosley "cannot be justly summed up as a paranoid and insecure person, harbouring the traits typical of anti-Semites."[169] W.F. Mandle has stated that Mosley condoned racial anti-Semitism in the BUF but did not subscribe to it.[170] Neill

---

[168]For example in 1940 he called Beckett " a crook."(Mosley, as quoted in A.W Brian Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, Clarendon, Oxford, 1992, p. 137).

[169]Gisela Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939, Macmillan, London, 1979, p. 100, Geoffrey G. Field, "Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off: Recent Research on England," Wiener Library Bulletin, Special Issue, (1982), p. 31

[170]W F. Mandle, Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1968, p. 35

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nugent and Richard Thurlow have also suggested that anti-Semitism did not form a core element of Mosley's political thought.[171] After passage of the Public Order Act in 1936 Mosley gave Joyce, the BUF's most prominent anti-Semite, fewer responsiblities. On March 11, 1937 he dismissed Joyce and Beckett for stirring dissension in the organization and expressing unqualified admiration for Hitler. Mosley's decision suggests that racial anti-Semitism was less essential as an element of the party's ideology than some scholars have maintained, such as Robert Benewick. Mosley may have also suspected Joyce of passing information about the party on to the domestic Security Service (MI5) which appears to have been the case. Shortly afterwards, Joyce and Beckett, founded the National Socialist League with the support of several wealthy sponsors. Approximately 60 Blackshirts followed them into the tiny new party. Beckett's departure deprived the fascists of an able propagandist and dynamic personality.[172] In late 1939, Joyce, who deeply admired Hitler, emigrated to Germany where he joined

---

171 "For Mosley anti-semitism was built-on; it was a supplement to analysis and critique, rather than a replacement." (Neill Nugent, "The Ideas of the British Union of Fascists," in The British Right: Conservative and Right Wing Politics in Britain, Saxon House, Farnborough, 1977, p. 146). According to Thurlow, "Antisemitism...did not affect the core of his [Mosley's] beliefs."(Richard C. Thurlow, "Fascism and Nazism--No Siamese Twins (II)," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 14, No. 2, April 1980, p. 18)

172 Fenner Brockway, the ILP leader, has recalled: "Beckett was a rebel, sincerely outraged by poverty and injustice and human suffering...He might have become a great personal force and it was sad to see him wasted [in the BUF]." (Brockway, as quoted in Francis Beckett, "My Father, the Nazi," The Spectator, May 1, 1999, p. 24). The National Socialist League never attracted more than a few hundred supporters. Among them was Capt. Cecil Courtney Lewis, the first editor of Blackshirt, and one of the BUF's legal advisors.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the radio department of the Ministry of Propaganda and delivered anti-British broadcasts as "Lord Haw-Haw." These broadcasts naturally lent credence to the notion that the BUF was a tool of the Nazis.[173] (The B.B.C. estimated that approximately half of the populace listened occasionally to these programs). Joyce was one of only a few Blackshirts to aid the Nazis during the war. After the conflict Joyce was tried as a traitor, convicted, and hanged.

Women played an important role in the BUF, particularly in its organizational and propaganda efforts.[174] Until recently, scholars have tended to ignore females' contributions to the organization, although they comprised perhaps as much as 30 percent of the party's membership.[175] This appears to have been as large or larger a proportion as any of the three major parties. [176] In some districts, such as Birmingham and Wallasey, the proportion seems to have been higher.

---

[173]The Times described Joyce's knowledge of "what is going on inside the United Kingdom" as "uncanny " (Times, May 24, 1940).

[174]Many female fascists were unmarried. The First World War had greatly reduced the number of men seeking wives in the inter-war era. The BUF gave some of these women an outlet for their energies.

[175]Several valuable studies on women and the BUF have recently appeared. See, for example, Julie V Gottlieb, Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement, 1923-1945, I.B. Tauris, London, 2000.

[176]Women represented only 1% of Labour MPs during the war and 7% in 1945. (Hugh B. Berrington, Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1945-55, Pergamon, Oxford, 1973, p. 32).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Thousands of women were convinced that their lives would improve under a fascist regime. As a Coventry woman boasted, "Women in England will not have to remain in the back-ground when Fascism comes to power."[177] The BUF's position on women's issues was fairly progressive. "We believe in real sex equality," Mosley asserted.[178] Thomson called for giving "equal pay for men and women doing similar work...no dismissal upon marriage" and "holiday on full pay for mothers upon the birth of a child."[179] The BUF maintained that women were often penalized by the mainstream parties' policies. An example was the Means Test, which determined an individual's qualifications for unemployment benefits:

> To-day...instead of work the dole is offered. The Means Test, the wrecker of homes, operates in the same way. Now an official can walk into a home and deprive a woman of her sewing machine with which she is able to create garments for herself and her children. As she is poor, and her husband is deprived of work, she is deprived of the means of production. Yet the Baldwins and the Chamberlains and the Runcimans [the President of the Board of Trade] can say we are prosperous. This spurious wealth is indeed prosperity for the few at the expense of the many. The welfare of the masses is the only criterion of wealth.[180]

Women held responsible positions in the BUF at a time when they held few powerful posts in the major parties. More than 10% of the 81 parliamentary candidates the BUF

---

[177]Letter to the editor, Blackshirt, August 12-18, 1933

[178]Action, December 3, 1938.

[179]Thomson, The Coming Corporate State, pp. 26-30.

[180]Action, July 30, 1936. The BUF seldom lost an opportunity to remind Britons that many Labourites had supported the Means Test in the Commons, including Arthur Greenwood and George Lansbury.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

announced between 1936 and 1938 in anticipation of a General Election in October 1939 were women. They also served as leaders of branches of the Greyshirts, or Youth Section. Margery Aitken served as one of the Directors of the BUF Blood Transfusion Service. Unmarried women, who usually had more time to devote to party affairs than married ones, played important roles in many branches, such as Bournemouth in the South and Nelson and Colne in the North. Several of the BUF's outstanding personalities were women, such as Anne Brock Griggs, the Chief Women's Organiser and Instructress of Women Speakers, Olive Hawks, an assistant in the Research Department and later parliamentary candidate for Peckham, Nellie Driver, the Women's District Leader for Nelson, a center of Communist strength in Lancashire, Olga F.C. Shore, an ex-trade representative for the government who became Organising Secretary of the Women's Section, Margaret Collins, who helped run the Press Department with J.A. MacNab, and Miss Doreen Bell, a writer and speaker. [181] Nearly a dozen women received the Gold or

---

[181] Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999. For more information on Driver, an effective organizer in the North, see David Mayall, "Rescued from the Shadows of Exile: Nellie Driver an Autobiography," Immigrants and Minorities, Vol. 8, (March 1989), pp. 19-39. Also see excerpts from a speech she made in Limehouse in 1939 in the April 8, 1939 issue of Action.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bronze Distinction Award, two of the party's highest honors.[182] Female parliamentary candidates included Hawks, Griggs, Bell, Nora Elam (who was also known as Mrs. Dacre-Fox), and administrator at National Headquarters, Lady Dorothy Downe, a former President of the Conservative Women's Association of Scarborough, L.M. Reeve, the manager of a large agricultural estate in Norfolk, and Muriel Whinfield, the ex-chair of the Alton Women's Unionist Association. [183] Miss L. Wilson and other women candidates sought seats in the municipal elections held in 1937 and 1938 throughout the country. Griggs and Whinfield were among the first 25 fascists that the Government detained during the war.[184] Some of the prominent women Blackshirts were former Suffragettes, such as Mary Allen, Commandant of the Women's Auxiliary Police Force, who received the Order of the British Empire in 1917 for training policewomen, Nora Elam, and Mary Richardson. Like their male counterparts, many female Blackshirts left the party after only a short time.

---

[182]Gold Award winners included Miss A.L. King and Mrs. E. Harris from London and Miss A. Good from Streatham while recipients of the Bronze Award included Lady S. G. Pearson who served as Commandant of the Hertfordshire V.A.D. Hospital, Flo E. Hayes, a speaker from Bournemouth who also wrote short fiction for Action, Nellie Driver, and Joan Winter, a speaker from Portsmouth.

[183]Hawks wrote a novel based on her BUF experiences shortly after the war entitled What Hope for Green Street? It took its title from one of the centers of fascist activity in Stepney. After publishing several books of non-fiction, she emigrated to Australia in 1961 with her second husband where she died of a heart attack in 1972.

[184]Times, May 28, 1940.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BUF newspapers published several columns on women's issues throughout the decade, such as "Women's World," "A Woman's Outlook," and "Candid Commentary," and pamphlets, including Women and Fascism by Griggs and Women, Fight for Britain, by Hawks. In 1934, The Woman Fascist a small paper edited by Elizabeth Winch and written especially for women appeared. In late 1934 it was merged with Blackshirt. Maud Lady Mosley, Oswald's mother and head of the Women's Section, explained that the move was made because male and female Blackshirts needed to work cooperatively not separately; the actual reason may have been that the paper had a poor circulation. [185]

In the next chapter the BUF's growth in the early to mid 1930s will be explored. An effort will be made to identify the reasons for its rise in popularity, explain why it was unable to sustain it, and how it responded to efforts by its opponents to arrest its development.

---

[185] Blackshirt, March 23-March 29, 1934 Miss Winch was apparently Mosley's mother's secretary

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER III

YEARS OF HOPE AND DISILLUSIONMENT: THE BUF IN THE MID-THIRTIES

This chapter is concerned with several questions. Why was the BUF able to grow fairly quickly in 1933-34? Why was it unable to sustain the momentum it enjoyed at this time when it appeared that it might have some of the ingredients necessary to become a mass movement? Why was it unable to recapture the growth it enjoyed in 1933 and1934? How did the BUF's opponents attempt to arrest its growth and damage its reputation and how did the fascists respond to these efforts?

In spite of the difficulties the BUF encountered in its inital few years it intensified its efforts to obtain a wide following in the mid-thirties. Meetings were held in most major cities and towns throughout England and Scotland including London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Edinburgh. Several were held at some of the largest venues in the country, such as the Olympia and the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Belle Vue Zoological Gardens and Free Trade Hall in Manchester, and the Stadium in Liverpool. A rally in Birmingham in January 1934 was estimated to have attracted 100,000 persons.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

One reason the BUF grew fairly rapidly in the early thirties was that its publicity efforts were vastly expanded. Its propaganda expenditure apparently exceeded that of all of the mainstream parties except the Conservatives.[1] Mosley and his lieutenants gave interviews to and contributed articles to a wide range of publications, such as the Daily Mail, the London County Times, and even the Jewish Chronicle, and Jewish World. Posters announcing meetings and publications were circulated on billboards, platforms, and buses throughout London and the provinces and speakers travelled acoss the country drumming up support.[2] Some of the strongest backing for Mosley and the BUF came, as expected, from the right. In January 1934 Rothermere, who owned one of the largest newspaper chains in the country, threw his support to the fascists with a dramatic leader in the Daily Mail entitled, "Hurrah for the Blackshirts."[3] Like many on the Right he admired their patriotism and discipline. "At this next, vital election," the former Air Minister and admirer of Nazi Germany wrote with typical hyperbole, "Britain's survival as a Great Power will depend on the existence of a well-organized Party of the Right, ready to take over responsibility for national affairs with the same directness of purpose

---

[1]Colin Cross, The Fascists in Britain, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1961, p 88.
[2]Action, July 8, 1939.
[3]Besides, the Daily Mail, mass-circulation papers he controlled in the mid-thirties included the Evening News, Sunday Mail, Sunday Dispatch, and Sunday Pictorial.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and energy of method as Mussolini and Hitler have displayed."[4] "The Blackshirts," he asserted, "are the only political force in Britain that is working for [national regeneration]...Hundreds of thousands of young...men and women would like to see their country develop that spirit of patriotic pride and service which has transformed Germany and Italy. They cannot do better than seek out the nearest branch of the Blackshirts."[5] Rothermere, who was a staunch anti-socialist, hoped to help forge an alliance between the BUF and Conservatives which would prevent socialists from gaining control of the country, a goal few Conservatives shared.[6] Rothermere does not seem to have realized at first that the BUF intended to overthrow the liberal parliamentary system he wished to preserve. He seems to have been so keen on finding an organization that felt like he did on many domestic and international issues that his political judgment was partially clouded.

---

[4] "The positive, practical policy of the Blackshirt movement," Rothermere averred, "with its definite aims and disciplined organisation, is Britain's best safeguard against being once more muddled into war " (Daily Mail, January 25, 1934).

[5] Ibid.

[6] "Mosley," Rothermere asserted in June , "has only expressed--with one or two exceptions--views that are identical with those of the robuster minds in the Conservative Party. Like them, he stands for law, order, free speech and English methods."(ibid., June 14, 1934).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The editor of the Saturday Review, a right-wing weekly, also engaged in wishful thinking concerning the BUF. "It is a thousand pities," he observed, " that this vast moral as well as physical force should be lost to the Conservative Party. The thousands of young men and... women in Mosley's movement may be impetuous, they may inherit the crusading instinct, they are probably prepared to do or die, but their sincerity and single-heartedness are inspiring. If the Conservative Party would place its house in order...the Mosleyites, as the right wing of Conservatism, undoubtedly in a few years can sway the country [and]... capture Conservatism."[7] "The government," he asserted, "fears Sir Oswald Mosley because he stands for Patriotism and for a robust PRO-BRITISH POLICY and are attracting a great many Conservatives to his banner who are fed up with the sham 'Nationalism' of the government."[8] "The Blackshirts have arrived at a time when they're needed," one man wrote to the Daily News. " The roaring British lion of Palmerston's days has become the purring cat of benevolent internationalism. I look upon [the BUF] as the future custodians of the country's safety."[9] Another Conservative from West Kensington stated, "I have always been a Conservative, as were both my parents; I

---

[7] Saturday Review, July 28, 1934.
[8] Ibid., December 29, 1934.
[9] Evening News, April 14, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

might almost be called an hereditary Conservative. But quite by chance I listened to an outdoor Blackshirt speaker and was much impressed. Now I very much like the Blackshirt policy, chiefly because it offers the young men of my generation an opportunity of giving themselves and England a future as well as a past."[10] Among the Conservatives who enlisted in the BUF were Joyce, Dundas, the Chief of Staff, F.M. Box, who succeeded Forgan as Director of Political Operations in 1934, Lady Pearson, the sister of Brigadier-General Sir Henry Page-Croft, the Earl of Errol, the Lord High Constable of Scotland, who became the BUF's delegate to the Kenya Colony, R.N.Creasy, who led the Eye branch, and Commander J.H. Aitken, a retired naval officer who belonged to the Empire Free Trade Association. However, the party never attracted more than a handful of prominent Conservatives to its ranks.

Few Conservative MPs had favorable things to say about the BUF. Most seem to have viewed it as far outside the mainstream of national politics. The fascists argued that the BUF was actually more nationalistic than the Conservative Party. For example, Mosley complained to an audience in Appleby, Westmoreland: "Who were these men to denounce Blackshirts as un-British and to claim a monopoly of the British spirit? In

---

[10]Frederick Mullally, Fascism Inside England, Claud Morris, London 1946, pp 57

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

policy and in action they had betrayed everything for which Britain has ever stood."[11] Several Conservative MPs saw some merit in the BUF. These included Capt. Michael Beaumont, a Unionist who represented Aylesbury, Lt. Col. J.T.C. Moore-Brabazon, who stood for Ayr Burghs, Capt. A.H. Maule Ramsay, an eccentric and anti-Semitic Unionist aristocrat who stood for the Scottish constituency of Peebles, and Lieutenant-Colonel T.C.R. Moore, an Irishman representing a Scottish district. "Moore," writes one historian, "was so pleased with Mosley's performance at the Royal Albert Hall [on April 22, 1934] that he told the Daily Mail "that there few, if any of Mosley's policies that could not be accepted by Conservatives. He stressed that the Conservatives had provided the Blackshirts with their inspiration and that the two were bound together by loyalty to the throne and love of country. He concluded by calling for closer cooperation between the two parties."[12] This never happened, however. Two other Conservatives who sometimes defended the BUF were Lord Lloyd, a noted proponent of Tariff Reform in the Commons at the turn of the century who belonged to the upper chamber in the thirties, and Sir Edward Grigg.[13] "How can you be surprised," stated Lloyd in 1934, "if

---

[11] Times, May 14, 1934.
[12] Robert Benewick, The Fascist Movement in Britain, Allen Lane, London., 1972, p. 91
[13] Baroness Ravensdale, In Many Rhythms, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1953, p 143

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Youth of Britain are losing faith in the Conservative Party? Can you wonder if many of them prefer the Blackshirt to the White Paper?" [14]

Another reason the BUF grew quickly in the early thirties was that its finances were perhaps healthier than at any time in its career. Dr. Robert Forgan, the Deputy-Director, helped the cause by helping to found the January Club in 1933 which brought business, civic, military, and BUF officials together monthly to socialize and discuss fascism and current events. It is still not known how many individuals attended these meetings or how much financial assistance they provided, but it has been estimated that several hundred persons attended during the course of 1934.[15] The idea for the club seems to have originated with Sir John Squire, the editor of the London Mercury. Members included officials from several leading companies, including Vickers, Morgan Grenfell, Caxton Electric, London Assurance, the Anglo-Chinese Finance and Trade Corp., and Handley Page; literary, diplomatic, and military figures such as Lord Lloyd, former Governor of Bombay, Wing-Commander Sir Louis Greig, Air Commodore Sir J.A.Chamier, and G. Ward Price, a writer for the Rothermere Press; Conservative and Unionist MPs, and

---

[14]Blackshirt, May 4-May 10, 1934.
[15]Richard Thurlow, "State Management of the BUF in the 1930s," in Mike Cronin, ed. The Failure of British Fascism, St. Martin's, New York, 1996, p. 32. Also see Patrick Howarth, Squire, 'Most Generous of Men', Hutchinson, London, 1963, p. 247.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

several associates of the Prince of Wales who held pro-fascist sentiments [16] These meetings and others with businessmen throughout the country bolstered and expanded the ties of the BUF with the commercial sector and probably led to a rise in financial contributions. Individuals who attended the club's meetings have seldom said much publicly about them. One who has is Sir Charles Petrie, an historian who spoke at its meeting in June 1934. "Not the least important result of the reaction against Baldwinism," he later observed, " was a remarkable, if temporary upsurging of Fascism. It is true that very few people of note actually joined ...Mosley, but a considerable number were sympathetically inclined towards him, as the membership of the January Club proved."[17] The club was disbanded in 1936 or 1937, probably because Mosley feared that government agents might have infiltrated it.

---

[16]Ted Grant, The Menace of Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It, Revolutionary Communist Party, London, 1948, pp 6-7. Also consult Robert Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1975, p. 330. MPs included Lord William Scott, Unionist MP for Roxburgh and Selkirk, Sir Adrian Bailie, Unionist MP for Linlithgow, and Major Nathan, Liberal MP for Bethnal Green North East.

[17] Petrie, as quoted in Cross, The Fascists in Britain, p. 101 Petrie, an historian and admirer of fascism, wrote a sympathetic biography of Mussolini in 1931. (Sir Charles Petrie, Mussolini, The Holme Press, London, 1931) He also praised the Duce and the Italian Corporate State in a piece in The English Review the following year. (Sir Charles Petrie, "Foreign Affairs, The English Review, Vol. 55, No. 10, October 1932, p 409) In 1933 he commended the Italian corporate state before the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. (Gaetano Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism, Victor Gollancz, London, 1936, p 40). In 1938 he wrote a volume on Joseph Chamberlain and his sons entitled The Chamberlain Tradition, L Dickson, London, 1938

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

After more than six decades, the BUF's finances are still shrouded in mystery. The total financial contributions received by the BUF from businesses and foreign sources will probably never be known. Mosley concealed the figures by using front organizations and Swiss bank accounts and he refused to discuss the issue even with his close associates. In addition, many pertinent records were destroyed during the Second World War or have not yet been released by the British government, which seized many of them in the spring of 1940. In recent years some of these materials have been de-classified and may be found at the Public Record Office. It is clear, however, that the financial contributions made by businesses to the party fell far short of its needs. As a result, the BUF was unable to hire the personnel it felt it needed, contest as many elections and disseminate propaganda on the level it wished. The BUF Trust, Ltd., the fund to which contributions were made never published a balance sheet. Francis-Hawkins served as Secretary, Managing Director and Chairman in the late thirties.[18] In his autobiography, My Life, Mosley claimed that he spent 100,000 pounds of his own money on his political campaigns. Audited accounts indicate that he spent 24,000 pounds between 1938 and 1939 alone.

---

[18]Comrade, Vol. III, No. 11 (March 1988), p. 5

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Another factor that may have helped the BUF's growth was that it gained some favorable publicity from a host of influential writers and intellectuals. Among them were the novelists Henry Williamson and Dornford Yates. Others who showed sympathy, although they did not become members, included Ezra Pound, George Bernard Shaw, Beverley Nichols, and Douglas Jerrold. In one of his Fabian lectures Shaw observed:

> Sir Oswald Mosley--a very interesting man to read just now: one of the few people who is writing and thinking about real things, and not about figments and phrases. You will hear something more of Sir Oswald Mosley before you are through with him. I know you dislike him, because he looks like a man who has some physical courage and is going to do something and that is a terrible thing. You instinctively hate him, because you do not know where he will land you, and he inevitably means to uproot some of you.
>
> Instead of talking round and round political subjects and obscuring them with bunk verbiage without understanding them, all the time assuming things which ceased to exist from twenty to six hundred and fifty years ago, he keeps hard down on the actual situation. When you pose him with the American question, "What's the Big Idea?" he replies at once, 'Fascism,' for he sees that Fascism is a Big Idea, and that it is the only visible practical alternative to Communism--if it really is an alternative and not a halfway house. The moment things begin to break up and something has to be done, quite a number of men like Mosley will come to the front who are at present ridiculed as Impossibles. Mussolini began as a man with about twenty-five votes. It did not take him very many years to become the Dictator of Italy. I do not say that. Mosley is going to become the Dictator of this country, though more improbable things have happened.[19]

---

[19]George Bernard Shaw, "In Praise of Guy Fawkes," as quoted in James Drennan, B.U.F. Oswald Mosley and British Fascism, John Murray, London., 1934, pp. 11-12. Shaw was sympathetic to Italian and German fascism as well as the British variety. In 1933 he noted, "In the experiments which have been made in Italy with its new Corporate State... we see... the people electing representatives." (Shaw, "In Praise of Guy Fawkes," in Where Stands Socialism Today?, Rich & Cowan, London, 1933, p. 175). Several years later he told the Sunday Referee: "Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. [are] two highly capable revolutionary and proletarian leaders, who are giving their people as big a dose of socialism as they can stand." (Sunday Referee, October 2, 1938).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nichols, one of the most popular writers in the country in the 1930s, demonstrated that he understood the fervor and dedication many fascists felt for their party when he noted:

> Anyone who has ever gone to any of the smaller Fascist meetings not the sensational meetings of the Leader but the ordinary gatherings of the rank and file. will find himself in the presence of men and women to whom his creed is a matter of life and death. And that, whether we like it or not, is something new in British politics. If you are interested, you might read Mosley's own book, The Greater Britain. Do what you like with it Riddle it with criticism. Laugh at it. But do not ignore it. For the views it sets forth are held, with religious conviction, by thousands of Englishmen who are prepared to die for them. [20]

"Mosley," noted Douglas Jerrold, "is...an important man...He is telling the truth as he sees it and he is one of the few people in England who are even trying to do so." The vast majority of persons who helped shape public opinion, however, were either hostile to the fascists or did not take them seriously.

---

[20] Beverley Nichols, News of England: or, A Country without a Hero, Jonathan Cape, London, 1938, pp. 292, 296. After the war Nichols observed, "[The BUF had] good reason to suppose that [it] was in tune with the mood of a very sizeable section of the British people." (Beverley Nichols, The Sweet and Twenties, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1958 , p. 236). Nichols' brother, Alan, became a BUF organizer in the Burgess Hill branch in 1934. (Blackshirt, May 11-May 17, 1934). Pound admired Mosley but felt that he gave too little attention to major issues, such as monetary reform. For example, he wrote Mosley in 1934: "You *could* have an international significance IF you will look forward, instead of playing round with the theatrical side of fascism. There is a vast amount of UNORGANIZED velleity toward monetary reform." (Pound, as quoted in Tim Redman, Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 157).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Although scholars have written little on the BUF press, the party always recognized that its journals were one of the most effective means of boosting its membership. [21] Indeed, according to Mosley's second wife, Diana Mitford, the BUF intended to use the funds it obtained from its largest anticipated source of revenue in the late thirties--the commercial radio stations it obtained permission to build in Germany-- to found a major newspaper.[22] The BUF founded two weekly newspapers almost at its inception--The Fascist Week in 1933 and Blackshirt in February of the same year-- and invested considerable resources into them. In 1934 these two papers amalgamated and Blackshirt became the sole weekly organ. It was supplanted in the autumn of 1936 when Action for King and People, or Action as it was usually referred to, was founded. This quickly became the party's chief newspaper. Each of these journals published news of interest to non-members as well as members, especially Action, which offered a broader range of topics and less news relating to party issues than its predecessor, such as regular columns

---

[21] "No great movement," it warned, "can ever hope to succeed in revolutionising and re-vitalising politics unless it is supported by its own Press." (Blackshirt, March 1, 1935). "Mick" Clarke asserted in 1928 "The press are not interested in news. All they want is sensationalism. When will some great patriot come forward...and give to British Union the money to start our own Daily Paper?" (Action, September 24, 1938)

[22] Comrade, Vol. III, No. 11 (March 1988), p.1. Mosley's first wife, Cynthia, the daughter of Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, died of peritonitis in 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

on the theatre, cinema, books, aviation, automobiles, and sports. [23] The editors of each paper, especially Action, attempted to produce a journal that ordinary Britons would read. A very wide range of members wrote for both of these publications. Each of the BUF newspapers dealt primarily with national and international politics, although Action and Blackshirt published regional news as well, particularly as it related to the organization. In the late thirties, Action published several regular regional columns, including "Midland Searchlight," "Mercian Musings," "Tyneside Talk," "Kentish Comments," "Notes from Scotland," and "South Wales Jottings." For example, an entire page of Action in the fall of 1938 was usually devoted to these columns. In addition, the births, deaths, and marriages of both noted and rank-and-file members and their kin were sometimes published. Most of the articles these journals published were propaganda pieces; there was little effort to report the news in an objective fashion. Most pieces carried by-lines, although Blackshirt omitted them in the early thirties and Action did the same in the late thirties.[24] The turnover rate among BUF writers was quite high. For instance, Joyce, Chesterton, and Beckett, three leading contributors to its press,

---

[23] Geoffrey Dorman and A.C. Findlay edited the aviation and sports columns respectively. Dorman signed his pieces on aviation "Blackbird." He wrote articles on autos as well using the pseudonym "Bluebird."

[24] Perhaps the editors expected that less attention would be paid to this issue if most pieces were unsigned. They may have also wished to save space which was usually quite limited.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

all left the organization between 1937 and 1938. Action had three editors between 1938 and 1940. Mosley monitored the contents of all of the organs closely, which suggests that he was prevaricating when he claimed after the war that he did not know that the BUF press was publishing articles from an extreme anti-Semitic perspective. [25] Mosley had a habit of twisting the truth which did little to inspire faith in his leadership abilities. [26]

BUF newspapers were inexpensively priced in an effort to attract the largest possible circulation. Like the other journals, Blackshirt used patriotic slogans on its masthead, such as "The Patriotic Worker's Paper." It consisted of only four pages and cost a penny until mid-1934, when it incorporated with The Fascist Week. It then expanded to 12

---

[25] According to one ex-member who served at the NHQ, Mosley "vetted every issue of Action before it was put to bed, if he was out of London he checked it over the phone." (This anonymous member is quoted in D S. Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1980 p. 98) Chesterton claims that he "read the page proofs" of each BUF journal every week at meetings of the Policy Directorate (Ibid.) While these reports are difficult to verify, Mosley was surely involved in all of the party's major activities.

[26] For instance, Mosley often exaggerated the size of BUF meetings and denied making statements that were already part of the public record. After the Second World War he had the impudence to challenge his opponents to "produce a single sentence from my speeches inciting to racial hatred." In addition, he attempted to deny responsibility for the BUF's propaganda, although he monitored the party's journals and speakers quite carefully. For example, D.S. Lewis has shown that Mosley personally presided over the Policy Directorate meetings in which the page proofs of the party's newspapers were read. One member who worked in the NHQ recalls, "Mosley vetted every issue of Action before it was put to bed [and] if he was out of London he checked it over the phone." (ibid.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pages and increased its price to 2 pence. Blackshirt was expensive to produce, however, and in 1937, it was reduced to eight pages. Action sold for the same price for the nearly four years that it was in existence. It usually consisted of 12 pages, was somewhat lighter in tone than Blackshirt with more photographs and graphics. F.D. Hill served as its advertising manager in 1934 and became the Business Manager the following year. The fascists used various fancy headlines and fonts apparently in an effort to make the paper more appealing. Its directors included several of the biggest names in the party, such as Fuller, who served as the Chairman, Thomson, Neil Francis-Hawkins, and Robert Gordon-Canning.

Action consisted of a mix of serious and light fare: essays, editorials, and articles mixed with photographs; regular columns on labor issues, international affairs, women's issues, Jews, the progress of the movement in various regions and at colleges and universities, letters to the editor; and a few political cartoons. Like all BUF journals, Action lambasted the mainstream parties and politicians which narrowed its appeal to general readers. Nonetheless, a few writers employed humor in their pieces as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the passage below on the purges in the Soviet Union shows:

> The latest spree of the Soviet Sabotage Squad has resulted in another bunch of comrades being out of circulation for the time being. It seems that the new Moscow Trial-game is getting someone down after all. The daily press informs us that Soviet map-makers have made a protest against the practice of naming streets and places after national heroes. Every time a fresh crowd of Class-War Commissars are wiped off the Soviet map, these poor mugs have to do a fresh bit of map-making of their own.[27]

All three newspapers focussed on politics, particularly domestic affairs. Blackshirt and, to a greater extent, Action, published columns on a wide variety of other topics as well, such as books, sports, the theater, the cinema, community events, homemaking, automobiles, and aviation in an effort to appeal to a broader cross-section of the population, such as "Under the Control Tower" and "Book Reviews." Compared to the papers of its rivals, like Labour's Daily Herald and the Socialist League's Tribune, BUF journals carried more text and fewer photographs, cartoons, and puzzles which was not a very effective way to expand their readerships. Although most of the articles were written by Blackshirts, some were summaries or edited versions of articles that first appeared in the mainstream press. These journals consistently put a very favorable spin on BUF activities. Marches, demonstrations, rallies, and elections that

---

[27] Blackshirt, May 8, 1937. Another Blackshirt piece stated, "Yeshov, new chief of the OGPU [Soviet secret police], has ordered all foreign dancers, clowns and variety artists to quit the Soviet in 14 days. Native born clowns will perform in the same old way. Headliner Joe Stalin is still doing his stuff in his own hearty fashion. Yeth! Comrades, he just slays them." (Ibid., August 28, 1937).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were only partially successful-- or even failures-- were usually portrayed as triumphs. For example, Action termed the by-election in North-East Leeds in March 1940 a victory, although the BUF candidate garnered less than three percent of the poll.[28]

Finding the funds to sustain these journals was a challenge. The problem apparently became more acute after membership fell in the mid-thirties since the fascists relied on dues from members of 1 shilling a month for a share of their income. The fascists used a variety of strategies to boost circulation, including discount subscription plans, sales contests, special prizes to readers, providing papers to branches at discount prices, expanding the classified ads section to nearly half-a page, and canvassing readers to determine the topics that they wished to read. None of these schemes bore very much fruit. None of the three BUF journals attained the circulation levels the party desired or, seemingly, made a profit. Circulation figures were stagnant during the latter half of the decade. Blackshirt with the largest circulation, still had less than 25,000 readers at its zenith in 1934.[29] The actual number of readers was probably considerably higher since many people passed Blackshirt--and the other BUF journals--on to fellow members or

---

[28]Action, March 21, 1940.

[29]David R. Shermer, Blackshirts: Fascists in Britain, Ballantine, New York, 1971, p. 109; G C Webber, "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October 1984), p. 580. Also see Robert Saunders Papers, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, Folder A1.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

supporters or friends. Several of the projects to raise circulation were apparently the brainchild of F.D. Hill, the chief sales agent, who before joining the BUF in 1933, had launched his own newspaper and controlled a chain of newsagents.

There was no truth to its boast that it was "Britain's largest political weekly." Unlike the Communist Party, the BUF never founded a daily paper, which naturally hurt its efforts to become a mass party. Mosley and his advisors knew that the party had to reach a larger segment of the population in order to enjoy sustained growth. In the late thirties a northern and southern edition of Blackshirt appeared and in 1939 British Union News, a small paper which focussed on events and personalities in the East End of London, made its debut at the cost of a penny. With this publication, the East End became the only community to receive its own BUF journal.

Mosley personally awarded the coveted Sales Cup annually to the branch that achieved the highest newspaper sales. The top individual honor the party offered was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Gold Distinction Award. [30] Members were permitted to wear different styles of uniform based on their service to the organization. Only Division I members who gave service to the party at least two times a week, such as selling newspapers and performing clerical duties, were permitted to wear the striking "Action Press" uniform which consisted of a black hat, shirt, pants, riding boots, and red armband. Many people assumed it was based on a Nazi model, although it was actually patterned on a British one.[31] The demands the fascists placed on Division I members was relatively light compared to the duties Communist Party members were expected to fulfill.[32]

---

[30] Blackshirt, April 17, 1937. Recipients included Ralph Jebb, the parliamentary candidate for Dorset West, Bill Eaton, District leader of Lancaster and parliamentary candidate for Burnley. The second leading individual prize was the Bronze Award. Winners included Arthur Mason, District Leader for Limehouse and LCC Candidate for Stepney in 1937, Arthur Beavan, a member of the "I Squad,"Mosley's bodyguard, Robert Saunders, the BUF District Treasurer in Dorset and Election Agent, a highly dedicated member who held senior posts in the National Farmers' Union after the war, Albert Woolnough, the District Leader in Bethnal Green West, and John Charnley, the young District Leader for Hull East and later parliamentary candidate for that city. Saunders' private papers which cover four decades constitute one of the most valuable records of BUF history available. For more information on him see "A Tiller of Soils," unpublished memoirs of Robert Saunders, Dorset County Library, Local Studies Section. For a complete roster of the recipients of the Gold and Bronze awards in 1938 see Action, October 22, 1938. Charnley, who was born in Leeds in 1909, was the first member besides Mosley to have his autobiography published. The book is Blackshirts and Roses, Brockingday, London, 1990.

[31] Although it resembled an S.S. uniform, it was actually based on one worn by the British Brigade, a nativist organization. (Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 11, 1999). Division II members were obligated to give service to the party one night per month while those belonging to the remaining section, Division III, were only required to pay dues. Some members, like Robert Saunders, were against the wearing of uniforms. They complained that the uniforms tended to promote an unnatural division between the fascists and ordinary Britons.

[32] See, for example, Bob Darke, Cockney Communist, John Day, New York, 1953, pp. 52-54.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF also published two quarterlies, the Fascist Quarterly, which appeared from 1934 to 1936, and its successor, the British Union Quarterly, which was issued from 1937 to 1940. Both featured essays, poems, and book reviews by the party's best writers, European fascists, and fellow travellers such as the poets Ezra Pound, Roy Campbell, and Wyndham Lewis, the artist and writer. The goal was to produce a journal on the same intellectual level as those of the mainstream parties, an objective that was not achieved, partly because contributors tended to treat their topics from too narrow and dogmatic a perspective. The fascists published more than 100 handbills on topics ranging from agriculture to unemployment as well as a large quantity of posters. They hired firms like Jesty Billposting and Spillers Billposting to help distribute them.[33] Neil Francis-Hawkins, the Director-General, estimated that the BUF disseminated six million leaflets in 1938 alone. In addition, they established Speakers' Schools throughout the country for both men and women. The classes were taught by some of the party's leading propagandists, including Raven Thomson, William Joyce and Anne Brock-Griggs.[34] Initially, the most effective speakers-- who were required to pass a

---

[33]Robert Saunders Papers, 119/A1/191.
[34]Ibid., 119/A1/242. Also see R.R. Bellamy, "We Marched with Mosley," unpublished manuscript at Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, p. 71.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

battery of tests in order to obtain a license-- were paid. Eventually enough competent volunteers were found, however, and the speakers receiving payment were let go.[35]

The BUF founded several publishing firms such as the Action Press, B.U.F. Publications, Greater Britain Publications, and Sanctuary Press, which produced dozens of books and pamphlets throughout the decade that dealt with most of the key domestic and international topics. The Sanctuary Press continued to publish Mosleyite literature well into the 1980s. Gordon-Canning served as editor of the Action Press. Among the titles it published were Fascism and Agriculture, Fascism and India, BUF Shipping, BUF Medical Policy, Pharmacy and British Union, and The BUF and the Jews. Perhaps one reason the fascists set up so many small publishing firms instead of several large ones is that they recognized that potential litigants were more likely to drop a libel suit against a firm that possessed few assets than one that was more financially secure.

These journals gave the fascists forums with which to broadcast their ideas to a significant segment of the population. The commercial ads placed in them generated much-needed revenue, although not nearly at the level the fascists hoped. Advertising in the BUF press is a topic scholars have not investigated, although it sheds light on the

---

[35]Bellamy, "We Marched with Mosley," p. 73

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

support it enjoyed among the commercial sector and its financial condition. A survey I have made of its three major newspapers reveals that ads from firms did not begin to appear until mid-1934, although single proprietors placed them as early as 1933. A special push to sell advertising space seems to have occurred in 1935, for a large quantity of ads began to appear in that year. It is perhaps no coincidence that the BUF's financial condition began to deteriorate around the same time. Another factor that may have led to the expansion of advertising sales was the appointment of several talented men to positions of responsibility such as Hill, who became Business Manager of Action. Businesses apparently chose to advertise in the BUF press for at least three reasons: the fascists and their followers represented a significant source of potential revenue to them. Secondly, the business believed in the BUF cause. Thirdly, advertising rates in BUF journals compared favorably with similar publications. The latter seems to have been the case for some firms from the East End of London. Many of these people lacked the financial resources to advertise in the larger, mainstream newspapers and magazines. The majority of the notices were from small shopkeepers, traders, and service industries principally in Greater London. A large proportion offered services or personal care products, such as hairdressing, self-defense courses, and electrical and automotive repairs. A small percentage of the businesses which ran ads were owned by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

current or former members of the BUF. At least a dozen medium-sized firms, principally in the London area, placed notices as well. Most ads ran for a short time, although there were several exceptions such as Watney's, a brewer which had the beer concession at the BUF's National Headquarters, and the Portland Hotel, which both ran notices for many months consecutively. Several advertisers boasted that they used only British materials and labor which suggests that they thought some readers considered this to be important. Significantly, none of the advertisers-- with the exception of a few German and Italian publishing houses--were foreign. Table 3.1 below shows the medium and large-size firms that placed ads.

TABLE 3.1 MEDIUM AND LARGE- SIZED FIRMS ADVERTISING IN BUF NEWSPAPERS

FIRM	LINE OF BUSINESS	FIRST AD PLACED
A.E. Baker & Co.	printing	1938
Barclay's British Beers	brewery	1935
Boswell Books	publishing	1935
C. Gordon Brown	manufacturer (toiletries)	1939
J. Chandler & Co.	liquor dealer	1934
Alexander & Cox	insurance	1934
Dressler's	brewery	1934
F.L. Fawkner	insurance	1934
Folbot Folding Boats	manufacturing (boats)	1939
Great British Stores	sporting pool	1939
Hamilton Motors	auto and truck dealership	1934
Hill Brothers	publishing	1935
Hosey School of Motoring	driving school	1935

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 3.1 (CONTINUED)

FIRM	LINE OF BUSINESS	FIRST AD PLACED
International Sporting Pools	sporting pool	1939
London Coastal Coaches	bus company	1934
Kimberley's	clothiers	1938
H.A. Lineham	movers	1938
Mount Liell Hotel	lodging	1939
New Era Tours	travel agency	1939
Observer Printing Works	printing	1935
Portland Hotel	lodging	1938
Premier Tobacco	manufacturing (tobacco)	1935
Raleigh	manufacturing (bicycles)	1939
Salisbury's	manufacturing (tobacco)	1935
H. Stevens	manufacturing (tobacco)	1935
Thomas Prior	antique and furniture dealer	1934
Union Tours	travel agency	1939
Watney's	brewery	1935

By early 1934, it appeared that the BUF might have the potential to become a significant force on the national political scene. Its membership rose steadily until by the middle of the year it had approximately 50,000 members, the highest level it attained. It nearly matched this figure during its anti-war campaign in 1939. In late 1933 and early 1934, the fascists became a force in several local governments in the mid-thirties like the one at Southgate. Blackshirts in the local council there were able to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pass several bills which they proposed.[36] In the East End of London, the Blackshirts held scores of meetings and attracted hundreds and sometimes thousands to their meetings and demonstrations. In 1935 the party purchased the Black House, formerly Whitelands Teachers Training College, a massive five-story structure in Chelsea which became its new headquarters. All of its central offices were located here.[37] By way of comparison, the British Communist Party, which had been founded more than a decade earlier, had approximately 10,000 members in the mid-thirties and about 18,000 when the Second World War broke out in 1939. [38] The Communists captured nearly 75,000 votes in the 1931 General Election but less than 30,000 in the general election four years later. The ILP, which severed its ties with Labour in 1932, saw its strength steadily decline.

One of the BUF's favorite propaganda strategies was to offer different programs to different regions. This was particularly true in the mid-1930s when it anxiously groped for a means of recapturing the level of support it had briefly enjoyed in 1933-34. For example, in Lancashire it suggested that it would make rejuvenating manufacturing its first priority, in the East End it contended that protecting small tradesmen and

---

[36] These included a bill restricting newspaper prizes and competitions. (Blackshirt, March 23-29, 1934)
[37] Dozens of members lived at the Black House where they received instruction in various fields, including public speaking and self-defense.
[38] Report of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to 16th Congress, CPGB, London, 1934, p. 13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

shopkeepers was one of its chief concerns, and in rural communities it insisted that abolishing tithes and other inequities in agriculture was at the top of its agenda. [39] The fascists also offered different proposals to different occupational groups. As its opponents pointed out, the BUF often told groups what it thought they wished to hear. For example, it told miners, farmers, and shipyard workers all at roughly the same time that rejuvenating their respective industries was its top concern. These promises rang hollow, particularly since the party lacked the authority to put even the simplest ones into effect.

In the mid-thirties dozens of new branches were formed across the country in keeping with Mosley's resolution in early 1935 to build the party at the grass roots instead of the national level.[40] Most branches corresponded roughly geographically with the respective parliamentary constituency. At its apex in 1934 the BUF had more than 100 branches which varied widely in size. Branches in the big urban areas generally had more members than provincial ones. Many of the leaders of these units-- known as District Leaders, or D/Ls-- were energetic men in their twenties and thirties who devoted much

---

[39]See for instance, "Cotton, Its Past, Present, and Future," Blackshirt, March 27, 1937 See also, "Fascist Policy for Agriculture," Manchester Guardian, April 9, 1934

[40]See the letter from the Political Officer, Dorset Constituencies to all branches in Dorset Political Area, Robert Saunders Papers, 119.A1.171(a). The Birmingham branch register rose from 200 in 1933 to 2000 a year later (John D. Brewer, Mosley's Men, Gower, Aldershot, 1984, p. 78).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of their time to the party often at considerable risk to their economic, and sometimes, personal security. The D/Ls often worked late at night and were sometimes easy targets for antifascists who wished to do them harm. It was not uncommon for Blackshirts to face discrimination at their jobs when their party affiliation became known. In 1936 the BUF announced that it would contest nearly 100 constituencies in the next General Election which, due to the outbreak of the war, was not held until 1945. In the event, only 81 parliamentary candidates were named. Greater London boasted 39 candidates, Lancashire 16, and there were 12 from Yorkshire , six from the Midlands, and three from Wales. These figures reflected the BUF's areas of strength fairly well.[41]

---

[41]Below is a list of the 96 parliamentary constituencies the BUF originally planned to contest in the next General Election. BUF leaders apparently thought the party had at least a moderate level of support in these areas in 1936-1937: Acton, Accrington, Ashford, Balham and Tooting, Barnsley, Battersea North, Bethnal Green North East, Blackburn, Bradford Central, Brighton, Bristol North, Brixton, Burnley, Canterbury, Cardiff Central, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Chelsea, Chichester, Colchester, Dorset West, Durham, East Grimstead, Epping, Epsom, Evesham, Exeter, Finsbury, Fylde, Fulham West Grantham, Guildford, Hackney South, Hammersmith North, Harrow, Harwich, Hastings, Holland with Boston, Horsham and Worthing, Huddersfield, Hull East, Ilford, Isle-of-Thanet, Islington, Ladywood, Lancaster, Leeds Central, Leicester Central, Lewisham West, Limehouse. Lincoln, Liverpool (Scotland), Liverpool (Walton), Liverpool (Wavertree), Maldon, Manchester (Blackley), Manchester (Exchange), Manchester (Gorton), Manchester (Hulme), Manchester (Moss Side), Manchester (Platting), Merthyr, Middlesbrough West, Mitcham, Newcastle West, Norfolk South West, Normanton, Northampton, Norwich, Nottingham South, Ormskirk, Peckham, Petersfield, Portsmouth Central, Reading, Ripon, Rochester, Sedgefield, Sheffield (Central), Sheffield (Ecclesall), Shoreditch, Stoke-on-Trent, Southampton, Southend, Stockport, Stoke Newington, Streatham, Stretford, Swansea West, Tonbridge, Uxbridge, Watford, Westminster (Abbey), Westminster (St. George),Westmoreland, Willesden West, and Wood Green.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF's modest growth in the mid-thirties caused its political opponents to increase their attacks against it in print and on the streets. Opponents used the fascists' contacts with large firms as proof that they were a pawn of Big Business. In a country where unions were so influential this was an unfortunate turn of events for the BUF.[42] "Fascism," Edward Conze, a socialist writer, asserted, "is the organised attempt to introduce Socialist planning with the consent of Big Business." [43] "Every trade unionist knows," Herbert Morrison, the powerful Labour MP and president of the LCC, told the Commons, "if this thing [the BUF] develops his trade union liberty and his trade union organisation are in danger." [44] The Labour Party alone published more than a half- dozen pamphlets on the Blackshirts in the thirties.[45] Harry Pollitt, the leader of the British

---

[42] The New Leader, for instance, warned, " Should Government and State machinery be insufficient, British capitalism will have.. a private army [the BUF] to call upon for defence against the workers." (New Leader, September 7, 1934). Fenner Brockway argued that it was a mistake to view the BUF as a foreign importation and as an organization doomed to remain on the fringes of the political scene.

[43] Time and Tide, July 28, 1934.

[44] Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, Vol. 317, November 16, 1937, p. 1461. The TUC warned: "People whose faith in Parliamentary Government has been weakened by the apparent inability to remove our economic ills... may, in despair, be ready to accept desperate remedies." (TUC, The Debate at the Brighton Trades Union Congress, London, 1933, p. 34). John Jagger, President of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, warned, "The mountebanks in black shirts [are]ordering armoured cars. We cannot afford to be complacent." (Manchester Guardian, April 2, 1934).

[45] These works included Who Backs Mosley? Fascist Promise and Fascist Performance, Labour Research Department, London, 1934; Mosley Fascism: The Man, His Policy and Methods, Labour Research Department, London, 1935; and Fascism--Fight It Now, Labour Research Department, London, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Communists, warned the Comintern that there was a "strong tendency to underestimate" the BUF.[46] The BUF's overall membership--which includes active and non-active members--dropped sharply between 1934 and 1936 as Table 3.2 below indicates. This table is based principally on information gathered by the Home Office's Security Service The BUF was never able to recapture the modest strength it had briefly enjoyed in 1934.

TABLE 3.2 TOTAL BUF MEMBERSHIP, 1934-1939

MONTH AND YEAR	ESTIMATED MEMBERSHIP
February 1934	17,000
August 1934	50,000
March 1936	10,000
November 1936	10,000
December 1938	16,500
September 1939	22,500[47]

---

[46] He made the same point at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in 1936 (See Harry Pollitt, Selected Articles and Speeches: Vol. I 1919-1936, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1953, pp. 157-58) Wal Hannington, the leader of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), warned: "The Fascist Party finds very little support at present amongst the workers in the Distressed Areas, but if those workers on a mass scale are ever allowed to lose faith in the in strength of working-class organisation we shall see Fascism sweep through those areas like a prairie fire." (Hannington, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, p 239).

[47] Adapted from G.C. Webber, "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October 1984), p. 577

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Some of Mosley's followers maintain that the the actual number of followers was greater than these statistics suggest. [48] The debate over the size of the BUF membership is likely to continue because many records were destroyed during the war, such as the Security Service's Reports for 1940, and the government has still not released many records pertaining to the organization. Only a fifth of the persons who belonged to the BUF at the beginning of 1934 were still in the fold in the autumn. This high turnover rate remained one of its nagging problems. Mosley estimated that 100,000 people belonged to the movement between 1932 and 1940. [49] Constant shifts in membership hurt morale and led to confusion in the organization. Many of those who left the BUF ranked among its most valuable and experienced members, including Dr. Forgan, Chesterton, F.M. Box, Gordon-Canning, Ian Dundas, Geoffrey Dorman, Cecil Courtney Lewis, W.J. Leaper, an ex-ILP member who had served as Deputy Administrative Officer at the National Headquarters prior to becoming editor of Blackshirt, and Rex Tremlett, the Deputy

---

[48] For example, Jeff Wallder contends that the ratio used to determine these figures--one active member for each one-and-a-half non-active member--is too low. He suggests that the actual ratio was closer to one active, or Division I and II member, for every three non-active, or Division III, one. (Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 13, 1999). Wallder may be right. BUF branches usually did not report the number of Division III members to the National Headquarters which helped protect the privacy of these individuals who often feared harm to their person or businesses if their affiliation with the BUF became known. Most scholars agree that the BUF's non-active membership was always much larger than its active one, but they do not agree on what the precise ratio was. After the war, the Trevelyan Research Project found that 5,000 persons in Yorkshire alone were either active or non-active members between 1934 and 1940

[49] Ibid., March 15, 1999

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Director of Publications and managing editor of Fascist Week and Blackshirt. [50]

The BUF's goal was always to attain power legally not through violence or under the direction of Italy, Germany, or any other foreign power. At no time did the BUF deviate from this plan.[51] Not many people ever saw the BUF, however, as a home-grown movement and this is one reason its popularity fell in the mid-thirties.[52] Lacking the public's trust, all of the BUF's efforts were built on a shaky foundation. Most Britons were unfamiliar with how the Corporate State worked and few accepted the fascists' contention that it differed in detail and principle in each country. Few people felt like the teacher who said, "Conditions such as back to back slum houses...in Birmingham brought the realisation of urgency and reality. To me it seemed that Mosley was putting forward socialism at a national level as opposed to pie in the sky socialism of the International Socialists. Britain needed things doing now and the time seemed right for a new dynamic creed, like fascism."[53] Or like the Leeds woman who wrote: "After

---

[50]Tremlett, a young man with considerable talent as a journalist, had nothing positive to say about the BUF in his autobiography and was apparently anxious to leave the party (See Rex Tremlett, Easy Going, Herbert Jenkins, London 1940, p. 224).

[51]John W. Charmley, Blackshirts and Roses: An Autobiography, Brockingday, London, 1990, p. 43.

[52]An exception to this was the New Statesman which editorialized: "Labour leaders have been too prone to pooh-pooh Fascism as merely an alien growth which would take no roots here." (New Statesman, October 16, 1936).

[53]Anonymous Respondent, as quoted in John D Brewer, "The British Union of Fascists: Some Tentative Conclusions on Its Membership," in Stein U. Larsen et al. eds., Who Were the Fascists? Universitetsforlaget, Bergen, 1980, p. 546.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attending the meeting held by... Mosley on Holbeck Moor...I see something worth fighting for: Our Country, our children, and our future. I went to listen to British men and British women, led by a Briton, and was satisfied that it was honestly and clearly British out for British prestige, British honour, and British justice." [54] The BUF's argument that liberalism and socialism had originated on the Continent but that this had not prevented Britons from adopting these doctrines fell on deaf ears. The fascists knew that they had not convinced the public that they put British interests first. [55] One of the biggest complaints many Blackshirts had after the war was that they had been branded as "fifth

---

[54]Letter to editor, Action, October 1, 1936.

[55]For instance, Maurice FitzGerald wrote to his District Leader in Dorset: "Gen. Fuller would be a most useful speaker... as several of the ladies using their influence here are frequently met by the assertion that we have no men of whom they can be sure of wishing to serve the king to the full and not ourselves first. Many here have this idea in their minds & if Gen. Fuller spoke here a man of standing in the King's Service this last barrier to their joining us would be broken down." (Letter from Maurice FitzGerald to Robert Saunders, September 5, 1935. Robert Saunders Papers, 119/A1/166b).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

columnists" and prevented from defending their country.[56]

The frequent clashes between Blackshirts and Jews, Communists, and other opponents in the mid-thirties badly tarnished the BUF's image. Melees at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester in March 1933, the Town Hall in Rochdale the same month, the Corn Exchange in Coventry later that year, the Olympia Hall Meeting in London in June 1934, and elsewhere resulted in injuries to scores of antifascists and Blackshirts and convinced many if not most people that the fascists operated outside the usual range of British politics. [57] The incidents also forced the BUF to cancel many events, including the major meeting it had scheduled at the White City Stadium in London in August 1934.

---

[56]Jeff Wallder, an ex- Union Movement activist, asserts:

> The stereotyped image of a British Fascist has been of a thug inspired by racial hatred who would be willing to betray his country to Germany during the Second World War. It is important to understand that individual Blackshirts did not see themselves that way at all They considered that they were engaged in a life or death struggle to save Britain and her people from poverty, bad housing, bad government and another war and believed that only BU had the policy and the spirit to counter these evils. It is important to understand the abbreviation of the Movement's title to 'British Union' [in the late thirties] was *not* an attempt to play down its fascist and national socialist beliefs, but that these two words represented the essence of the Movement's philosophy.

(Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999) Written interview with Richard Thurlow, March 1, 1999 "We suffered unprecedented abuse," one farmer recalled, "when our sole aim was to keep Britain great " (George Hogarth, "The Essex Farmworker," in Jeffrey Hamm, ed. Mosley's Blackshirts, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986, p. 45)

[57]There appears to have been only one fatality among the fascists. Capt. Charles H.Steele, the former ADC to the governor of Hong Kong who became the Parliamentary candidate for Guildford, died in February 1939 apparently as a result of injuries he sustained after being hit by a stone anti-fascists hurled at him in Reading. (Action, February 11, 1939).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As Roger Eatwell, an authority on fascism, has noted: "Mosley's fascism was not based on the Romantic conception of violence as a form of transcendence that characterized many continental fascists."[58] But BUF leaders did not do nearly enough to demonstrate this and to keep its members within the law. The Fascist Defence Force, its security arm, was comprised mostly of young men with little experience, who often showed poor judgment when faced with hostile crowds and preferred to settle disputes with the use of physical force instead of reason. The number of fascist assaults against Communists and other opponents rose sharply in the mid-thirties as did anti-fascist attacks against Blackshirts. Some fascists took pride in their tough guy image. For example, six Birmingham members sent the following poem to a prominent Communist in their city:

> If we meet you one dark night
> You'll never see the morning light.
> Tho' our shirts are black our hearts
> are true,
> Our skin is white and we are true
> blue.
> So if you have much more to say
> We will deal with you in the Hitler
> way.[59]

---

[58]Roger Eatwell, Fascism: A History, Allen Lane, New York, 1996, p.237
[59]Daily Worker, November 3, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Blackshirts often deliberately recruited in Labour and Communist neighborhoods, which naturally led to clashes. [60] The East End of London and Lancashire, strongholds of both fascists and Communists, were the sites of some of the bloodiest incidents. In March 1934, a typical fracas between these two parties in Bristol led to three fascists being charged with assault. [61] The next month Communists gave local Blackshirts "a good hiding" at their meeting in Edinburgh in spite of police efforts to protect them. [62] In June nearly 50 Blackshirts and 150 Communists met in Bristol and this time the clash resulted in 12 injuries and seven arrests. [63] Incidents like these usually received extensive coverage in the mainstream press and played directly into the hands of anti-fascists. Arthur Bromley, a T.U.C. official, warned that the BUF intended to "disfigure" and torture opponents in "brutal dungeons [with no] respect for sex." H.G. Wells termed the Blackshirts "clumsy louts," while Ernest Thurtle, the Labour MP for Shoreditch, asked Mosley if he wanted his "supporters to...blind and disfigure [his] political opponents?" after a Blackshirt hurled a glass jug at him at a meeting. [64] The

---

[60] "Fascist Howled Down," Daily Worker, October 11, 1933.
[61] Benewick, The Fascist Movement in Britain, pp. 92-93.
[62] Daily Worker, as quoted in Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, pp. 365-6. Also see Action, July 24, 1937.
[63] Manchester Guardian, June 23, 1934.
[64] Blackshirt, September 16-September 22, 1933. Wells as quoted in Action, February 1, 1940. Thurtle, as quoted in Action, March 18, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Daily Worker, the leading Communist organ, regularly referred to Blackshirts as "thugs" and "Stormtroopers." Six months before Olympia Churchill asserted:

> We are witnessing something very like a reversion to barbarism in some of the greatest countries and most powerful nations in the world. Freedom is being trampled down by dictatorships; mob passions and mob slogans sweep away the constitutional rights of the citizen; gross cruelties are perpetrated upon helpless people. Make no mistake about it, some of those tendencies are alive here.[65]

Political violence did not become the outstanding issue associated with the BUF, however, until its infamous meeting at the Olympia Hall on June 8, 1934, which was intended to showcase the party's ideas to a national audience and demonstrate that it deserved the support of all classes. Approximately 13,000 people were in attendance, one of the largest crowds to assemble for an indoor political meeting. Among those present were many middle-class people who had read and heard of the party's newfangled ideas and came to see for themselves. Scores of Communists and other anti-fascists attended as well, many expressly to provoke and embarrass the fascists at their most highly-publicized event.[66] Shortly after Mosley began speaking, some of them began to heckle him. Mosley lost his temper for a few moments and called them "the sweepings of the ghetto" and other derogatory terms. After the heckling

---

[65]Manchester Guardian Weekly, January 18, 1934

[66]Joe Jacobs, a Communist from Stepney, admitted this in his informative autobiography, Out of the Ghetto, My Youth in the East End, Communism and Fascism, 1913-1939, Simon, London, 1978

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

resumed, the stewards attempted to remove the demonstrators from the hall by force. Mosley remained on the stage and did not attempt to stop them at first. Some people refused to leave, however, and fights soon broke out throughout the hall. Dozens of men and women were beaten, kicked, and thrown down stairs by the security officers. After a considerable time, members of the nearly 800 member police force which had been posted outside the building to prevent violence between the anti-fascists and BUF supporters, entered the hall and restored order. When the meeting was over more than 70 people, mostly anti-fascists, required medical attention.[67] Olympia tarnished the BUF's image badly. Unfortunately for the party, many public figures attended the event and published accounts of what they saw which rightfully cast the party in a highly unflattering light, such as Geoffrey Lloyd, MP for Ladywood and Baldwin's Parliamentary Private Secretary, T.J. O'Connor, Unionist MP for Central Nottingham and ally of Baldwin, the Rev. Dick Shepard, and the writers Aldous Huxley, Gerald Barry, Vera Brittain, Pearl Binder, Ritchie Calder, Storm Jameson, Naomi Mitchison, A. J. Cummings, and Phoebe Fenwick Gaye.[68] For instance, Lloyd

---

[67] Among the fascists injured was Henry J. Gibbs.
[68] Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, p. 371

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

asserted:

> I do not think I saw a single heckler ejected in a decent and orderly way. Again and again, as five or six Fascists carried out an interrupter by arms and legs, several other Blackshirts were hitting and kicking his helpless body. Sir Oswald Mosley talks of an organised Socialist attack on Olympia, assaults on women wearing the black shirt, and the use of razors and other weapons. What miserable hypocrisy Sir Oswald's statement is. Clearly, these events, if they actually took place, were stimulated by the past brutalities of the Blackshirts.[69]

"When I recall the ridiculous incredible bravery of those Communist interrupters, " Gaye wrote in Time and Tide, a moderate journal, "and the Nazi brutality of the so called 'stewards'...in dealing with them, I became all but a Communist myself...The attacks were of an animal savagery."[70] "No increase in police powers," warned the New Statesman, "will save England from... violence and disaster... if private armies are once allowed to grow up in our midst."[71]

Shortly after Olympia, the B.B.C. offered Mosley an opportunity to respond to these charges. It was the last time he was invited to broadcast on the B.B.C. until the 1960s.[72] Mosley's argument that the BUF only used physical force in self-defense convinced few people. There was too much evidence to the contrary from witnesses and victims. Only a few BUF officials, such as Thomson, specifically called for the use of physical force

---

[69]Labour Research Department, Who Backs Mosley?, p. 33. Also see Daily Herald, June 8, 1934.
[70]Phoebe Gaye, "Mosley a la Mode," Time and Tide, June 16, 1934.
[71] New Statesman, June 16, 1934.
[72]Bellamy, "We Marched with Mosley," p. 112.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

against their opponents. But BUF leaders sometimes boasted of the party's ability to defend itself and to use violence if necessary. For example, Mosley unwisely told the audience at the Olympia Hall Meeting: "[The Blackshirts] have the power to smash to pieces any socialist meeting in the country any night we like."[73] And Mosley and his advisors sometimes turned a blind eye when members attacked the party's enemies like the Communists. In their short-sighted view, this was the only way the fascists could obtain a fair hearing in some of the rougher areas, such as the East End and urban districts in Lancashire and Scotland and Wales. Evidently, the BUF sometimes planned violent incidents. For example, Mosley admitted that the fascists sent members from London to Manchester for a meeting in the Free Trade Hall in March 1933 and that some of these men brought truncheons.[74] In September 1933 eight Blackshirts raided a well-known Communist tobacconist's store in London while he was away at a Party meeting and vandalized the shop.[75] Three months later a gang of Blackshirts assaulted a Communist artist in London at a time when the policeman assigned to the area was at the opposite side of the street and no witnesses were present.[76] For an organization that

---

[73]Mosley, as quoted in Comrades in Struggle, Friends of Oswald Mosley, London, 1988, Side A.
[74]Daily Worker, February 5, 1936.
[75]Ibid., September 13, 1933.
[76]ibid., December 13, 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

billed itself as a champion of British traditions, the BUF was slow to realize how baleful an effect its record of instigating violence had on its reputation.

The Labour Party, the ILP, and particularly the Communists, were also to blame for some of these clashes. The latter were particularly aggressive, especially when the BUF attempted to recruit in their strongholds, such as East London, South Wales, Lancashire, and Glasgow. For example, the Times noted, "Communists seem to make a practice of creating disorder at Fascist meetings."[77] On the hustings and in print Communists constantly urged workers to rally against the fascists. Like the BUF, they seem to have recognized that the CPGB-BUF conflict helped generate interest in their party in some areas, such as East London.. In addition, the Communists and Blackshirts recruited many of the same occupational groups, such as the unemployed and non-unionized workers.[78] The Security Services monitored the BUF closely from its inception.[79] The Home Office reported that Communists broke up at least 31 of its meetings between 1934 and 1935, while the fascists smashed up three

---

[77]Times, October 5, 1936.

[78]Harry Pollitt estimated that 60 percent of the Communist Party's members were unemployed in the early 1930s.

[79]For example, one fascist recently recalled, "During the early days of the war we closed the Finchley Branch to save funds and held weekly meetings in my father's house. An MI5 sleuth stood across the road watching. My father suggested inviting him in to gain first hand knowledge of our harmless activities!" (Interview with Frank R. Hawke, December 31, 1999).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Communist engagements. [80] The CPGB did not wish to give the appearance that it was intimidated by the Blackshirts' tactics and it sometimes condoned the use of knuckle-dusters, truncheons, and other weapons by its members, as the BUF did.[81] Some Communists recognized that the conflict with the BUF gave the party an opportunity to attract more Jews and other anti-fascists to its ranks. Douglas Hyde, for instance, recalled: "Quite deliberately we used the Jewish fear of fascism and anti-semitism for our own political ends. It made Stepney branch our strongest, with over 1,000 members. It [the struggle with the fascists] was the Party's greatest asset in Jewish areas all over Britain."[82] Approximately 43% of the Jews in Britain resided in Stepney in 1929. The bond of friendship forged in the 1930s between the Communists and Jews in the East End lasted for decades. [83]

A few Conservative MPs defended the BUF actions at Olympia, but their voices were virtually drowned in the storm of indignation that followed the event. "The young men who have joined the Blackshirt movement," Howard, the Member for Islington asserted,

---

[80]PRO, HO 144/20413, 216/234.

[81]For example, Albert Edward Jones, a Blackshirt handyman, claimed that the BUF issued two truncheons to him. (Daily Worker, September 18, 1934)

[82]Douglas Hyde, I Believed: The Autobiography of a Former British Communist, Heinemann, London, 1951, p. 187.

[83]See, for example, Henry Srebrnik, London Jews and British Communism, 1935-1945, Vallentine-Mitchell, Ilford, 1995.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"are among the best element in this country."[84] Michael Beaumont stated,"[As] long as the forces of law and order make no effort to safeguard the rights of free speech in this country the use of some such methods is the only way in which those putting forward an unknown and controversial case can obtain a hearing...No one present can doubt that the interruptions...were skillfully organized with the object of preventing Sir Oswald from speaking."[85] Patrick Donner defended the BUF in the National Review:

> Many of the Communists were armed with razors, stockings filled with broken glass, knuckle-dusters, and iron bars ..They marched from the East End... with the avowed purpose of wrecking the meeting. A friend of mine saw a woman Fascist with a razor-cut across her face, and with my own eyes I witnessed gangs of Communists (some of them dressed in black shirts to make identification of those responsible for the uproar more difficult) resisting ejection with the utmost violence . Can it in equity be argued that the stewards used their fists... with more vigour than perhaps the situation required"[86]

Others who defended the BUF included the Rothermere press, which spoke favorably of the movement throughout the decade, the English Review, the Saturday Review, the New English Weekly, which was edited by A.R. Orage, the Patriot, a small far-right wing journal published by the Boswell Press, and the Aeroplane, which was edited by C.G Grey, a BUF supporter and anti-Semite. The Saturday Review asserted:

---

[84] As quoted in Labour Research Department, Who Backs Mosley? p. 19 "All this talk about weapons is bosh," Mr. Pike, MP said. Pike, as quoted in Ibid., p. 19.
[85] Michael Beaumont, as quoted in Cross, The Fascists in Britain, p. 115
[86] Donner, as quoted in Oswald Mosley, My Life, London, 1968, p. 296. N. Grattan-Doyle also defended the fascists in the Manchester Guardian, June 12, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"The sweepings of the Ghetto are organised to shout down Mosley...They are directed by organizations which for some very strong anti-British reason want to down [him], because his policy is strongly Pro-British." [87] Few of these journals, reached a very large audience, however, with the exception of Rothermere's papers. Several local politicians were also sympathetic to the BUF, such as Charles Bennet, the former Mayor of Bethnal Green. "The Fascists," he wrote to the Home Secretary John Simon in 1936, "are not primarily responsible for the disorder [in the East End]. The huge majority of decent English people in this quarter of London [Bethnal Green] is definitely with them."[88]

The BUF's defenders made very little impression on the public. After Olympia, many people (perhaps most) concluded that the use of physical force and racial intolerance were essential elements of the BUF's program. Many people who might have seen merit in at least some of its ideas now dismissed it as a legitimate contender for power. It is impossible to know precisely the numbers who felt this way, however, since no scientific surveys were taken at the time. The New Statesman, a moderate journal, predicted that it had become "a losing cause."[89]

---

[87] Saturday Review, November 10, 1934. The Daily Sketch, a London newspaper, was also sometimes sympathetic to the BUF

[88] Action, November 28, 1936

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The House of Commons, which until then had taken little notice of the organization, now conducted an extensive debate on the BUF's activities [90] The fascists' opponents dominated the proceedings. Unfortunately for the BUF, just three weeks after Olympia, the Nazi Blood Purge occurred in Germany in which the Gestapo murdered dozens of left-wing Nazis and opponents in cold blood. [91] Here was more proof, critics suggested, that fascism was a savage ideology, or in the words of the British Stalinist R. Palme Dutt, "society at war with itself."[92] "I reckon the effect of the German and now the Austrian murders and shootings," Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer predicted, "will be further to discredit Mosley and all political armies."[93] He was right. The assassination of Dollfuss, the Austrian President, by Austrian Nazis in July 1934; the Italian invasion of Ethiopia ; Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland (March 1936), and the passage of the Nuremberg Laws, which denied Jews basic civil rights (1935-1936) reinforced the notion that lawlessness and racial and religious

---

[89] New Statesman, as quoted in Margaret George, The Warped Vision: British Foreign Policy 1933-1939, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1965, p. 128.

[90] See Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 290, June 11, 1934, pp. 1342-47

[91] The victims included General Kurt Von Schleicher, the former Chancellor, Captain Ernst Roehm, the head of the Brown Shirts, which had more than three million members, and Gregor Strasser, Hitler's long-time rival, and ex-head of the NSDAP's National Organization Office.

[92] Dutt, Fascism and Social Revolution, p. 19. Harry Pollitt asserted, "The events at Olympia and in Berlin on June 30 have revealed the common brutality and bestial policy of terror and violence that is common to both Mosley and Hitler." (Daily Worker, July 23, 1934).

[93] Chamberlain, as quoted in Iain Macleod, Neville Chamberlain, Friedrich Muller, London, 1961, p. 176

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

intolerance were essential ingredients of fascism. In the final analysis, the BUF failed because of its own weaknesses and errors not because of what the Continental fascists did. Another important reason the BUF's popularity plummeted in the mid-1930s was the economic recovery which picked up momentum in the latter of the decade. With rising incomes and more job security Britons were reluctant to embrace a party with extreme economic ideas like the BUF.

BUF leaders did little to discourage the forceful break-up of rival parties' meetings and physical and verbal attacks upon opponents, particularly Jews and Communists. Nor did they do enough to discipline those members who engaged in lawless acts. This seems to have given some irresponsible members the notion that such behavior was tolerated. As Robert Benewick has noted, the BUF was so anxious to bolster its membership that it sometimes permitted recruits with criminal records and discipline problems into its ranks. Arthur Beavan, a former security officer who was assigned the task of monitoring these persons, has recalled: "We had ...problems with various petty crooks and confidence tricksters...When rumours of the disappearing funds of one particular branch reached the Top Brass I was sent as a kind of undercover agent to investigate...I...collect[ed] evidence... [and] it soon became apparent that the branch

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

organiser and the treasurer were pocketing most of the subscriptions and donations."[94] Many more cases of corruption and deceit might be cited. The BUF also attracted some careerists which was not unusual given its rapid growth in 1933-34. As John Charmley, the leader of the Hull branch, recalls, "Some of these recruits were milk and water, who could not stand the pace, and fell away when the going became tough. Some were clearly of doubtful character, looking for easy pickings in a mushroom growth which might provide opportunities for exploitation job-wise."[95]

In 1934 the BUF attempted to impose greater discipline on its members. In July, a new regulation denied members the right to carry weapons. The order proved difficult to enforce, however, partly due to the high turnover in membership which appears to have reached its apex that year. Among those who apparently ignored the regulation was Joyce. The decline in membership was partly due to Rothermere's decision to back the movement and then not to support it.[96] It was not uncommon for recruits to leave the organization after several months, particularly if they were young adults without steady employment. In 1936, the elite "I" Squad, which had frequently used excessive force

---

[94]Arthur Beavan, "The Welsh Security Officer," in Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, p. 59
[95]Charnley, Blackshirts and Roses, pp. 61-62
[96]Blackshirt, July 20, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

against opponents without provocation, was quietly disbanded. These measures were much too little too late to salvage the party's reputation.

Anti-communism was a cardinal element of the BUF's domestic and international programs as it was of all fascist parties. One of the most effective strategies that the Italian Fascists and the Nazis employed was to pose as the guardians of private property and national tradition against the collectivism, social levelling, and internationalism of communism. Mussolini had used the threat of a communist coup d'etat to attain power in 1922, while the Nazis employed the Reichstag Fire and the threat of a communist revolution to pass the Enabling Act of 1933 which effectively made them the only legal party. The Blackshirts pursued a similar strategy. They were as unwilling to recognize the British character of the Communists as the latter were to acknowledge the BUF's home-grown roots. Communist claims to represent the British working class were spurious, according to the BUF, which saw the CPGB as a cosmopolitan party bankrolled by the Soviets. The fascists cited a host of statistics relating to Communist finances and activities in support of their argument. [97] The CPGB did in fact obtain

---

[97]Henry Gibbs, The Spectre of Communism, Selwyn & Blount, London, 1936, pp. 60-64. Also see the unsigned piece, "Moscow's Paid Interrupters," Blackshirt, June 29, 1934. For more information on this topic consult Francis Beckett, The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party, London, 1995 and Henry Pelling, The British Communist Party, A. and C. Black, London, 1958.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

funding and advice from the Russian Communists since its inception, although the BUF exaggerated the advice and sums of money it received.[98] The weakness of the British Communist Party prevented the BUF from making much political capital out of this issue. Unlike Germany and Italy, there had never been a communist party of any significance in Britain. In spite of the weak economy and highly unstable international arena, the CPGB still remained on the fringes of the political scene in the thirties. Although it enjoyed a slight rise in membership in the years immediately prior to the Second World War, when the conflict broke out in 1939 it still had fewer than 20,000 members.[99] The BUF's inability to capitalize politically on anticommunism was a major

---

[98] J.T. Murphy, who left the Communist Party shortly before the war, has stated, "Had the Communist Party not received big financial shots in the arm, it would have been reduced and probably gone out of existence within a year or so of formation." (Murphy as quoted in Raymond Challinor, The Origins of British Bolshevism, Croom, Helm, London, 1977, p. 270). In Challinor's view, the Comintern did "everything within its power to see that the party survived...and was more dependent than most sections [of the Comintern] on Moscow for finance." (Ibid., p. 234). Theodor Rothstein, a Russian Bolshevik, played a key role in the formation of the CPGB. He funnelled a large sum of money from Moscow to the British Communists. According to Challinor, he "possessed the funds... to distribute among the various left-wing organisations. His ability to bestow largesse upon pliant individuals and organisations gave him immense influence in British left-wing circles." (ibid., pp. 225, 241). Challinor notes that the Home Office "became acquainted with his financial disbursements [to the British Communists] down to the exact penny" (ibid., p. 247). Also see David Burke and Fred Lindop, "Theodore Rothstein and the Origins of the British Communist Party," Socialist History 15: Visions of the Future, Rivers Oram, London, 1999, pp. 45-65. Many British Communists travelled to Russia to meet with Soviet leaders in the 1930s, including Harry Pollitt, William Gallacher, M.P., and Sylvia Pankhurst. According to A. W. Brian Simpson, a legal scholar "The CPGB was certainly under foreign influence and control."(A.W. Brian Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, Clarendon, Oxford, 1992, p. 196).

[99] Pelling, The British Communist Party, p. 192.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

failure since the marked improvement in the economy in the mid-thirties left the organization with only a few other significant domestic issues, such as housing and rearmament.

The Blackshirts apparently hoped that the more formidable and menacing they made the Communists seem, the more valiant and patriotic they would appear to the public. Therefore, they always painted them as the architects of violent revolution and potential destroyers of British institutions. For example, Mosley warned in 1932: "Governments and parties which have relied on the normal instruments of government, have fallen easy and ignoble victims to the forces of anarchy. If therefore, such a situation arises in Britain, we shall prepare to meet the anarchy of Communism with the organised force of Fascism."[100] According to Gibbs, "The Communist organization in Britain operating on the instructions it receives from Moscow is planning the destruction of everything symbolized by the name of Britain." British Communists were allegedly using many strategies to achieve this goal. One was to undermine the country's morals and values. Wegg-Prosser claimed that they wished to throw "the whole spiritual and cultural heritage of the Western world...on the scrap heap... Morality, justice, honor and

---

[100] Mosley, The Greater Britain, as quoted in Eugen Weber, Varieties of Fascism, Van Nostrand, Princeton, 1968, p. 171

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

humanity are discarded as bourgeois prejudices...[A] hideous oppression of [the] human spirit occurs in Russia." [101] "Communism is aimed directly at the destruction of our entire civilisation," Fascist Week declared. "A Communist Britain would be antagonistic to every....nation but Russia...[It] would have no Empire...[and] no individual or international life." [102]

The BUF had a highly exaggerated conception of the British Communists' power. In its view, all of the major programs and activities it undertook were taken at the behest of the Comintern, such as the hunger marches and the anti-fascist coalition it joined in 1933 with all of the other socialist parties known as the United Front. ""How is it," the fascists asked, "that the [CPGB] is able to publish in this country at least thirty-two regular national periodicals, millions of leaflets and propaganda booklets, hire expensive loudspeaking equipment and to command apparently unlimited financial resources?" "The Reds are not men of conscience," Fascist Week asserted, "they are only men of Comintern graft. They want money--big money." [103] The fascists pointed to the frequent visits Harry Pollitt and other officials made to Russia as proof that it was in the pay of

---

[101] Blackshirt, February 15, 1934.
[102] Fascist Week, May 11-May 17, 1934.
[103] Ibid., February 9-February 15, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Kremlin."[104] The BUF had no solid evidence which made their case a weak one. It is unlikely that BUF leaders believed all of their own rhetoric on this issue. The Soviet Union gave the Communist Party considerable financial support as well as ideological guidance-- especially after the Ninth Plenum of the Comintern in February 1928-- but it was facile for the BUF to label it a mere puppet of the Kremlin. Since its inception, the CPGB had offered innovative proposals designed to remedy the specific social and economic problems affecting Britain. Two of its chief concerns were unemployment and housing. Few people believed that the Communist Party was a threat to national security, and in the late thirties, the Nazi threat, and to a lesser extent, the menace of Japanese expansionism, led to a greater warmth in Anglo-Soviet relations. For perhaps the first time since 1917 the Soviets were regarded by many as potential allies. Throughout the decade, the Communists petitioned the Labour Party for the right to affiliate with it and backed the latter's positions on a wide range of domestic and international issues, which helped to improve its image slightly. For instance, in 1937 it chose not to contest many local elections where it might have cut into the Labour vote. In the same year it signed the Unity Manifesto with Labour, the

---

[104] Fascist Week, May 25-May 31, 1934. "This movement," the BUF warned, "send[s] candidates to Moscow for 'training.' This can be achieved only by... Red money from Russia."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Socialist League, and the ILP against "Fascism, reaction, and war."[105] "The Labour Movement," stated one Communist journal, "provides the only possible leadership of the peace forces, of democracy and progress in this country."[106] During the London County Council elections in March 1937 some Labourites campaigned side-by-side with Communists in East London.[107]

Some Britons found the fascists' anticommunist arguments compelling. Many people, particularly at the lower end of the economic spectrum, were dissatisfied with their lot, but did not know whom to blame. Since the 1920s many of these people had seen their real incomes fall.[108] In addition, some of them faced increasing competition from large firms, such as department and chain stores. Generally, non-unionized workers and small traders distrusted state involvement and had no use for the mammoth government apparatus that the Communists apparently wished to create. The First World War had

---

[105]Ben Pimlott, "The Socialist League," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 6, No 3 (July 1971), p 36

[106]Imprecor, March 21, 1938. This journal was also known as International Press Correspondence. "There is no Communist terror," the Manchester Guardian, one of the premier liberal organs asserted, "of the sort Sir Oswald Mosley pretends to see, [and] he cannot be allowed to create one by deliberately inviting physical opposition and public disorder." (Manchester Guardian, March 14, 1933)

[107]Pat Devine, "Fascist Votes: An Analysis of the L.C.C. Election Results in East London," Discussion, Vol.II , No 14 (April 1937), pp 19-21.

[108]In 1936 the Commons, in fact, established a Special Committee to investigate the physical well-being of ex-servicemen. See "Copy of Reports Made to the Prime Minister by the British Legion Regarding the Condition of Ex-Service Men and of His Reply," in Great Britain, Reports from Commisioners, Inspectors and Others, Vol. 3, (October 26, 1937-November 4, 1938) London, no date

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

resulted in the spending of millions of pounds on the military that might have been used for social programs.

Some apologists for the Empire also found the BUF's anticommunism appealing such as Lord Rothermere (for a time), Lady Houston, and Carlyon Bellairs, a sexagenarian who had been an associate of Joseph Chamberlain three decades earlier. In their view, communist expansion threatened the British Empire and possibly Britain herself. The mainstream parties' decision to cut defense spending after the war allegedly magnified the problem. Perhaps the BUF should have given more attention to defense issues since many of its most devoted followers were either current or former members of the armed forces.[109]

Another group that was attracted by the BUF's anticommunism was Catholics.[110] Although formal bars of discrimination had been removed in the late seventeenth century, many Catholics (most of whom had ties to Ireland) still did not feel totally

---

[109]J.F C Fuller and Geoffrey Dorman, who besides serving as editor of Action for a short time worked as an assistant editor of Aeroplane, seems to have recognized this. They both wrote extensively on military issues in Blackshirt and Action. See for example, Blackshirt, May 31, 1935 and Action, October 31, 1936

[110]David Butler and Anne Sloman, British Political Facts, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1975, p 408

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

They also continued to represent the least affluent segment of the population.."[111] Many of the ideas the BUF proposed were popular with Catholics. One Catholic wrote in Blackshirt: "Pope Pius XI condemns the activities of...financiers on exactly the same lines as Fascists condemn them." [112] "The growing strength of the British Union of Fascists," noted the Catholic Herald, "is a hopeful sign. It stands for the small owner as opposed to big business, and its policy is the nearest approach to the social theory of the encyclicals we have yet been offered by any prominent political party" [113] Catholic leaders in Britain and on the Continent had praised the corporate state since its inception and had always been staunch opponents of communism. British Catholics were, therefore, familiar with the challenges the latter posed to native

---

[111] "The emergence of Romanism as a substantial and accepted part of English life," one scholar has observed, "is, in modern times, a very recent phenomenon. The ground was being prepared for it much earlier, but it was not until after the Second World War that it became manifest." (Daniel Jenkins, The British: Their Identity and Their Religion, SCM, London, 1975, p. 113). Also see E.E. Reynolds, The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, Clarke, Wheathampstead, 1973, p. 359

[112] Blackshirt, June 29, 1936.

[113] Catholic Herald, October 6, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

institutions. The BUF press sometimes quoted Church leaders on this issue.[114] The Lateran Treaty which Mussolini and the Pope signed in 1929 demonstrated to at least some British Catholics that fascism and Catholicism could co-exist. "Fascists in Italy do not regard Mussolini as a god," stated the Rev. Nye, who wrote a regular column in Blackshirt entitled, "Fascism and Religion." "They can...be good Catholics and, at the same time, convinced Fascists. To imply that a man cannot be devoted to a great cause without renouncing his religion is pure nonsense."[115] As Thomas Linehan has suggested, there were parallels between the fascists' and Catholics' views on "sexual, family, and political relations" and on the hierarchical organisation of society."[116] Catholics were also sympathetic to the BUF because as an MP Mosley had denounced the Black and

---

[114]For example, in 1936 the Blackshirts quoted the pope:

> A common enemy exists today who threatens everything and everyone. It is communism which seeks to penetrate everywhere and has already permeated in many places by violence, stealth and by fraud. It is deplorable that many people do not see, or pretend to see, the common peril and even help that destructive force. (Action, May 14, 1936).

[115]Ibid., November 30, 1936. In 1932 the Italian Fascists and Pope signed a Concordat. Blackshirt observed: "The very doctrine of Papal definition and interpretation of dogma allows the Roman church a pliability and adaptability which would be harmful without the compensating check of an iron discipline. The Pope can change dogma [and] his ability to do so offers the best hope of lasting concord between Fascism and the Papacy."(Blackshirt, July 1-July 7, 1933).

[116]Thomas Linehan, East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex 1933-40, Frank Cass, London, 1996, p. 82. In 1937 Action stated: "Fascism stands for the family...[and] for the Corporate State, a system closely in accord with with Catholic principles." (Action, January 23, 1937).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Tans (British troops who had committed outrages in Ireland in the 1920s) and, more importantly, because the party welcomed them and treated them as equals. For example, Action boasted that "the Fascist Movement is one to which all members of all sections of the Christian Church can belong." The data on BUF membership is still far from complete and it is not yet entirely clear why so many Catholics were among the movement's most devoted and enthusiastic members and supporters. Many former Blackshirts have been reluctant to discuss their association with the party for fear of losing their jobs, being ostracized socially, or physically threatened. After the war, British anti-fascists harassed some ex-Blackshirts, including Mosley and Olive Hawks.[117] Even today, some ex- fascists use pseudonyms.[118]

By late 1934, patience with the BUF's tactics began to wear thin. Calls for banning its uniforms and restricting its right to conduct meetings on public property rose up on all sides of the political spectrum. [119] A host of massive anti-fascist rallies were held throughout the country in the next several years. One of the largest took place on

---

[117]In the 1950s, Mosley emigrated to Ireland and later to France while Hawks settled in Western Australia.
[118]For instance, John Warburton, one of the most prominent Mosleyites after the war, has signed his writings "John Christian."
[119]For an interesting discussion of this topic see George Allison, "The Next Steps in the Fight Against Fascism," Labour Monthly, Vol. 16, No. 11 (November 1934). Several countries on the Continent had already banned political uniforms, such as Sweden.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

September 9, 1934 at London's Hyde Park and it featured a galaxy of left-wing speakers such as Strachey, Pollitt, Brockway, and a crowd estimated at 100,000. In contrast, the largest audiences the fascists attracted--either indoors or outdoors-- were nearly always under 20,000. Several critics of the BUF drew parallels between it and the Nazis. [120] J.R. Clynes, the veteran ILP leader, spoke for many people when he said: "The Fascists are becoming more and more degraded and less likely to attract support because of their barbarian actions abroad and because of their brutalities here." [121] With this statement, Clynes demonstrated that he probably had a better appreciation of the role of perception in politics than Mosley. Mass protests continued to be held across the country for the rest of the year.

In 1936, the Labour Party, which led the protests against the Blackshirts, helped draft legislation to restrict them.[122] They were aided by the Conservatives. The bill that finally emerged in December, known as the Public Order Act, not only banned the wearing of "political uniforms and quasi-military organizations," but gave the police greater control over political meetings and demonstrations, and imposed constraints on

---

[120] Times, September 10, 1934.
[121] Manchester Guardian, September 18, 1934.
[122] In October 1936, the Daily Herald, the leading Labour journal, asserted: "It is the clear duty of the Government to rid the country of this menace to the King's peace" (Daily Herald, October 5, 1936).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

speech that were viewed as likely to lead to breaches of the peace.[123] Although the BUF often denied it, the Public Order Act dealt it a serious blow. It made it more difficult for it to obtain permits to hold marches and demonstrations and reserve halls for meetings, banned the use of stewards at outdoor meetings, and outlawed its distinctive black shirt which had helped reduce class distinctions among members and been an effective recruiting tool. For many years the authorities had denied halls to political organizations on the extreme Right and Left.[124] More than a dozen Blackshirts were arrested for making inflammatory speeches under the new regulation, including Thomson, "Mick" Clarke, who fascists sometimes referred to as "The Idol of Bethnal Green," and William Cox, a racial anti-Semitic costermonger from Stoke Newington. Shortly after the London County Council elections in March 1937, the LCC banned the use of loudspeakers and loudspeaker vans by political campaigners in all open public spaces, thereby depriving the fascists of one of their most effective and inexpensive

---

[123]Board of Deputies of British Jews, Annual Report 1936, Board of Deputies of British Jews, London, p 33. Several European countries had already outlawed political uniforms, including Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland.

[124] In the fall of 1936 J. Toole, the Lord Mayor of Manchester, forbade the Blackshirts from wearing their uniforms in a demonstration. According to Toole, the result was that townspeople took much less interest in the fascists. He explained, "I wanted to let people see these Fascists without their uniforms That made all the difference in the world. You never saw such a motley lot and I believe it convinced people that the future of the country could not be trusted to such a crew " (Daily Herald, October 6, 1936).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

propaganda tools.[125] The Public Order Act also affected its opponents. For example, the ILP was prevented from wearing its red shirt in public--but for good reason they generally enjoyed a more respectable and law-abiding reputation and had less difficulty in obtaining the permits and facilities they desired. As an example, in the late thirties the fascists were denied permission to rent the Royal Albert Hall in London, Seymour Hall in Marylebone, and Battersea Town Hall while other groups were permitted to use them, including the CPGB and its trade union organization, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), or Minority Movement. [126] Blackshirt complained that the Public Order Act "destroys many principles on which British law has been built for centuries in order to permit political corruption and police methods of a South American Republic to be introduced into British public life." [127] One measure of how effective the bill was is that the government did not see the need to propose any additional legislation against the fascists until the spring of 1940 when it revised Defence Regulation 18B in order to intern them without charging them with specific

---

[125] British Union Pictorial Record, BUF, London, undated, p. 14.
[126] Action, March 11, 1939; Manchester Guardian, October 9, 1936, Daily Herald, October 9, 1936.
[127] Blackshirt, as quoted in Robert Benewick, Political Violence and Public Order, Allen Lane, London, 1969, pp. 142-48. Many assumed that the Public Order Act would have less harmful an effect on the BUF For example, the Tribune asserted: "Fascism...is not a matter of shirts...Its outward and visible symbols can be discarded, without decreasing its militant power."(Tribune, January 8, 1937)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

crimes.

In the mid-1930s, Mosley and his advisors resolved that steps had to be taken to stop the decline in party membership. One of the solutions they chose was to concentrate on international issues. Another was to take a more aggressive stance against the Jews and to make them a scapegoat for the BUF's problems. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, making anti-Semitism one of its central issues deflected attention away from economic questions and nationalism, two core issues, and convinced even more people that the BUF operated outside the normal range of British politics.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER IV

THE BUF AND THE JEWS

Anti-Semitism, which had always been an element of the BUF's political philosophy, became one of its prime issues in the mid-thirties. An examination of this topic will shed light on several themes of this study, such as whether the BUF was a home-grown organization or a derivative of Italian Fascism and Nazism. It will also help to identify the reasons for its failure since anti-Semitism ran counter to the country's long tradition of racial tolerance. Several questions will be explored in this chapter. Was anti-Semitism central to BUF ideology, or was it adopted primarily for political expediency? What impact did the BUF believe the Jews had on British society in the inter-war era and what special characteristics did it suggest they possessed ? Which individuals and groups were the strongest proponents of anti-Semitism in the movement and, conversely, who were its leading critics? Why was its brand of anti-Semitism popular in certain pockets of the country, such as London's East End, but a failure overall? How did the campaign affect its already slim chances of becoming a mass movement?

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF faced a potential crisis in late 1934 and 1935. Membership continued to fall steadily from its peak in early 1934. Rumors were rife that the party had reached its apex and had begun a decline that it might be unable to check.[1] The BUF's active, or Division I and II, membership plummeted from 50,000 in August 1934 to 5,000 in October of the following year.[2] The Birmingham branch, for example, saw its register drop from 2,000 in 1934 to a mere 125 the following year. The BUF had difficulty publicizing its activities given the negative attitude the mainstream press adopted towards it. This naturally had a deleterious effect on recruiting, fundraising, the collection of dues, and the sale of uniforms and insignia.[3] The situation became even worse in 1935 when Mussolini, who had been sending Mosley approximately 5,000 pounds a month since 1932, cut the figure by about 80%.[4]

---

[1] See, for instance, William Rust, "Mosley and Lancashire," Labour Monthly Pamphlets, Vol. 3, No 5 (May 1935) and R. Palme Dutt, "The Cotton Industry and the Fascist Offensive in Lancashire," Labour Monthly, Vol. 17, No 4 (April 1935).

[2] Great Britain, Home Office 144/20412 107-22; 144/20145/14-7.

[3] The following example points to the existence of a possible blackout. Shortly after "The Battle of Cable Street," a film featuring various persons involved in the events in the East End was released. Mosley and Morrison were among those interviewed. When the film was released to the cinemas, the sections featuring Mosley were removed. (Morning Post, October 24, 1936).

[4] Mussolini gave the payments partly in hopes that the BUF would help sway British opinion in favor of Italy in the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis of 1934-35. For more information on Mussolini's financial assistance to the party see John Hope, "Cable Street, the BUF and the Italian Subsidy," Searchlight, Vol. 25, No 292 (October 1999), pp 20-21 and Richard Lamb, Mussolini and the British, John Murray, London, 1997, p. 92.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Shortly afterwards, the fascists reduced their full-time staff at the Black House, their London headquarters, and sold the facility Meanwhile, the BUF Trust, Ltd. was rumored to have gone into default. [5] In 1935, L.E. Cameron-Walker, the trust's accountant, wrote to A.C. Fletcher, District Treasurer of the Dorchester branch:

> It is essential.. that every possible economy be made in your District, as income now is very much below expenditure. Matters will improve.. but at the present moment the position of the District is such as to warrant expenditure only on items which are absolutely necessary to enable you to carry on.[6]

A similar situation existed in branches across the country. These problems naturally hurt morale. After the New Party debacle, Mosley understood that the organization needed to attract new members and sources of funding if it hoped to survive. In the autumn of 1934 he seemingly chose anti-Semitism as one of the means to help the party regain its momentum. A short time later, he became convinced that the attempt to build the party up from the national to the local level had been a failure and that it was wiser to develop it from the grass-roots by contesting mostly local elections.

This more aggressive stance against the Jews marked a departure from earlier BUF policy. For its first two years, the organization took an ambiguous position on the

---

[5]Letter from Henry J.H. Bartlett to Robert Saunders, July 29, 1935, Robert Saunders Papers, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, 119/A1/57.
[6]Letter from L.E. Cameron-Walker to A.C. Fletcher, Dorchester District Treasurer, December 9, 1935, Robert Saunders Papers.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

issue. Mosley, who had not expressed anti-Jewish views previously in his political career, feared it would damage the party's reputation. As Alex Softly has noted, Mosley hoped that the BUF would present an "image of respectability" to the British public, particularly after the Olympia meeting. He does not seem to have regarded it as central to the party's doctrine at this time. There is no mention of it in The Greater Britain, and fascist newspapers in 1932 and early 1933 discussed the issue only occasionally. In his pamphlet, Notes to Speakers, which was published in 1932 shortly after the party was founded, Mosley specifically instructed members not to discuss the topic and warned that those who did would be punished. "Anti-Semitism," he held, "forms no part of the policy of this organization," and "anti-Semitic propaganda is forbidden."[7] "Hitler made his greatest mistake" he asserted in the spring of 1933, "in his attitude towards the Jews."[8] This was hardly the type of statement a man who was a tool of the Nazis would make. The BUF insisted that there was no "British race," just as Fascist Italy held that there was no Italian one. Indeed, some Blackshirts took great pride in the country's mixed Roman, Pict, Saxon, Norman, and Celtic past. As one Mosleyite recalls,

---

[7]Board of Deputies of British Jews, Annual Report, Board of Deputies of British Jews, London, 1932, pp. 43-44

[8]Times, April 21, 1933

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Mosley always claimed that any form of racial hatred would be anathema to a Movement that believed that Britain's future lay within its multi-racial Empire."[9] This is certainly arguable, for anti-Semitism was a belief many Blackshirts always shared. The Blackshirts also did not criticize the preferential treatment whites received in India, South Africa, and other possessions. Jews were permitted to belong to the party until May 1934 when virtually all branches stopped accepting their applications. [10] Gordon Beckwell, a postwar Mosleyite, has argued weakly: "[Mosley] never attacked all Jews for what they were, only some Jews for what they did...Anybody who studies [his] writings and speeches from this period will note that he always keeps a sense of proportion: the subject would take up half a minute of an hour speech...The Movement's speakers were also instructed not to give undue emphasis to this subject."[11] Frank R.

---

[9] Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999.

[10] Jewish members included Leaper, who had served as a New Party candidate in Yorkshire in the 1931 General Election, T. "Kid" Lewis, a former welterweight boxing champion from the East End who became one of the first members and served as a leader of the stewards, Harold Soref, one of the standard bearers at the Olympia Hall rally and later a Conservative MP, Lew Levisohn, a member of the Battersea branch, Beckett, who was the son of a Jewish mother and English father, and a Mr. Cohen. (Ibid) After the war, Levisohn became the manager of Winifred Atwell, a black musician popular in the UK. Some suggested that he was a Communist planted in the organization. (Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 13, 1999) A few members knew of Beckett's mixed ancestry, but they did not attempt to make it an issue. Jews were permitted to belong to the party and its affiliated organizations, such as the Fascist Union of British University Associations, after 1934. Very few Jews, however, apparently joined any of these groups. (Frederic Mullally, Fascism Inside England, Claude Morris, London, 1947, p. 62). Also consult R. Reynall Bellamy, "We Marched with Mosley: A British Fascist's View of the Twentieth Century," British Union Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Sheffield.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hawke has claimed: "It was only when Jews attacked British interests and the leaders and members of the Movement that there commenced any feelings against them. In the early thirties, there were many Jewish people in the membership of the British Union."[12] In truth, anti-Semites had always exerted influence in the BUF. The party's signal lack of popularity caused some of these individuals to search for a scapegoat, such as the Jews, to blame the party's misfortunes on. Searchlight, an anti-fascist journal is on target when it notes, "The [BUF's] turn to antisemitism looks like a cynical manoeuvre intended to restore the BUF's flagging fortunes."[13] As Andrew Thorpe states, "A mixture of conviction and opportunism led to the highlighting of the Jewish issue."[14] In the early thirties Mosley allegedly told Baroness Ravensdale, his sister-in-law: "A dynamic creed such as Fascism cannot flourish unless it has a scapegoat to hit out at, such as Jewry."[15] This is a more reasonable explanation for the inauguration of the anti-Semitic campaign than the BUF's argument that the campaign was only initiated in retaliation for attacks on its members by Jews.

---

[11]Gordon Beckwell, "East London for Mosley," Comrade, Vol. XIII, No. 48 (January 7, 1998), p. 5
[12]Written interview with Frank R. Hawke, June 29, 1999
[13]Searchlight, Vol. 25, No. 293, (November 1999).
[14]Andrew Thorpe, Britain in the 1930s: The Deceptive Decade, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, p. 54
[15]Mosley, as quoted in Colin Cross, The Fascists in Britain, Barrie & Rockcliff, London, 1961, p. 123

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Most of Mosley's lieutenants did not give much attention to the Jews before 1934. Many feared that the issue would deflect attention from its core subjects like the corporate state and the strengthening of imperial ties. For example, Fuller and F.M.Box wisely advised the movement to concentrate on more substantive and less controversial subjects. "The issue of Fascism has been obscured in Germany by the irrelevant Jew question," Blackshirt noted in early 1933. "The... Nazis' [campaign] against the Jews has considerably complicated their accession to power and their ability to deal with the Socialist, Communist, and financial enemies of the State."[16] "The British Union is definitely not anti-Jewish," wrote the same organ. "We have no right, nor desire either to condone or condemn any phase of policy which is being applied in Germany; as we are concerned with putting our own house in order in our own way."[17] The public was convinced, however, even in this early period that Mosley and the BUF had a deep animus against the Jews. Perhaps this was because the Blackshirts bore many outward resemblances to the Nazis and because Labour, the ILP, and especially the Communists, constantly drew parallels between the Blackshirts and NSDAP in their

---

[16]Blackshirt, April 1, 1933 The same journal observed that there were "good Jews and bad Jews" just as there were "good Christians and bad Gentiles." (Ibid., August 5-11, 1933).
[17]ibid., July 8-July 14 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

propaganda.

Blackshirts gave more emphasis to anti-Semitism than Beckwell and Hawke suggest. Even before the inception of a full-fledged campaign against the Jews in 1934, some Blackshirt toughs attacked Jews, and an anti-Jewish undercurrent was evident in all of its publications. Owing partly to the size of the party, some Blackshirts found that they could ignore Mosley's instructions on this topic and get away with it. As Robert Skidelsky has noted, "From the start of the BUF...there were powerful and barely contained anti-Semitic forces in Mosley's following." And even after the party's anti-Semitic campaign wound down in 1937 Blackshirts continued to vilify Jews in print and on the hustings until the party was dissolved in 1940.[18] Throughout this period individual Blackshirts attacked Jews in print and on the hustings. At least a small minority of members were attracted to the movement solely for its anti-Semitism. Thanks to them, the party acquired a reputation for racial intolerance that it was never able to erase. A minority of members accepted all or nearly all of the major principles of racial anti-Semitism: the notion that Jews were an alien "race," the idea that they were attempting to establish a world state with themselves at the helm,

---

[18]See, for instance, "Notes from Scotland," Action, April 1, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and the notion that they intended to mongrelise all "races" besides their own. Some of these individuals occupied influential positions in the party such as Joyce, Chesterton, and Beckett. "We must get rid of this muddle-headed idea," stated Beckett, for example, "that the...Jew [is] an Englishman."[19] "How can a Jew be national?" asked one writer to the editor of Blackshirt. "Does national mean national Jewish, or national British, or national Jewish British?"[20] Lower-ranking racial anti-Semites included John Charmley, leader of the Hull branch, Jim Battersby, leader of the Southport branch, Toni Moran, the wife of Tommy Moran, and James William Higgs, whose son, Dennis, led the Southend branch in Essex. In this early period, some members physically attacked Jews, particularly in the London area. At least some of the incidents appear to have been initiated by anti-fascists, especially Communists and Jews, who not unreasonably feared that the BUF was a British version of the NSDAP. As Colin Holmes notes, "Jewish groups were prepared to initiate attacks on fascists and to retaliate when the victims of

---

[19]Hackney Gazette, February 21, 1936.
[20]Blackshirt, February 8, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

fascist assaults."[21] For example, Jews were among those who led the violent protests against the Blackshirts outside the Olympia Hall meeting. Fights between Blackshirts and Jews were a regular occurrence in several boroughs in the East End of London in the mid-1930s In October 1934, Max Levitas, a young trade unionist, and two other young Jewish men were arrested in Stepney for hurling fireworks at Blackshirts during an anti-fascist demonstration that Communists participated in.[22] As W.F. Mandle, an Australian scholar, has noted, "some Jews...were unwilling to distinguish between varieties of Fascism."[23] As a British Nationalist Party member has recalled, "Jews were... left-inclined...Therefore, when the communists sought confrontation with the BUF, Jews were in the forefront of this."[24]

---

[21]Colin Holmes, "East End Anti-Semitism, 1936," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, Vol. 32 (Spring 1976), p. 26. In recent years scholars have questioned the notion that the BUF insigated most of its clashes with anti-fascists. For example, Stephen Cullen asserts that Special Branch and MI5 files suggest that "the use of premeditated political violence was more a characteristic of the anti-fascist opposition than of the BUF " (Stephen Cullen, "Political Violence: The Case of the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 28, No. 2, April 1993, p. 247). Gisela Lebzelter states that "opposition at Fascist meetings" was often due to "local Jews." (Gisela Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England, Macmillan, London, 1979, p. 93).

[22]Daily Worker, October 18, 1934 Also see Cullen, "Political Violence," p. 263

[23]City and East London Observer, October 13, 1934, W.F Mandle, Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1968, p. 5. Also see The Truth About Anti-Semitism, The Workers' Bookshop, London, undated.

[24]Interview with A. Lecomber, February 16, 2000.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A large segment of the public also seems to have been unable or unwilling to differentiate between the BUF and the German and Italian fascists. From an early date the BUF recognized that it was perceived as hostile to the Jews. For example, Blackshirt asked whether "we have given sufficient publicity to the fact that we are not anti-Semitic."[25] In spite of the anti-Jewish beliefs some members always harbored, the BUF did not initiate an organized propaganda campaign against the Jews until 1934. Prior to that time the organization was content to condemn Jews as individuals not as a group. "We...know," noted one BUF journal, for example, "that any Jew attacking a [BUF] member does so, not as a Jew, but as a Red."[26] In April 1933 Blackshirt stated: "Anti-semitism is no issue of fascism...In Germany, anti-semitism is a symptom, not of fascism, but Germany."[27] In May Mosley told the Jewish Chronicle, a leading Jewish newspaper: "Within a month of the foundation of the British Union...an order was posted by me in all our premises forbidding Jew baiting in any shape or form and stating definitely that the British Union...was not anti-Semitic...I have repeatedly challenged any newspaper to bring to my notice cases which infringe this order and consequently would

---

[25] Blackshirt, August 12-August 18, 1933.
[26] Ibid., May 13, 1933
[27] Stephen Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists, 1932-40," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 1987), p. 126

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

lead to the expulsion of a member." He insisted that the party's position on the issue was "very similar to that of Fascist Italy where attacks upon Jews are unknown."[28] Two months later the BUF falsely claimed that it was "not anti-Jewish in any way."[29] In early 1933 Blackshirt stated that "The early propaganda of the Nazis against the Jews has considerably complicated their accession to power and their ability to deal with the Socialist, Communist and financial enemies of the State."[30] A few months later Mosley attempted to identify racial anti-Semitism as peculiarly German, a weak strategy he used many times without success:

> The attacks on Jews in Germany do not rest on any Fascist principle but are manifestations of an inherent quality in the German character. It is foolish to blame Fascism for something that has its source in the mentality of a particular nation. For many centuries religious and racial tolerance has been part of the British character and I give my assurance that under Fascism that great tradition will be preserved.[31]

"We refuse to attack a man merely because he is a Jew," Blackshirt observed in September 1933, "without any enquiry whether he had served Britain with his blood or

---

[28] Jewish Chronicle, May 1933. This organ was a monthly at the time. It was not until 1938 that Mussolini, who was no anti-Semite, introduced anti-Jewish legislation at the urging of the Nazis. "The Manifesto of the Race," the cornerstone of this legislation, deprived Jews of their full civil rights. (Meir Michaelis, Mussolini and the Jews, Clarendon, New York, 1978, p. 157). Privately, Mussolini was critical of the Nazis' racial policies. The Italian Fascists referred to their brand of bigotry as "spiritual racism" in contrast to the Nazis' biological racism.

[29] Blackshirt, July 1-July 7, 1933.

[30] Ibid., as quoted in Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England, p. 91.

[31] Jewish Economic Forum, July 28, 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

has served her enemies with his money. Many Jews have fought for this country, and some of their families, through years and centuries, have proved themselves to be loyal citizens... Such men have nothing to fear from Fascism."[32] Two months later the paper assured Jews "who had proved themselves worthy... of this country" that they would be treated justly under a fascist regime. [33]

Many rank-and-file members shared these views. For example, in February 1934 John Cornhill wrote three long articles in Fascist Week on the financial industry without once mentioning Jews. [34] The Jewish Chronicle noted that many of "Mosley's followers are... attracted...by his policy for the economic reconstruction of the country [rather] than by his anti-Semitic teachings."[35] Most of Mosley's lieutenants do not appear to have been racial anti-Semites, although some gave hints from the party's earliest days that they held negative opinions of the Jews and might give greater expression to them. For

---

[32]Blackshirt, September 30-October 6, 1933.
[33]Ibid., November 18-24, 1933.
[34]Fascist Week, February 9-February 15, 1934; February 16-February 22, 1934; and February 23-March 1, 1934. One member recalls, "The anti-semitism of the German Movement was... regarded with distaste by most British Fascists, and our disagreement with it was expressed in our early literature. It was felt that it was a purely German manifestation, and no business of ours; nor did we let it influence our own tolerant attitude to British Jews." (Bellamy, "We Marched with Mosley," pp. 59-60). Bellamy's interpretation is not entirely accurate. Actually, Mosley and some of his followers did allow the Nazis' attitude towards the Jews to affect their own. For example, racial anti-Semites, such as Joyce, Chesterton, and Beckett received inspiration and ideas from the NSDAP.
[35]Jewish Chronicle, July 16, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

instance, E.D. Hart, head of the Research Department, stated: "The Jews have their share of socially useful attaintments."[36] Mosley himself seems to have had no strong feelings against the Jews prior to founding the party. Several of his friends were Jews, including Alfred Mond (later Lord Melchett), who served in Lloyd George's cabinet during the First World War, Sir Herbert Samuel, the Liberal leader and former High Commissioner of Palestine, and Harold Laski, the political scientist.[37] By 1934 Mosley took a harsher attitude towards the Jews. He seems to have become an anti-Semite at least partly because he needed a scapegoat to blame for his party's failures and an issue to help him attract more followers. Throughout his career he had been willing to experiment with new ideas and strategies in his quest for power, which was always his paramount goal. Making anti-Semitism a key plank of the BUF program after he and his advisors had insisted that it played no role in the party was entirely consistent with this pattern. Power, not ideological consistency, was always his chief objective. Indeed, Mosley himself was

---

[36] Action, August 27, 1938. As Neill Nugent has stated, "The widely-held view of Mosley and the BUF as merely a collection of anti-semites... is too simple." (Neill Nugent, "The Ideas of the British Union of Fascists," in The British Right: Conservative and Right Wing Politics in Britain, Saxon House, Farnborough, 1977, p. 161).

[37] Ted Grant has noted, "It is significant that among the early supporters of Mosley [were] a number of wealthy Jews," such as Ralph Blumenfeld, Chairman of the Daily Express, and Major Nathan, Liberal MP for Northeast Bethnal Green. (Ted Grant, The Menace of Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It, Revolutionary Communist Party, London, 1948, pp. 6-7). Herbert Samuel was a Zionist and the first professing Jew to serve in the Cabinet.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one of the architects of the BUF's anti-Semitic campaign. George Sacks, the writer, was on target when he observed in 1935: "It is quite obvious that, left to himself, Sir Oswald Mosley is no anti-Semite...Gradually, however, the clamour of his own supporters, and the realisation of the value of anti-Semitism as an aid to power, is forcing itself to the front...We may confidently expect anti-Semitism to be added to his political programme."[38] The New Statesman recognized this in 1936:

> It is an open secret that his [Mosley's] economic policy put out with a blare of trumpets a few years ago, made no impression... We find it hard to believe that Sir Oswald is himself convinced by his own anti-Semitic propaganda except as a political weapon...Not many years ago [he] numbered prominent Jews amongst his intimate friends. Sir Oswald saw more clearly than most people that an anti-Semitic movement might catch on even in England. Anti-Semitism is, in truth, latent in many people, who dislike certain 'foreign' characteristics in the Jewish race [39]

The best explanation for the initiation of the anti-Semitic campaign seems to be that it was a combination of political expediency and ideology. Several writers have already suggested that political gain as much as ideology was a major reason why the campaign was launched.[40] "One can conclude," D.S. Lewis has observed, " that, in part at least, the

---

[38]George Sacks, The Intelligent Man's Guide to Jew-Baiting, Gollancz, London, 1935, p 150. Mr A. Herman, President of the Zionist Youth of Great Britain, stated in 1936, "Mosley never was, is not, and never will be a sincere and convinced anti-Semite." (Herman, as quoted in Action, December 5, 1936).

[39]New Statesman and Nation, October 10, 1936. Mosley's family does not seem to have been anti-Semitic. He was quite close to his paternal grandfather, a friend of King Edward VII. The latter was quite sympathetic to the Jews. For more information on Edward consult Anthony Allfrey, Edward VII and His Jewish Court, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1991.

[40]Mandle, Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists, p. 13; 23. William Cobbett?, Jews and the Jews in England, Boswell, London, 1938, pp 110-11.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BUF's adoption of anti-Semitism was motivated by political expediency. This would be consistent also with the reduction of anti-Semitism during...the 1937-1938 recession, as well as the timing of the East End campaign."[41]

The Jews, who represented less than 1% of the population of Britain, were a convenient, highly visible target. In October 1933 the BUF claimed that they were at the "fore in every crooked financial deal which damages British interests" and had "introduced the weapon of the razor and the knife to our streets in support of the alien interests which they serve."[42] In the next month Blackshirt warned:

> The Jews have now organised as a racial minority within the State to conduct a furious agitation [against fascism] with all the force of their great money power. [They have] established such a grip upon the Press and other organs for the creation of public opinion that they are in a position to hold up to ransom the established Parties of the State [43]

In November 1933 Blackshirt published a leader with the provocative title, "Shall Jews Drag Britain to War?" In the following January Mosley told a Birmingham audience: "We will attack the alien forces in the city of London. Every producer lives under the tyranny [they exercise]. We will crack the whip over their heads."[44] "Alien forces" and

---

[41] D S. Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987, p. 109. A.W Brian Simpson, has noted: "Anti-Semitism was not a necessary part of Mosley's fascist programme." (A.W Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, Oxford, Clarendon, 1992, p. 122).
[42] Blackshirt, September 30-October 6, 1933
[43] Ibid., November 4-November 10, 1933
[44] Jewish Chronicle, February 24, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"alien financiers" were two of the many code phrases the BUF used for the Jews. In May 1934 Mosley told an audience in Bristol that he would no longer permit Jews to become members of the BUF because "he couldn't allow the enemy into the party."[45] They were barred because allegedly they placed "the interests of their own race" first, the "Jew controlled press" printed lies about the party, and because they organized physical attacks against party members.[46] Point Eight of the ten-point "Blackshirt Policy" claimed that Jews used "the financial power of Britain in the interests...of foreign countries."[47] Meanwhile, BUF members chalked anti-Semitic slogans on hoardings such as "P.J.," meaning "Perish Judah," and they broke up Communist meetings partly because the latter took a more militant stance against its anti-Jewish efforts than any other organization.

It was not, however, until October 28, 1934 that the BUF specifically attacked Jews as a group at one of its major public events. This date marked the party's second anniversary, which suggests that anti-Semitism was less integral an element of its

---

[45] Jewish Chronicle, May 11, 1934

[46] Fascist Week, May 11, 1934. Frank R. Hawke recently recalled, "Any such feelings [anti-Semitism] that were aroused were purely due to Jews attacking us. Since they represented just 1% of our [country's] population it seems strange that of all the court confictions [sic] that were recorded for affrays 60% were Jews." (Interview with Frank R. Hawke, June 29, 1999).

[47] Blackshirt, August 10, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ideology than some scholars, such as Richard Thurlow and Robert Benewick have suggested. That night Mosley told an audience at the Royal Albert Hall:

> I find that as I have proceeded in Fascism I have encountered forces which I did not dream existed in Britain. One of them is the power of organized Jewry which is today mobilized against Fascism. They have thrown down their challenge to Fascism and I am not in the habit of ignoring challenges. They howl over the length and breadth of the land that we are bent on racial or religious persecution. That charge is utterly untrue. Our Empire is a great conglomeration of races of the earth, bound together in a mighty unity, and any suggestion of racial or religious discrimination strikes a blow at the conception of the British Empire.
>
> Today we do not attack the Jews on racial or religious grounds. We take up the challenge that they have thrown down because they fight against Fascism and Britain!
>
> We we will not tolerate an organized community within the State which owes allegiance not to Britain but to another race in foreign countries. [48]

This speech was the beginning of an organized campaign against the Jews. For the next two years, anti-Semitism became a leading party issue. A large proportion of the articles in Action and Blackshirt from the autumn of 1934 to early 1937 dealt in some way with the Jews, which left less space for topics that might have appealed to a broader audience. Several columns devoted exclusively to anti-Semitism appeared in both publications, like Beckett's "Order of Synthetic Jewry," J.A. MacNab, Sandy McDougall and M. Collins' "Jolly Judah," and MacNab's "I Sketch Their World" and "The Jews Again." One of the fascists' favorite ploys was to publish anti-Semitic

---

[48]Mosley, as quoted in Cross, The Fascists in Britain, Barrie and Rockliff, London, 1961, pp 126-27 For a detailed account of the speech see the leader in the Daily Herald, October 29, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

quotes by bogus "Jews." 'We Jews," stated one of them, "are at the end of a civilisation [Britain] which is used up and sucked dry; we have eaten into the nations; have tainted and dishonoured the races, and with our mortiferous culture, have brought staleness and decay into everything." [49] This illustrates the lengths some fascists were willing to go to in order to embarrass the Jews. While anti-Semitism became one of the fascists' major issues, the BUF did not become a single-issue party as some writers have suggested. As Neill Nugent has noted, "Even when the anti-semitic campaign was at its height, 'serious' political and economic ideas continued to form the major part of policy statements."[50]

The East End of London, with its large Jewish population, became the focus of the BUF campaign.[51] There the despised Jewish minority was prospering while many members of the Christian majority were suffering economically. Several developments intensified the situation. One was F.M. Box's resignation as Director of Organisation in early 1935. Up to then he appears to have been able to help prevent racial anti-Semites such as Beckett and Joyce from gaining more influence in the party. Another event was

---

[49] Blackshirt, March 15, 1935
[50] Nugent, "The Ideas of the British Union of Fascists," in Nugent, The British Right, p. 146
[51] Approximately 60% of London's Jews lived in this section of the metropolis in the 1930s.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the hiring of Richard A."Jock" Houston, a street bookmaker and racial anti-Semite with an extensive criminal record, as a paid speaker in the East End in October 1935. Houston, who became one of the most popular BUF propagandists in the East End, did much to exacerbate anti-Jewish prejudice in this area. Another, probably less significant factor, was anti-BUF statements by various Jewish personages, including Neville Laski, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and the Chief Rabbi of London. Laski, for example, asserted: "Mosley's spiritual home is in Germany beside Hitler."[52]

Blackshirts in the provinces gave this issue less attention. Besides Glasgow, Manchester, and Leeds, relatively few Jews lived outside London. For instance, they comprised less than 0.6 % of the population of Birmingham. Not surprisingly, the latter branch did not have very much to say about the "Jewish Question."[53] Tensions had been high for decades in the East End between Jewish residents and the Christian majority--mostly Cockney manual workers and tradesman. Many Christians unfairly blamed Jews, who had mostly settled in the area only a few decades earlier, for problems

---

[52]Laski, as quoted in the Jewish Chronicle, April 12, 1935 Ronald F. Webb, an ex-UM branch leader, has recalled, "In...1935 the Chief Rabbi made an attack on Mosley [and] branches in East London formed overnight " (Interview with Ronald F. Webb, August 24, 1999).

[53]John D. Brewer, Mosley's Men, The British Union of Fascists in the West Midlands, Gower, Aldershot, 1984, p. 107. Jewish Chronicle, February 5, 1937 For an insightful analysis of the roots of anti-Semitism among young urbanites in Britain in the twentieth century see James T Robb, Working-Class Anti-Semite, Tavistock, London, 1954.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

they experienced such as the loss of employment, overcrowding, and poor sanitation. Actually, the latter two problems had been endemic to the East End for many years prior to the influx of Jews in the late nineteenth century. The economic collapse of the 1930s naturally exacerbated the situation. A survey conducted in the late thirties by Mass-Observation, a leading polling organization, found that only 2 % of the men and 13 % of the women in Stepney, a BUF stronghold, stated that they liked Jews socially. [54] Edward Farzani, an electrical worker and Shoreditch resident at the time, recalls, "The Jews weren't English and they weren't German anymore. They weren't anything." [55] In late 1934 and 1935, the BUF discovered that street corner speakers such as Houston and E.G. "Mick" Clarke brought scores of recruits and generated considerable enthusiasm among the inhabitants of the East End with their anti-Jewish diatribes. Clarke, who like many fascists in the East End worked in the furniture trade, warned:

> It is about time the British people of the East End knew that East London's big pogrom is not very far away now. The people who have caused the pogrom to come near in East London are the Yids...Mosley is coming every night of the week in future to East London and by God there is going to be a pogrom.[56]

---

[54]Tony Kushner, The Persistence of Prejudice, St. Martin's, Manchester, 1989, p. 49
[55]Interview with Edward Farzani, April 11, 1999.
[56]PRO/HO 144/21061, 692, 242/61A.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Scores of recruits from the area joined the movement at this time. Encouraged by their efforts, the BUF chose to make this impoverished, densely-populated area the prime focus of its anti-Semitic campaign. Clashes between Blackshirts and Jews and Communists became commonplace between 1934 and 1937. In 1935, more than three dozen Jewish men and boys reported being attacked by BUF toughs in Stepney and Whitechapel. [57] In September 1936 Blackshirt hooligans threw flour and soot on a demonstration organized by the Ex-Servicemen's Movement Against Fascism (AJEX), a Jewish organization. [58] The clashes seem to have led to a boost in morale among those East End fascists who preferred to use physical force against their opponents.[59] The violence in the East End spawned a host of Jewish defense organizations besides AJEX, such as the Co-ordinating Committee against Fascism, a coalition of several dozen

---

[57] East London Advertiser, September 21, 1936. The actual number of assaults was certainly higher since many cases went unreported.
[58] Ibid., September 5, 1936.
[59] For instance, to the tune of "Sons of the Sea!", a popular song, BUF toughs in Bethnal Green sang:

Scums of Aldgate
Are all Yiddish Boys
Up and down Whitechapel
With their Hebrew noise.
They may build their barricades
And think they know the game
But they can't beat the Boys of Bethnal Green,
Who'll make old England's name.

(ibid.).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jewish and socialist groups organized by the Board of Deputies of British Jews; the Jewish People's Council against Fascism and Anti-Semitism (JPC), a coalition based in the East End comprised of more militant groups; and the Blue and White Association. The JPC organized mass meetings, distributed leaflets, and published it own monthly newsletter, Vigilance. In February 1936 Jews from Hackney, an East End borough which was the scene of some of the worst racial violence, delivered a petition to their MP signed by over 1,000 of their co-religionists.[60] This illustrates the anxieties many Jews felt:

> We, the undersigned being Jewish tradespeople and inhabitants of Hoxton and the vicinity do hereby declare, that for a considerable time we have been subjected to an intense anti-Jewish campaign initiated by the fascist movement in the district The Jew-baiting commenced in noticeable form on the seventh day of October 1935, and steadily increased with the support of the rough element of the neighborhood. They parade up and down Hoxton Street on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings and under the pretext of selling the Blackshirt paper and shout a tirade of anti-Jewish slogans to incite the populace against the Jews.
>
> Meetings are held in the vicinity of Hoxton Street solely for the purpose of Jew baiting. Many of us have been subjected to most disgraceful and obscene language, insulting remarks, and threats; and various cases can be quoted of a)a shopkeeper having been assaulted b)another tradesman being compelled to close his shop before the legal time owing to the menacing attitude of the 'Blackshirts;' c)a certain shopkeeper had goods stolen from his shop after a fascist disturbance, and many other instances of annoyance. The following are a few of their slogans: 'Clear out the Jews from Hoxton;' 'Perish Judea;' 'Why buy your goods from the stinking Jew? Go in and take them yourselves,' 'Ex-servicemen in the gutter, the Jews in the shops;' 'Jew, back to the Ghetto,' 'The Jews have robbed you long enough.' Very many more slogans can be quoted.

---

[60]Interview with David Levitt, April 11, 1999

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> We earnestly plead to you as law-abiding citizens many of us having lived the most part of our lives in this district, that every possible action should be taken against these organised hooligans as they must eventually endanger our livelihoods and personal safety.[61]

As violent and dramatic as these episodes were, they were still not enough for some Blackshirts who subscribed to racial anti-Semitism, like Joyce and Beckett. As Robert Skidelsky notes, "They disliked the B.U.F.'s half-hearted anti-semitism, and wanted to make it a central issue."[62] For example, in September 1936 Joyce told leading BUF speakers that they should risk being incarcerated rather than modifying their attacks on Jews. Wisely, Mosley rejected his advice.[63]

Tensions in the East End of London remained high until the beginning of the war. The inner boroughs of Bethnal Green, Limehouse, Stepney, and Whitechapel, became a BUF stronghold, the sole area of the country where the organization became a political and physical force to be reckoned with. Over 1,000 political meetings--both fascist and anti-fascist--were held in the area during the summer months from 1937 to 1939.[64] In 1937 Scotland Yard found it necessary to dispatch all-night patrols to the

---

[61] Jewish Chronicle, February 21, 1936. Another slogan the fascists and their followers chanted was, "Fascists First, Jews Second."
[62] Robert Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1975, p. 345.
[63] Roger Eatwell, Fascism: A History, Allen Lane, New York, 1996, p. 236.
[64] Richard Thurlow, The Secret State, Blackwell, Cambridge, MA, 1995, p. 199.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

area. Gareth Stedman Jones and Christopher T. Husbands have suggested that the casual nature of employment in the East End helped prevent the growth of an unionized working-class which identified with socialism or communism. They argue that workers there have had "a rootless volatility," which helps to explain why for more than a century the East End has been a bastion of nationalist and racialist movements such as the BBL, BUF, and National Front.[65] Non-economic factors have also played a role in the development of xenophobic groups in this area. East End residents have often had educational levels below the national average, which has helped foster bigotry. The BUF attempted to exploit these feelings during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis when it suggested that Ethiopians were racially inferior to the Italians. More than three decades later, the National Front-- which Chesterton helped found in 1966-- took a similar tack when it sought to restrict immigration from the New Commonwealth. Another factor is overcrowding. Space has been at a premium in many sections of the East End for decades. It was a problem even before the first large group of Jewish immigrants arrived

---

[65]See C.T. Husbands, "East End Racism 1900-1980: Geographical Continuities in Vigilantist and Extreme Right Wing Political Behavior," The London Journal: A Review of Metropolitan Society Past and Present Vol. 8, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 3-26. For example, in the 1980s the National Front became a significant force in Tower Hamlets, an East End community in which many immigrants from the Commonwealth settled after the war. Also see Annie Phizacklea and Robert Miles, "Working-Class Racist Beliefs in the Inner City," Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea, eds. Racism and Political Action in Britain, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1979.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

towards the end of the nineteenth century. The successive waves of foreigners in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries naturally exacerbated the situation and led to resentment against them among natives, who often lacked the economic means to obtain housing elsewhere.

Post-war Mosleyites reject the inference that racial intolerance was one of the major incentives for East End residents to join the BUF. They insist that its "Great Program" and the indifference of the government to the problems of the area were more salient factors. [66] Race was certainly a significant factor, however, leading to the party's popularity in the East End. For centuries, people there have resisted the immigrants who settled in their community as fascists like Leonard Wise, who helped recruit members in the area, have recognized.[67]

---

[66]For instance, Jeff Wallder claims that 90 percent of the reason East Enders joined was the "Great Program--putting an end to the slums, attempting to prevent a needless war with Germany-- and only 10% of the reason was anti-Semitism." (Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 11, 1999). This view underestimates the depth of anti-Semitism among East End residents.

[67]Wise has noted:

> The coster-mongers, casual dock labourers, dustmen and small shopkeepers who applauded Mosley . . in the dirt-poor areas of East London were the descendants of generations of English Cockneys who had in their lives bitterly opposed the mass invasion of "their bit of England" by one group of foreigners after another--Huguenots after the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685; desperate Irish families after the Great Famine. Jews fleeing from Pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia, and Russian revolutionaries. (Letter from Leonard Wise to Richard Thurlow, British Union Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, undated.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The anti-Semitic campaign reached its zenith in 1936. That year street fights between Blackshirts and Jews and Communists broke out in major cities throughout the country. In March, Herbert Morrison, an inveterate opponent of the fascists, read to the Commons a letter from a Jewish man from the East End that reveals the brutal tactics some Blackshirts employed and helps explain the fears many Jews felt:

> At approximately a quarter after midnight, I was going home and getting off a 'bus outside my door, when I noticed about thirty Blackshirts, who rushed for the 'bus and shouted: 'Here he is.' Realising that they were after me, I remained on the 'bus...and took another penny fare, so as to try to find a policeman, which I did at Dalston Junction. I then got off the 'bus and reported the matter to the police officer...but he only thought I should return home and take a chance. ...He did, however, take my name and address, and said he would report it, but, not being satisfied to take a chance, I called a taxi and drove to Old Streeet Police Station and reported the incident.
>
> The inspector in charge told me to go home by taxi and sent a policeman on a bicycle after me. But, of course, the Blackshirts had by that time gone. Since then I have been scared to go about at night on my own... I feel that as soon as the Blackshirts think things have blown over they will try waiting on me again. If you think you can do anything I shall be grateful. Unfortunately, these people never do any work, and nearly all of them have a record as black as ink. [68]

The Jewish Chronicle accurately reported that the fascists' meetings in Stoke Newington were "almost wholly confined to Jew-baiting."[69] In July Manchester was the site of one

---

[68] Jewish Chronicle, March 13, 1936.

[69] Ibid., June 19, 1936. According to the paper, "When members of the audience, whether Jew or Gentile, attempted to question the speakers, they were approached in a threatening manner and sometimes pummelled by supporters of the speaker " (ibid.). Anti-Semites referred to Stoke Newington as "Stoke Jewington."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the more violent meetings. The Jewish Chronicle reported:

> When ... Mosley left the hall [Hulme Town Hall] a booing crowd of two or three thousand rushed round his car. The police and his bodyguard managed to clear the way, and he went to a fascist club in Tomlinson Street. While he was inside, the crowd smashed some of the windows, and a Fascist flag was torn down. Two Fascist-protected vans drew up outside the hall and the crowd broke through the police cordon, swarmed round the vans, tried to overturn them, and threw lighted matches into them.
>
> When the Blackshirts came out from the club they were beaten back, and three attempts to open the van doors failed. After several struggles the vans managed to get away. Sir Oswald's car was stoned as it stood outside the club, and when he left, the crowd made an unsuccessful attempt to stop it. Later, all the windows of the club were smashed. Eight arrests were made.[70]

The disorder intensified in the autumn when the BUF held indoor and outdoor meetings virtually every night in Bethnal Green and Stepney.[71] A Director of the B.B.C. termed the Jew-baiting "one of the worst things in our history."[72]

The BUF always falsely insisted that "anti-Semitism was "no concern of [the] movement at the outset, but the Jews... forced [it] on our attention."[73] It pointed to police-court records which showed that 50 per cent of those arrested for assaults against party members " were...Jewish" before the party even launched its anti-Semitic

---

[70] Jewish Chronicle, July 3, 1936.

[71] "There is a very definite and powerful anti-Jewish feeling in certain parts of East London," John McGovern, the ILP MP for Shettleston observed, "and when one sees it in all its nakedness it is easy to understand the war on Jewry that is taking place in Germany." (New Leader, October 16, 1936).

[72] Manchester Guardian Weekly, January 8, 1937.

[73] Mosley, as quoted in Hugh Ross Williamson, Who is for Liberty? M. Joseph, London, 1939, pp. 226-73

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

campaign in 1934.[74] In fact, individual Blackshirts in the London area initiated attacks on Jews shortly after the party was founded. Nor did the fascists demonstrate that the Jews had organized a conspiracy against them. The most they did was to offer some statistics relating to the number of Jews arrested for assaults on their members and of Jews who worked in key industries like finance, publishing, and entertainment.[75] The lack of evidence the BUF provided helps explain why it remained a fringe party. It also explains why Mosley never accepted the challenge to a public debate on anti-Semitism offered by Neville Laski. Even after the campaign was well underway the fascists still tried to maintain the fiction that they were not anti-Jewish. "[Anti-semitism has] never been one of the essentials of British fascism," asserted Fascist Quarterly, "but... was only formulated when it was no longer honest to ignore the fact that the greatest vested interest in the world was being mobilized against the conception of a united Britain."[76]

---

[74]Williamson, Who is for Liberty?, pp. 226-73. Action baldly and erroneously stated, "The concerted attacks by Jews, on British Union members and meetings forced the conclusion that not only could no Jew accept a purely national policy but the whole conception of Jewry was violently opposed to a 'Britain First' programme." (Action, January 21, 1939).

[75]Refer, for instance, to John Beckett, "Our Press Lords--No.2," Action,, March 12, 1936; John Beckett, "Our Press Lords--No.4;" Ibid., April. 2, 1936; J.A. MacNab, "Behind the News," ibid., October 17, 1936, Peter Heyward, ""Guest Week," ibid., November 19, 1938. Also see its attack on Israel Moses Sieff, who allegedly controlled the Daily Mirror and Sunday Pictorial, two organs previously owned by Rothermere in Ibid., February 29 and April 25, 1940.

[76]JAM, "The Essentials of Anti-Semitism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 (January-March 1935), pp. 230-31.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"We do not persecute the Jews because of their race," "Mick" Clarke insisted."We do not oppose the Jews because of their religion. We do not attack them for what they are. WE DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST THEM BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY DO [upper case in original]." [77] It was clearly easier for some Blackshirts to blame anti-Semitism on the Jews than to admit that they were racially prejudiced.

Although anti-Semitism was always a part of the BUF's ideology, it was not as important as it was for the Nazis. The BUF never attempted to formulate a Jewish racial theory unlike the NSDAP and much later the Italian Fascists. Its brand of anti-Semitism was considerably milder than that of the Nazis. Although Blackshirts produced a large volume of anti-Jewish writings and speeches, they never organized their ideas into a system as Nazi intellectuals attempted to do in works like Alfred Rosenberg's Der Mythus des 20 Jahrhundert. On the contrary, BUF writings and speeches on the Jews were often idiosyncratic, ill-organized, and without focus. Like most British anti-Semites Blackshirts seldom used terms such as "Aryan," "Nordic," and "master race," and never tried to define them.[78] "The striking feature of the BUF's pronouncements upon race," it has been noted, "is their complete lack of sophistication.

---

[77] E.G. Clarke, The British Union and the Jews, Abbey Supplies, Westminster, 1938, pp. 1-7

[78] An exception was Dr. Arnold Leese's tiny Imperial Fascist League.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

They included no formal hierarchy of racial groups."[79] As Richard Thurlow states, "Mosley's views on European nations or peoples should [not] be confused with those of Hitler."[80] Joyce probably came the closest to adopting an attitude towards the Jews similar to the Nazis, but only a small minority of Mosleyites shared his views on this issue.[81]

Blackshirts could not agree on the nature of the "Jewish menace," nor on how to meet it. They alleged that Jews had so many undesirable traits and were responsible for so many of society's ills that their arguments lacked consistency and credibility. For instance, Jews were supposedly the secret power behind the mainstream parties and, at the same time, dangerous revolutionists. They lived in filthy, unsanitary conditions and

---

[79]Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, p. 38. Robert M. Gorman states, "The BUF was not a true *racial* [italics in the original] fascist organization, in that Mosley's policy on race or the Jews and the 'Jewish question' was hesitant and ambiguous." (Robert M. Gorman, "Racial Antisemitism in England: The Legacy of Arnold Leese," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. 30, Nos. 43/44, 1977, p. 68)

[80]Richard C. Thurlow, "Fascism and Nazism--No Siamese Twins," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1980), p. 8.

[81] "It was inevitable," Joyce wrote, "that the Marxian creed should divide humanity into two camps. In the one would be the worshipers of materialism and the haters of higher human values. In the other camp would stand those Aryan men and women who believe in the unconquerable greatness of the human spirit, and the subordination to it of all economic and material considerations." (William Joyce, "Analysis of Marxism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, 1936, p. 542). Robert Saunders expressed the opinion of many members when he stated, "He [Joyce] amused members with his scathing attacks on all who did not agree with us, but his personality and manner repulsed many who were attracted by... a more pleasant and persuasive approach. Mosley was quite right to expel him." (Robert Saunders, "The Dorset Farmer," in Jeffrey Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986, p. 23).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were also lovers of wealth and luxuries. They conspired to establish a world government and at the same time cared only for their own group. They were unassimilable yet dominated British culture. They were mentally inferior yet concocted brilliant schemes to control Britain and the world. They were addicted to superstition and were at the same time materialists. Mosley, Thomson, and Beckett were primarily concerned with the Jew's financial clout while Chesterton, Fuller, Clarke, Gordon-Canning, and Gibbs appear to have been more troubled by the insidious effects they had on culture. Gibbs, for example, held that the movie industry in the U.S.--and to an increasing extent in Britain-- was "Jew-dominated."[82] "Jews-Jews-Jews," noted Gordon-Canning , "[are] all pervading whether at Brighton, in the night clubs of Mayfair, in the luxury cinemas of the West End on a Saturday night, in the casino of Le Touquet. They are only 350,000, so we are told, and yet by their universal presence they might be well over a million." [83] To Fuller they were a "cancer" that threatened every aspect of the country's life.[84] Action

---

[82]Action, April 18, 1936. For Thomson's opinions see The Coming Corporate State, Greater Britain, Westminster, 1937, p. 19 For Clarke's views consult his The British Union and the Jews.

[83]Gordon-Canning, as quoted in Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, p. 38.

[84]Fuller wrote:

> If among the masses of the people customs and traditions are...set aside, morality is thrown out of balance, and animalism become rampant. To establish this moral anarchy, immense and continuously demoralising pressure is placed on the masses, a thing easily accomplished today through the newspaper and the cinema, both of which are largely controlled by Jews.

(J F C Fuller, "Cancer of Europe," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 2, April-June 1933, p. 76)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

lamented: "We cannot expect the many aliens who exercise strong power in the theatre world to have an understanding of the tastes of British children. Doubtless they find it far easier to cater for lascivious old men than for healthy British youth."[85]

However, a sizeable number of fascists did not believe the Jews represented a threat to British institutions. "I was outside a pawn shop selling Blackshirt, which contained the headline 'Anti-Jew,'" recalled one. "A Jew approached, saw the headline and said 'I am British.' And he was British even if a Jew. This made me think what's behind all this if Jews are criticised when they are British."[86] Peake, the Dorset District Leader, advised one of the members of his branch, "Think over the Jewish Question. I am going to propose that comments on Jewry are confined to publications in book form & and that the Blackshirt Press[is] augmented with something more cultural & uplifting than anti-Jewish propaganda."[87] These dissenting views, however, tended to be ignored by the public.

The fact that the BUF did not publish a single major comprehensive or theoretical work on the topic of anti-Semitism suggests that some members may have pursued the

---

[85] Action, December 17, 1938.
[86] Brewer, Mosley's Men, p. 22.
[87] Peake to Saunders, June 24, 1935, Robert Saunders Papers, 119/A1/341

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

issue as much for political as for ideological reasons. It is difficult to explain the obvious lack of interest in racial theory if one assumes that the BUF's ideology was based on that of the Nazis. A host of key Blackshirts who appear to have sympathized with the Jews suddenly resigned during the anti-Semitic campaign, including Robert Forgan, W.J. Leaper, and Charles Wegg-Prosser. This suggests that at least some members did not perceive anti-Semitism to be a very important element of the party's program when they joined it. As Geoffrey G. Field has noted, "It has never been clear that those who inclined toward Mosley did so *primarily* because of anti-Semitism."[88]

By 1934 some racial anti-Semites held key positions in the party. Several of them belonged to the Policy Directorate, the top decision-making body which usually met with Mosley on a weekly basis. These individuals were probably the major proponents of the campaign. Ironically, two members of the Policy Directorate were Jews: W.J. Leaper and John Beckett. The table below lists the most influential racial anti-Semites in the movement in the mid-thirties, the posts they held, and when they joined.

---

[88]Geoffrey G. Field, " Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off," Wiener Library Bulletin, Special Issue, (1982), p. 38.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 4.1 LEADING RACIAL ANTI-SEMITES IN THE BUF WITH POST HELD & THE YEAR JOINED

MEMBER	POSITION	YEAR JOINED
John Beckett	Director of Publications	1933
A.K. Chesterton	Editor, Blackshirt	1933
E.G. "Mick" Clarke	Propaganda Administrator	1933 or 1934
J.F. C. Fuller	Adviser, Military Affairs	1933
Robert Gordon-Canning	Chairman, Action Press	1934
William Joyce	Director of Propaganda	1933
J.A. MacNab	Editor, Fascist Quarterly	1934
Alexander Raven Thomson	Director of Policy	1933

* * * *

Anti-Semitism had firm roots in British history, as scholars such as Colin Holmes, Cecil Roth, and Tony Kushner have shown and the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava admitted in the House of Lords in 1939.[89] It had flourished during the medieval period when the Church exercised great power and Jews--who were popularly considered the murderers of Christ--were perceived as fallen souls. Representing only a very small percentage of the population Jews came into conflict with the Crown over a number of issues, including the charge that they were money-changers and because of

---

[89] See, for instance, Colin Homes, Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939, & Meier, New York, 1979, pp. 1-9. For the Marquis' comments see Hansard, House of Lords, July 5, 1939

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their alleged attempts to convert Christians. In 1290 the conflict reached a crisis when King Edward I ordered them to leave the country. They were not allowed to return until 1664. [90] Their growth in numbers for several centuries afterward was slow; by 1800 there were still only 8,000 professing Jews in England. [91] The Jews' lot was a hard one, but not as difficult as in Central and Eastern Europe where groups hostile to the Jews, such as artisan and peasant organizations and the military, were more influential. The Test Act of 1673 and other statutes prevented the Jews from serving in many professions, holding high public office, or attending schools such as Oxford and Cambridge until well into the nineteenth century. It was not until 1858 that the first professing Jew sat in the House of Commons. Jews were often the butt of jokes and ridicule in the popular press. For instance, after Disraeli's purchase of the Suez Canal, a cartoon in the satirical journal, Punch, depicted him as Moses in Egypt. [92] Cunning, energy, greed, and unscrupulousness were allegedly their hallmarks.

---

[90] Jewish Chronicle, March 1, 1935. Cromwell favored their return, however, in 1656.

[91] Montagu Frank Modder, The Jews in the Literature of England, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1939, p. 347.

[92] Punch, December 11, 1875. "We... propose the establishment of a huge national crucible," Punch wrote in 1847, " where, upon the return of every panic, every suspected Jew should be thrown in and melted, and the pure ore separated from the carcass; the dross--for we hope, we would not violate the last feelings of humanity--the dross to be returned, for decent burial, to the melted Jew's relations."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Although the Jews finally obtained full civic equality in the 1870s, they continued to face many subtle forms of discrimination. The massive Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe and Russia between 1870 and 1914 (120,000 settled in Britain during this period) led to a resurgence of anti-Semitism.[93] Most settled in London where they concentrated in several industries such as finance, tailoring, boot and shoemaking, and furniture making. Victorian and Edwardian nativists and anti-Semites ascribed a host of undesirable qualities and traits to them such as greed, filth, clannishness, moral depravity, and superstition.[94] "Great Britain," warned one nineteenth-century anti-Semite, "is threatened at every point: we are facing an imminent coming crash...The way of salvation...will be accomplished alone...from the British idealistic concept and from the matchless tradition of the British race; but not from the false and materialistic conceptions of Alien Judea."[95] "A Jew is not an Englishman or Frenchman holding particular theological tenets: he is a Jew with a special deity for his own race," wrote

---

[93] From 1850 to 1910 the Jewish population rose from 35,000 to 243,000.

[94] For example, Joseph Banister wrote in England Under the Jews. "They may have bathed in the Jordan a couple of thousand years ago, but very few of them appear to have bathed in anything else." (Joseph Banister, England Under the Jews, Joseph Banister, London, 1901, pp. 57-58). Among the many anti-Jewish works published in this period were John Reeves, The Rothschilds: The Financial Rulers of Nations, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, London, 1887, and Thomas Farrow, The Money Lender Unmasked., Roxburgher, London, 1897

[95] Hutchinson, as quoted in Heinz Krieger, England und die Judenfrage, Diesterweg, Frankfurt, 1938, p. 5

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Goldwin Smith, a noted historian and writer in the late 1800s. "The rest of mankind are not merely people holding a different creed but aliens in blood." [96] According to Charles Booth, the social investigator, "The foreign Jew totally ignores all social obligations other than keeping the law of the land, the maintenance of his own family and the charitable relief of coreligionists."[97] Still, anti-Jewish sentiment in Britain never reached the level it did in Eastern Europe and Russia.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s Britain had an open immigration policy. In this period several organizations were formed whose major goals included the restriction of Jewish immigration and influence on the native culture. These included the BBL, the London League, and the Immigration Reform Association. In 1902 the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration was established under Lord James of Hereford. Scores of witnesses appeared before the Commission, including James William Johnson, the chairman of the BBL. Johnson told the Commission: "[The Jews] settle in different localities and live according to their own traditions, usages and customs. We say this is wholly deleterious to the Englishman as well as a gross injustice and a hardship

---

[96]Goldwin Smith, "Can Jews Be Patriots?"Nineteenth Century, Vol.III No. 1 (January--June 1878), pp. 875-77 Smith was Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford from 1858 to 1866. For more information on this scholar see Colin Holmes, "Goldwin Smith: A Liberal Anti-Semite." Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 6, No. 5 (September-October 1972).

[97]Booth, as quoted in Walter Besant, East London, no publisher, London, 1980, pp.195-96

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

upon us."[98] The Commission recommended a reduction in immigration, which occured when the Aliens Act became law in 1905. An additional bill reducing the influx of aliens was passed in 1911.[99]

There were several significant similarities between the BUF and the BBL, although most Blackshirts and their opponents usually ignored them. One reason for this may have been that Mosley had an immense ego and seldom acknowledged the influence others had on this thinking. In addition, by the mid-1930s not many people remembered the BBL very well. The BUF and the BBL had roughly the same size and were similar in their socioeconomic composition. At its zenith in 1902, the BBL consisted of approximately 12,000 members, about the same as the number of active Blackshirts in the mid-thirties. It appears that only a few hundred BBL members, however, took a very active role in the organization. Like the BUF, the BBL counted many ex-Servicemen, small shopkeepers, manual workers, and costermongers among its members. Between 1901 and 1904 the BBL established branches in several of the same East End boroughs as the BUF, including Bethnal Green, Hackney, Shoreditch, and Stepney, the site of its

---

[98]Great Britain, Report of Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, Vol. II, London, 1903, p. 286

[99]During the First World War Jews formed the Foreign Jews Protective Committee Against Deportation. (Daily Mail, June 2, 1917).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

oldest and largest chapter. The proportion of native-born Britons in these communities was high, particularly in Bethnal Green, as was anti-alien sentiment. The BBL also boasted a following in Essex where the BUF later enjoyed support. [100] Competition between Jews and Christians for employment, housing, and recreation was as intense at the turn-of-the-century as it was in the 1930s. The BBL and BUF were particularly concerned about the impact that the Sunday Trading laws, which permitted Jewish shopkeepers to conduct business later than Christians on Friday evenings and until 2 p.m. on Sundays, would have on Christian merchants and small traders.[101] For instance, in March 1938 Mosley condemned the Sunday Trading Restriction Act (1936) at a meeting at Victoria Hall in Bethnal Green, the former BBL stronghold. In Evans Gordon and Mosley both organizations had leaders who had distinguished themselves in the military.

Mass meetings held by the BBL bore striking parallels to the ones the BUF held three decades later. For example, at the People's Palace in London on January 14, 1902 more than 6,000 people listened to speakers condemn Jews and the government's

---

[100]Great Britain. Report of Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. Vol. II, p. 289.
[101]The debate over Sunday Trading continued into the 1990s. For example, see Independent, August 27, 1994.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigration policies while a security force of 250 men kept order. The audience was entertained with patriotic songs like "God Bless the Prince of Wales" and "Soldiers of the Queen" just as BUF meetings regularly featured nationalistic tunes such as "God Save the King" and "The Marching Song". When demonstrators heckled Evans Gordon and other speakers the security force used force to remove them just as the BUF Defense Force did three decades later for Mosley and other BUF speakers.[102] A similar mass meeting was held in London on November 10, 1903.

Both groups blamed anti-Semitism on the Jews. Evans Gordon asked in the Commons in 1904: "Why are the sympathies of the... [Government] reserved for the [Jewish] aliens? Are they aware of the conditions among our own people in the East End due to this unrestricted influx of aliens?... The oppressed of foreign countries are becoming the oppressors here." [103] "Who is ultimately responsible for there being Jewish

---

[102]Times, January 22, 1902. "There is hardly an Englishman," Evans Gordon asserted, "who does not live under the constant danger of being driven from his home, [and] pushed out into the streets, not by the natural increase of our own population, but by the off-scum of Europe." (Evans-Gordon, as quoted in Bernard Gainer, The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905, Crane, Russak, New York, 1972, p. 36). For more information on these meetings see Paul Foot, Immigration and Race in British Politics, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965, pp. 88-89. Three decades later, Action complained. "In...Manchester...it is now almost impossible for a non-Jew to obtain a house when it comes on the market...Refugees are making even more acute the housing problem of Britain."(Action, January 28, 1939).

[103]Evans Gordon, as quoted in Joel H. Wiener, Great Britain: The Lion at Home; A Documentary History of Domestic Policy, 1689-1973, Vol. III, Chelsea House, New York, 1974, pp. 2763-64

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

separatism and hence... a 'Jewish problem?', asked the Fascist Quarterly three decades later. "We had always believed it was the Jews themselves, by their insistence upon racial purity." [104] Both groups pointed to the Jews' practice of trading on Sunday as proof that they were undermining the country's Christian tradition. The Shops Act, which restricted trading by Jews after 2 p.m. on Sunday, went into effect in May 1937. The fascists alleged that Jews violated the law just as the BBL had complained that they broke a similar statute decades before.[105] In addition, both organizations and their supporters insisted that the mainstream parties were incapable of solving the "Jewish problem," and suggested that a conspiracy existed in the mainstream media to downplay the issue. [106]

---

[104] JAM, "The Essentials of Anti-Semitism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 (January-April 1935), pp. 230-31.

[105] See Report of Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, Vol. II for several BBL leaders' views on the topic. Although a minority of Jewish merchants did violate the law, the BUF typically overstated the number.

[106] For instance, Joseph Banister observed during the immigration restriction campaign:

> Nothing is likely to be willingly done by any British Government to stem the Yiddish inundation until a thoroughly British and National party is formed... A large proportion of our people have no faith in either of the political parties... The material for a National Party already exists. It only needs organizing. There are men even in the present parliament possessed of the necessary ability and patriotism to do this... [but] their influence is purely local, and they are little known to the general public... Any speech they make in Parliament or outside it is either not reported by the London Press, or reported in a very brief and emasculated form. (Banister, England Under the Jews, p. 213).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There were several important differences between the BUF and the BBL. First, the latter was founded by Conservatives, who wished to preserve the social and economic order. The BUF, as has been shown, intended to overturn the existing social order. Secondly, the BUF required its members to take a more active role in the organization than the British Brothers. The majority of BBL members seem to have contributed little to the organization besides signing a declaration of support and occassionally attending meetings. In contrast, the BUF required active members to pay dues and to serve the party at least one day a month by performing duties like selling newspapers and answering telephones.

There was a strong strain of anti-Semitism in British intellectual circles in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many political and cultural leaders suggested that the Jews threatened the country's Christian tradition (which was under attack from modern scientific theories such as Darwinism) and promoted secular values such as materialism and commercialism. Among these were the influential Catholic writers G.K.Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, who edited New Witness, a short-lived journal which published

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

many articles of an anti-Jewish nature.[107] Joseph Chamberlain wrote privately, "There is in fact only one race which I despise--the Jews."[108] Several anti-Semites held key positions in the government, such as William Joynson-Hicks, who served as Home Secretary from 1924 to 1929. Mainstream journals suggested that Jews exercised considerable influence over the country's economic affairs.[109] Writers such as Nora Webster and Leo Maxse reiterated the theme that Jews and Freemasons were the secret power behind communism and that they sought to establish a world state with themselves at the helm.[110] The poets T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and the novelists John Buchan and Dornford Yates also explored anti-Semitic themes.[111]

---

[107]Belloc, for example, wrote:

> The strongest force restraining an expression of hostility to the Jew is fear. They [Britons]... recognize... the grasp of the Jew over finance. They conceive that if they speak they will be dragged down, their enterprises ruined, their credit dissolved. (Herbert VonThal, ed., Belloc: A Biographical Anthology, Knopf, New York, 1970, pp.197-98).

[108]Chamberlain as quoted in Field, "Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off," p. 31.

[109]For example, see Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 114, No. 677 (July 1933), p. 7.

[110]N.H. Webster, World Revolution: A Plot Against Civilisation, Boswell, London, 1921; N.H. Webster, Secret Societies and Subversive Movements, Boswell, London, 1924. "What have we done," Maxse asked, "that we should be persecuted by the Jews? They would appear to aim at an *imperium in imperio*." (National Review, Vol. 61, March 1913, p.7).

[111]See, for instance, Yates' Shoal Water, 1940. Yates' real name was Cecil William Mercer.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Some socialists attacked the Jews as well.[112] "The Jews are a menace and an injury to the English working classes," Blatchford's Clarion asserted.[113] Reynolds News, stated, "What is the use of going whining about the world over the sufferings and persecutions of Jews...while not a thought is given nor a sigh drawn for affiliated and down-trodden Englishmen."[114] Keir Hardie and John Burns, two labour leaders, contended that Britain was defending Jewish investments not British ones during the Boer War; they referred to the British Army as the "janissary of the Jews."[115] Some Liberals shared these views, including J.A. Hobson, the influential

---

[112]For instance, H.M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation (SDF), a small Marxist party, mistakenly claimed, "Jew money-lenders now control nearly every Foreign Office in Europe." (Justice, April 5, 1884). Harry Quelch, the paper's editor wrote, "The Jew financier is the personification of that gold international which today dominates the government and the jingo press of all nations." (Quelch, as quoted in Geoffrey G. Field, "Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off: Recent Research on England," Wiener Library Bulletin, Special Issue, 1982, p. 25). At the turn-of-the-century, the SDF belonged to the Labour Representation Committee, which later formed the Labour Party.

[113]Clarion, June 22, 1906.

[114]Reynolds News, January 22, 1882.

[115]Hardie and Burns, as quoted in Wilfred Fest, "Jingoism and Xenophobia in the Electioneering Strategies of British Ruling Elites before 1914," in Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls, eds. Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914, Macmillan, Oxford, 1981, p. 175

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

economist.[116]

Anti-Semitism seems to have risen in the inter-war era, in part because of the depression. The discrimination Jews had faced for decades in housing, employment, education, and recreation persisted. In addition, the communists' seizure of power in Russia, and later briefly in Bavaria and Hungary, demonstrated to some anti-Semites that the Jewish international conspiracy they had predicted for years was finally coming to fruition. Extreme right-wing journals such as the Morning Post, the Patriot, and Lord Alfred Douglas' Plain English, which depicted Jews as revolutionists and communists, inflamed these fears.[117] In November 1919, Lt.-Col. Malone, MP told the Commons that Jews were in control of Russia. Several months later, Churchill linked the Soviet

---

[116]Hobson wrote

> He [the British Jew] is the nearest approach to the ideal 'economic' man, the 'fittest' person to survive in trade competition. He is almost devoid of social morality. No compunction or consideration for his fellow worker will keep him from underselling and over-reaching them, he acquires a thorough mastery of all the dishonourable tricks of trade which are difficult to restrain by law; the superior calculating intellect, which is a national heritage is used unsparingly to enable him to take advantage of every weakness, folly and vice of the society in which he lives.

(Hobson, as quoted in Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society, pp. 20-21 He also observed, "The London press ...[is] falling more and more under the control of the Jews and other financial gentry" (Derbyshire Advertiser, July 17, 1891).

[117] For example, the Morning Post asked: "Can it be that...Jewish nationalists are working for Internationalism and Bolshevism among Christian nations in order to strengthen their own, and hope to base the domination of their own race on the ruins of every other?" (Morning Post, March 2, 1920)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

government with the Jews. Russian Communists, he stated, "believe in the international Soviet of the Russian and Polish Jew." National Opinion, the journal of Page-Croft's National Party stated: "Bolshevism was a loathsome and dangerous disease...The carriers of these germs...were...Jews who had no nationality...Bolshevism...was being carried out by international Jews."[118] The publication in 1920 of the first English translation of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a blueprint for a Jewish-controlled world government purportedly written by a group of Jews in France in the 1800s but later proven to be a forgery, raised tensions between Christians and Jews.[119] Greater Britain Publications, a BUF firm, published this document in the late thirties.[120] Shortly after the Protocols appeared, the Times stated:

> What are these 'protocols?' Are they a forgery? If so whence comes the uncanny note of prophecy, prophecy in parts fulfilled in parts far gone in the way of fulfillment? Have we been struggling these tragic years to blow up and extirpate the secret organization of German world domination only to find beneath it another more dangerous because more secret?[121]

Various commentators argued that there was a contradiction between the Jews' desire for

---

[118]William Rubinstein, "Henry Page Croft and the National Party 1917-22," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 9, No. 1 (January 1974), p. 145.

[119]See Norman Cohn, Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Harper, New York, 1967. Also consult George Pitt-Rivers, The World Significance of the Russian Revolution, London, 1920, and Unsigned, "Zionism versus Bolshevism," Illustrated Sunday Herald, (February 8, 1920).

[120]Action, September 24, 1938.

[121]Times, May 8, 1920.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a national homeland and their status as British citizens.[122]

The Britons, a small fascist party based in London, was one of the most active anti-Jewish groups. It published a large variety of anti-Semitic tracts in the twenties and thirties, including Dr. J.H. Clarke's The Call of the Sword and Democracy or Shylocracy?, Victor E. Marsden's, The Jews in Russia, Joseph Banister's Jews and the White-Slave Traffic or 'Lords of the Hells of Gomorrah,' and several unsigned works, with titles like the following: Can a Jew be an Englishman?, Four Protocols of Zion, The Code of the Jew, and The Conquering Jew. Marsden published the first English edition of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The Britons issued a 12 point program and Point One called for the country to be "governed [only] by citizens of British blood." Point Five stated that the "Alien Immigration Law" should be made more stringent, "thus preventing our Country being swamped with undesirable Aliens and cheap foreign labour." [123] The Boswell Press, which later advertised in BUF journals, published a large volume of anti-Semitic literature in the twenties and thirties. Among

---

[122] For example, Hilaire Belloc referred to the Jews as "a separate nationality in our midst." (Spectator, February 2, 1921).

[123] Point Nine stated that "All Merchants and Shopkeepers [should] be compelled to display the Proprietor's name in a prominent position, and that all Companies and Firms publish the names of their Directors and Partners on all communications." (The Jews' Who's Who, Israelite Finance, Its Sinister Influence, The Britons, London, 1920, p. 227)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

these works were Secret Societies and Subversive Movements by Nesta Webster, which was published in 1926, and The Nameless Beast by Charles Rouse. The Patriot, a monthly founded by Lord Northumberland in 1922 to check the Jewish and communist "conspiracy," was affiliated with this publishing house. It became a firm supporter of the Blackshirts and was sold in BUF bookshops. After the Second World War and the massive immigration from India, the Caribbean and other colonial territories, racism and anti-semitism remained important issues in British society.[124]

* * * *

Thus, when the BUF inaugurated its anti-Jewish campaign it chose an issue that had been a feature of the British cultural and political scene for many years. Many people who harbored anti-Jewish feelings did not, however, wish to have them translated through a fringe movement. Most apparently perceived its brand of anti-Semitism to be an imitation of Continental fascism more than a flowering of native beliefs. Like earlier

---

[124]For example, in the 1990s the future of "the English race" in a multi-ethnic society was a much-debated topic. See, for instance, "Racism and Xenophobia in Britain Today," Searchlight, Vol. 25, No 285 (March 1999).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

nativists, the BUF contended that the Jews were a rootless, cosmopolitan people who went wherever the financial rewards were greatest and had no allegiance to the state they settled in. The BUF was concerned that the approximately 50,000 German and Austrian Jews who fled Nazi persecution in the thirties and settled in Britain would take jobs away from natives. "We do not permit foreigners to be MPs or officials, or afforded the full rights of British citizenship and Jews will not be afforded these privileges," vowed Mosley who sometimes sounded like a Nazi anti-Semite during the campaign. [125]

Many Blackshirts complained that the Jews attempted to keep themselves as a separate community working for their own "racial interests."[126] For example, "Mick" Clarke asserted, "The Jews maintain themselves as a compact minority race in our midst, working primarily for their own interests regardless of the general welfare of the British people."[127] The fascists seldom noted that Jews who chose to live in Christian communities did not always welcome them as neighbors, co-workers, or friends. Nor did they indicate precisely what secret, international bodies Jews allegedly owed

---

[125] Mosley, Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered, B.U.F., London, 1936, Questions 95-99 The BUF praised the government's decision to reduce the number of work permits it issued to Central Europeans in the late thirties because it saved the country from "the curse of mass immigration of thousands and thousands of ghetto Jews." (Action, November 26, 1938).
[126] Action, November 26, 1938.
[127] Clarke, The British Union and the Jews p. 3

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

allegiance to.

Like the BBL and British Fascists, the Blackshirts insisted that Jews were a highly materialistic people. Money was allegedly their god; traditional morality and spiritual issues meant little to them. "The predominant characteristic of the Jew is his materialism," Fuller asserted, "which endows him with a destructive social force when he is placed in a spiritually ordered society. Though he will work himself to death, seldom will he risk his life for an ideal or for a spiritual cause."[128] The Jew's native guile and unscrupulousness insured his success in capitalist societies.[129] Jews were allegedly unpatriotic and had attempted to shirk their military duties during wartime.[130]

---

[128]J.F.C. Fuller, "The Cancer of Europe," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1935), p. 76.

[129]According to one anti-Semitic Blackshirt:

> The Jew ... is feckless and inconsequent, always working when he can, on the 'everything, to gain, nothing to lose,' principle. His parasatism [sic] engenders passion for all pursuits wherein he assumes his favorite character of 'middle man;' declared leadership and honest toil are alike abhorrent to him; 'graft' is his middle name.... He will stoop to the lowest depths of human degradation to secure the merest pittance. Prosperity seldom tempts him from his dirty habits. (Blackshirt, March 1, 1935)

[130]"How many Jews fought with Clive in India?," Thomson asked rhetorically in Shoreditch in 1936. "How many Jews died in the Black Hole of Calcutta? How many Jews fought with Wolfe?" (Thomson, as quoted in Jewish Chronicle, September 18, 1936). The BUF sparked a melee at the Carfax Assembly Rooms at Oxford University three months earlier when it suggested that some students there were unwilling to defend the country in wartime. Jews had actually served in all of the major conflicts Britain had fought in as the Board of Deputies and Ex-Servicemen's Movement Against Fascism, another Jewish organization, attempted to demonstrate.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

For example, a London bus driver wrote Action:

> As a...'bus conductor whose route covers the Jewish quarter of Stoke Newington and Stamford Hill, I have been rather surprised at the war-like spirit shown by these loyal people during the present crisis, the general opinion among them being that 'Now is the time to fight!...We must crush Fascism!'... In view of this excess of patriotism, it is a pity that Jewish youth is barred from any of the fighting forces, as, although I cover this district on an average four times a day, I have yet to see one wearing a uniform or the badge of the Territorial Army. Nevertheless, I hear, on good authority, that during the week-end there has been a general exodus in a westerly direction. I am convinced that with their usual sagacity they can foresee a flanking invasion of our West Coast. I, for one, will sleep sounder, knowing that somewhere on the coast of Wales brave Jewish youths are entrenched, ready to fight to the last man to repel the invader. Incidently, I envy the inhabitants, especially public servants, of some of our remote West Country villages who are making the acquaintance of this big-hearted race for the first time. [131]

Jews allegedly promoted values that were weakening British society and possibly leading to its permanent disintegration. They were attracted to prurient and low-brow entertainment and professions, such as pornography, prostitution, gambling, the cinema, and boxing. They used the media to spread their amoral, "Oriental" beliefs. "The lewd filth of the imported sex purveyor,"asserted Blackshirt , " is in full accordance with Jewry's scheme for British cultural liberty." [132] "Our national Press," stated Clarke, "is largely Jewish-owned, and...their control over advertising revenue can, and has been used to prevent any fair reporting... by those papers...[Also] the Cinema with its immense powers of insidious propaganda is notoriously in Jewish hands and has been shamelessly

---

[131] Action, September 2, 1939.
[132] Blackshirt, May 23, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

exploited for political purposes of late years." [133] Among the papers the BUF attacked as Jewish-owned was the Daily Telegraph, while The Left Book Club, which Victor Gollancz, the publisher, helped found in May 1936, and the Gaumont cinema chain were also labelled as Jewish-controlled. [134] The refusal by the latter to include statements Lloyd George made in favor of Nazi Germany in a film it released allegedly demonstrated that it censored the news.[135] "[Jewish] money power," Blackshirt warned, "has [now] established such a grip upon [the] Press and other organs for the creation of public opinion that they are in a position to hold up to ransom the established Parties of the State." [136] "Jewish-controlled" entertainment firms allegedly used the cinema and jazz as drugs to make the "tired workers of Britain" forget their "poverty in the midst of plenty."[137] "It will be a great day for the country," Blackshirt stated, "when Jewish films

---

[133]Clarke, The British Union and the Jews, p. 3.
[134]Action, March 13, 1937; Ibid., April 2, 1936, Blackshirt, April 16, 1935. Gollancz was a Jew, but most of the authors the Club published in the thirties were non-Jews, such as John Strachey, G.D.H. Cole, and George Orwell. For more information on this important publishing venture see Stuart Samuels, "The Left Book Club," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. I, No. 2 (April 1966), pp. 65-86.
[135]Lloyd-George, like many Britons in the 1930s had considerable respect for what the German dictator and his party had accomplished. For example in the autumn of 1936 he wrote in the Daily Express: "He (Hitler) is a born leader of men. A magnetic, dynamic personality with a single-minded purpose. He is not merely in name, but in fact the national leader. He has made them safe against potential enemies by whom they are surrounded. The old trust him. The young idolise him." (Lloyd-George, as quoted in Ernest W.D.Tennant, True Account, Max Parrish, London, 1957, p. 195).
[136] Blackshirt, November 4-November 10, 1933.
[137]Ibid., April 18, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

are banned. " Joseph Gough, who used the pseudonym "Bowie," asked:

> How much longer will the Eastern standard of Entertainment and Culture continue to befoul our National life? The sex novel in which sex is the yardstick of sales value, holding up to ridicule all that is decent in English life, placing the moral pervert on a heroic level. The film and the stage, where history has been distorted to make a parade of immorality, where national heroes have been painted with the tarbrush of perversion. The dissipated gigolo is the hero of the day! The Negroid-Jewish bands provide our martial music. We march on! proud British nation, to the strains of 'Love in Bloom!' following the limping steps of our Jewish cultural leaders. [138]

Like the BBL, the Britons, and other British xenophobes of the past, the fascists suggested that Jews were unassimilable:

> Sell a house on an estate to a Jew--and you must sell every other house to Jews, 'for the overwhelming majority of decent people'... will refuse to live there... The result? Jews herding together in jerry-built slums of the future run up by jews and unscrupulous Gentile builders. After a while each house contains various branches of the purchaser's tribe, in the Oriental style. The air is foul with the stench of fried fish and kosher cookery... Thus...in an outer suburb of London which... which might have been made a pleasant township, we have the Ghetto again--and Jews have made it from start to finish. [139]

Eastern European Jews caused the fascists particular concern since they supposedly possessed a lower cultural level and therefore represented more of a threat.

In the BUF's view, the greatest menace the Jews posed was economic. Their low ethical standards, business savvy, and clannishness gave them

---

[138] Blackshirt, April 18, 1935. Also see Leigh Vaughan-Henry, "Hollywood, History and Hooey," Ibid., September 21, 1934.
[139] Action, January 14, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

advantages which made it difficult for natives to compete against them. "The Jew," Blackshirt warned, "will graft, intrigue, corrupt, and practice every kind of filthy chicanery for the benefit of himself and his fellow Jews."[140] "The low type of foreign Jew... [is] debasing the life of this country. [They] are the men to the fore in every crooked financial deal which damages British interests." "The tentacles of the Jew's tenacity, spread deep-rooted over all the land of his adoption," according to this journal. "They must be totally eradicated if the blood of Christian life is to flow unrestrained." Jewish businessmen were allegedly "driving scores of... cinema owners out of business or to a mere and precarious existence."[141] This issue struck a chord with many small businessmen and tradesmen whose firms were severely hurt by the depression and dismayed by the advantages Jewish businessmen supposedly enjoyed (which included cut-rate pricing, low labor costs, and the exclusive right to open shops on Sundays), but did not know where to turn for assistance.[142]

Inconsistency was one of the hallmarks of the anti-Semitism the BUF propagated. In its view Jews were architects of both capitalism and communism. "Every Communist

---

[140]Blackshirt, February 7, 1936.
[141]Action, January 14, 1939.
[142]Hansard House of Commons Debates., Vol. 286, March 9, 1934, pp. 2174-2255.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

regime," the Fascist Quarterly stated, " has been controlled by parasitic Jews." [143] "In Russia the Bolshevik administration is almost wholly Jewish," asserted Wegg-Prosser, "[and] we know that the Bolsheviks were financed by Kuhn Loeb and Co. [a New York investment firm allegedly owned by Jews] through the agency of the notorious grain-speculator and Socialist Helphandt, alias Parvus, whose real name was Israel Lazarevitch."[144] Joyce alleged that the Jews had organized the Red Army in order to invade Europe.[145] The BUF never explained why the Jews would seek to control two antithetical economic systems. Its usual explanation was that Jews were willing to support the communists financially because the latter served as a potential bulwark against fascists. Nor did the BUF ever provide evidence that Kuhn, Loeb had offered financial support to the Bolsheviks. [146] Several decades earlier, both the BBL and the Britons had also contended that the Jews were the architects of radical socialism and communism and were unable to give allegiance to any group but their own.[147]

---

[143]Charles Wegg-Prosser, "The Worker and the State," Fascist Quarterly, Vol II (1936), pp. 257-59
[144]Ibid.
[145]Action, January 16, 1937
[146]Blackshirt, January 18, 1935; Fuller, "The Cancer of Europe," p. 66
[147]According to The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which was widely-read in extreme right-wing circles in the early 1900s, Jews were "working for internationalism and Bolshevism.. [and] the domination of their own race on the ruins of every other." (Nilus, Protocols of the Elders of Zion, as quoted, in the Morning Post, March 2, 1930). In 1920, The Britons published a long, encyclopaedic tract entitled The Jews' Who's Who: Israelite Finance Its Sinister Influence which stated that the Jews had helped organize and fund the Bolshevik Revolution. (The Jews' Who's Who, pp. 19-20).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

According to the fascists, it was foolish to allow Jews economic freedom since they were incapable of patriotism or self-sacrifice and would use it only to enrich themselves. "There is no reason," asserted Mosley, " why the mill-owner and the financier should be allowed to drag down British industry. No reason except one--that nameless, homeless, and all-powerful force which stretches its greedy fingers from the shelter of England to throttle the trade and menace the peace of the world...international Jewish finance."[148] Action observed that a mother of eleven children was sent to jail for stealing food for her children while "alien financiers are allowed to juggle with prices and to put thousands out of work and are finally rewarded with titles."[149] One BUF follower complained:

> Labour councillors concern themselves with 'Food for Spain,' while children starve on a pittance of 41/2d. per day, while alien children get 12s. 6d. per week.. I have been threatened by the Board of Education with proceedings if I do not send my two children to school, which I will not do as they have no boots on their feet and I cannot buy them any. They are driving us lower than ever into the depths of despair. While Jews' children are given good clothes and boots, mine, being British, are denied these.[150]

Lancashire was supposedly a case in point. Once the world hub of textile manufacturing, for years it had allegedly been starved of capital by Jewish investors who obtained a

---

[148]Mosley, as quoted in Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society, p. 17.
[149]Action, May 6, 1939
[150]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

higher rate of return in Asia. Mosley told a Lancashire audience:

> The enemy destroying you [are] these people to whom you gave shelter in Britain. These are the alien hands who have the wealth of Britain and are supplying it to the East to develop slave labor in the. cotton slums of Bombay and Madras and...Japan...[This is] the natural and logical outcome of the triumph of the international financier over all parties.[151]

A poster the BUF circulated during the LCC Elections in 1937 stated:

> You have now had experience of Conservative, Liberal and Labour rule in London. That experience has proved to you that they are all the same. Labour has made greater promises, but their performance is just as bad. None of these Parties can help the people because they are the parties of Jewish Finance. Conservatives and Liberals have economised at the expense of the people to save the pockets of their masters. Labour won a majority on the Council three years ago with promises now broken, but they have done nothing for the people because the same masters will not let them. The great Jewish interests control all these Old Parties... is alien to Britain and does nothing for the British people. Will you stand by in your own fight by giving us your votes on March 4th next, or will you surrender Britain and yourselves to Jewish control? That is the question that you have to decide in this election.[152]

Mosley warned that, "Any banker who breaks the law, will go where the poor go to-day when they break the law... The worst offenders will already have been deported as falling within the category of Jews who have grossly abused the hospitality of Britain."[153] The vast majority of British financial institutions, however,

---

[151] Blackshirt, January 11, 1935. He conveniently ignored the fact that most domestic mills were older and less efficient than those in India and Japan and that from a purely economic point of view investors could hardly be faulted for preferring the Asian firms.

[152] As quoted in David Shermer, Blackshirts: Fascists in Britain, Ballantine, New York, 1971, p. 90. The BUF's Speakers' Notes No. 21 advised speakers to highlight "the association of Jews with the Communists." (BUF Speakers' Notes, as quoted in Pat Devine, "Fascist Votes: An Analysis of the L.C.C Election Results in East London," Discussion, Vol. II, No. 14, April 1937, p. 20).

[153] Mosley, Fascism, One Hundred Questions Asked and Answered, Question 48.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were under Christian control. [154]

Inconsistencies in the BUF's views on the Jews may have been resolvable because many members thought of the issue in emotional not objective terms. Pseudo-scientific racial theories which depicted Jews as "sub-humans" were popular among these individuals, such as Joyce, MacNab, and Chesterton. In their view, Jews possessed a warped system of values. "It is now that the Jews stand[s] on the verge of world domination," Chesterton observed. "So long as his essential 'Jewishness' is concealed, there is no mischief which he cannot encompass by the subtle exercise of his power; no market he cannot crash, no foreign relationship he cannot foul, and...no war he cannot engineer."[155] Typically, these racial anti-Semites offered little evidence for their charges. They gave no proof of a Jewish-communist conspiracy besides citing statistics relating to Jews allegedly serving in the financial industry and belonging to socialist and communist parties around the world. In dozens of articles Beckett, Joyce, and MacNab alleged that Jews secretly controlled British finance, but offered no evidence to support the

---

[154]Viscount Camrose, British Newspapers and Their Controllers, Cassell, London, 1947. Not a single Jew served as a governor on the Bank of England, or directed any of the leading insurance companies. The Board of Deputies, which led the Jews' anti-BUF effort, was certainly correct when it noted: "There is not a single Jew on the Board of the Bank of England nor is any Jewish controlled firm represented on it. There are only four Jews on the boards of the 'Big Five' [the leading banks in the country]." (Board of Deputies of British Jews, The Jews, pp. 23-26).

[155]Chesterton, "The Apotheosis of the Jew," p. 49.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

allegation. If they had attempted to do so they would have discovered what was easily observable; namely, that the overwhelming majority of wealthy businessmen, financiers, and bankers in the United Kingdom were Christians.

Melees between Blackshirts and Jews and Communists throughout the decade cast the fascists in a dark light. For example, a draughtswoman who lived in Bethnal Green and Surrey in the thirties, recalled in the 1990s, "I think their [the BUF's] attacks on the Jews was what harmed the Blackshirts the most."[156] Jewish youths in the East End, who feared that the BUF intended to spark Nazi-style pogroms, instigated some incidents, but the fascists appear to have sparked more. One Blackshirt, for example, scrawled on the walls around Clapham Junction in Battersea in South London, "'All out August 16 for Pogrom [and] P.J. [which meant 'Perish Judea.']"[157] An eyewitness present at a BUF

---

[156]Interview with Irene Holmberg, April 11,1999

[157]In June 1935 the New Leader described a typical incident in North East London

> At a meeting at Ridley Road last Thursday, where Comrade Rich, of the I.L.P., and Comrade [Joe] Jacobs, of the C.P., spoke, some 150 Blackshirts attempted to rush the platform, and failing in that, commenced throwing anything they could pick up at the speakers. The police had to intervene vigorously! After the meeting was over a hundred Blackshirts gathered in a side-street, and attempted to waylay the two speakers, who were accompanied by about 20 I.L.P. and C.P. members and supporters. According to the testimony of two doctors and an optician, who examined a comrade who was injured in the fight, the injuries could only have been caused by a hard, blunt instrument, and not by fists. (New Leader, June 28, 1935).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

meeting in 1936 illustrates the tactics the Blackshirts employed against opponents:

> There was a good deal of interruption, though not nearly so much as is considered usual. A large number of uniformed stewards at once gathered round a group of interrupters, who were local Communists. From time to time Mr Joyce pointed to some individual and exclaimed: 'Out with him, I've had enough of him.' Nobody was ever asked to leave; it was always, 'Shut up you, take him out.' The person pointed out was immediately seized by from four to eight or nine stewards, raised bodily from his or her seat and flung... out of the hall. One steward full-fistedly grabbed a girl by her hair and literally tore her out of her seat. Another girl lost her shoes in the struggle and kept crying that she wanted to go out quietly. This she was not allowed to do. Having in her stockinged feet tried to escape from the men stewards by climbing over several rows, several sets of chairs were pushed over by two women stewards who pursued the girl, who was making for the exit as fast as she could, caught hold of her and bodily dragged her out of the hall. There were in all about fifteen such incidents, of which the ones I have described were not the most violent. I have chosen these because they took place within a few feet of me. [158]

The Battle of Cable Street on Sunday October 4, 1936 in East London was a major factor in the government's decision to press for legislation restricting the fascists' civil rights.[159] Weeks before the march, which the BUF deliberately planned to pass through the Jewish districts of Aldgate, Whitechapel, and Stepney , radical Jewish organizations like the Jewish People's Council, the Communist Party, and the ILP urged residents to use physical force to prevent the procession.[160] In the 1930s, more than a quarter of the

---

[158] New Statesman, October 31, 1936.

[159] Times, October 5, 1936.

[160] For instance, a CPGB leaflet announced:

> EAST LONDON YOUTH! BAR THE ROADS TO FASCISM!... BLOCK THE ROADS ROUND ALDGATE AT 2 P.M. AGAINST FASCISM AND THE BRUTAL ATTACKS ON LIVING CONDITIONS THAT GO WITH IT

(Action, October 16, 1936).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Communists in the country lived in the London area. The JPC gathered approximately 100,000 signatures on petitions protesting against the march. [161] Approximately 3,000 Blackshirts, many of whom were shipped in from across the country assembled at the site. Hours before the march was slated to commence more than 125,000 anti-fascists gathered to protest and the size of the crowd made the route the fascists' wished to take impassable. Their slogans were "Bar the Road to Fascism" and "Mosley Shall Not Pass." "I have never seen the people of East London so thoroughly aroused and angry during the whole of my experience," wrote Mrs. S. Roberts, the Mayor of Stepney afterwards.[162] The demonstrators hurled marbles, rocks and other objects to trip the mounted police who sought to clear a path for the fascists, tore pavement blocks for projectiles, and overturned at least one lorry.[163] Fearing more violence, Sir Philip Game, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, ordered the fascists to cancel the march shortly before it was set to commence, which they did. [164] It is likely that this decision

---

[161] Fenner Brockway, Inside the Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison, and Parliament, G Allen & Unwin, London, 1942, pp. 270-72.

[162] World News and Views, October 10, 1936. According to Roberts, "The coming and going of police, mounted and on foot, ambulances and even fire engines, made one wonder whether the Borough was in a state of war." (Ibid.)

[163] Cassie Bright, a CPGB member, recalls the preparations the Communists made to disrupt the march in her piece, "Too Many Gods, Until I Found the True One," Awake!, May 22, 1997

[164] New York Times, October 5, 1936; Stephen Cullen, "Political Violence: The Case of the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April 1993), p. 266

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

prevented dozens of injuries and possibly lives. Some historians have suggested that the Battle of Cable Street marked the beginning of the end of the BUF, but some evidence suggests that the event triggered anti-Semitic feelings among some people and helped the fascists gain more support. For example, Thomas Linehan has pointed to a slight rise in membership in the East End of London in the late thirties in a recent book on the Battle of Cable Street.[165] Less than two weeks later, the Blackshirts got some measure of revenge in the East End when BUF supporters vandalized and looted stores, smashed car windows, burned vehicles, and attacked innocent people on the street. An East London newspaper recounted one of the more violent incidents they instigated:

> Terrorism the like of which has never been witnessed in the East End broke out again last Sunday when a band of [BUF] hooligans sped down Mile End Road smashing, looting and pillaging the windows of Jewish shopkeepers. Stones and missiles were obtained from Clinton Road, Mile End which was under repair ... Not one store bearing an English name was molested. The hooligans raced on to the corner of Canal Road where they overturned a car belonging to Mr Philip Levy, a taylor. Armed with sticks, iron bars and other weapons they smashed open the petrol tank. The petrol spurted forth. A man threw a match and in no time the roadway was a mass of flame. The flaming liquid raced down the gutter. A child playing by the curb was snatched away in the nick of time. On the main road a man was hurled bodily through a window and a seven-year-old girl was thrown after him. Never before in the History of the East End has there been such frenzied victimisation. [166]

---

[165] Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman, eds. Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society, Vallentine Mitchell, London, 1999.

[166] City and East London Observer, October 17, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In the same month Blackshirts attacked the offices of the Blue and White Association, a Jewish anti-fascist organization based in London, and attempted to break up an anti-fascist procession through the East End which was estimated to have 10,000 marchers.[167]

The Communists' militant stance against BUF anti-Semitism naturally appealed to Jews, particularly youths, many of whom had apparently not given communism much thought previously.[168] Prominent Jewish Communists in the 1930s included Phil Piratin, Chairman of the CPGB's Stepney branch, Joe Jacobs, the Secretary of the Stepney branch, Abe Lazarus, a strike organizer, Max Lazarus, a student leader at Oxford University, Benny Rothman, an anti-fascist leader in Manchester, Barnet Becow, an activist in the East End of London and candidate for Mile End West in the November 1937 LCC election, Jack Cohen, another East End activist and LCC candidate who apparently also wrote for Imprecor, the Communist newsweekly, Peter Zinkin, editor of the New Propellor, the journal of the Aircraft Shop Stewards National Council,

---

[167]Daily Herald, October 12, 1936.

[168]Basil L.Q. Henriques, the Warden of a Jewish settlement in the East End, stated: "The Jew feels that he must do something in self-defence. The only party which is militantly attacking Fascism is the Communist. Thus contrary to the political views of the vast majority of them, they are being so terrorized as to be forced into the ranks of Communism, thereby only intensifying Antisemitism." (As quoted in W.W. Simpson, Youth and Anti-Semitism, no publisher, London, 1938, pp. 41-42).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Abraham Lazarus, an Oxford activist, and Andrew Rothstein, a speaker in the London area. [169] But these individuals no more represented Jewish opinion than William Gallacher, the sole Communist MP in the thirties, or Harry Pollitt, the CPGB leader, exemplified Christian views. Most Britons, particularly educated ones, recognized this.

The use of physical force was hardly a new phenomenon in British politics. Fights had marred Chartist meetings in the mid-nineteenth century, the Suffragettes had used violence to try to obtain the franchise at the turn of the twentieth century, Jews and Chinese were physically attacked in the valleys of South Wales in 1911, and in the inter-war period Conservatives campaigning in working-class districts were sometimes assaulted.[170] The fighting involving the BUF, however, was more savage than usual, and it led some to conclude that the Blackshirts were adopting the same brutal tactics as the Italian and German fascists and that unless the government took decisive action the violence would assume greater proportions. In addition, some people warned that the BUF would try to take advantage of a breakdown in public order. For example, F.C.

---

[169]See Piratin's Our Flag Stays Red, Thames, London, 1948. Henry Srebrnik, "The Jewish Communist Movement in Stepney: Ideological Mobilisation and Political Victories in an East London Borough, 1935-45," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1984, sheds lights on this topic. For more information on Becow see Daily Worker, November 2, 1934. David Lipetz, also known as Goldfarb, represented the Comintern in Britain from 1924 to 1929.

[170]For more information on the anti-Jewish riots in Wales see, Geoffrey Alderman, "The Anti-Jewish Riots of August 1911 in South Wales," Welsh History Review, Vol. VI (1972).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Watkins, Labour MP for Central Hackney, where some of the bitterest clashes were fought, told the Commons:

> In this country we have always managed to conduct our political controversies, until the Fascists came by reasonable methods. We believe in reaching political decisions by counting not breaking, heads. If the knuckle-duster and other means of violence are introduced into our discussions, things will go very badly indeed for us. I trust that no effort will be spared to prevent this kind of thing happening in London or anywhere else.[171]

Stafford Cripps, who enjoyed a wide following on the left, warned that it might be necessary for the socialists and Communists to start a "private army" of their own.[172]

In July 1936 the Commons held a debate on the issue of public order. Members from each of the major parties pointed to incidents like the ones described as proof that the Blackshirts were deliberately inflaming racial hatred. Labour MPs like Herbert Morrison, F.C. Watkins, Dan Chater of North East Bethnal Green, Denis Pritt of Hammersmith North, and Ernest Thurtle of Shoreditch, the son-in-law of George Lansbury, the Labour leader, represented constituents affected by the Blackshirt anti-Semitic campaign and they and their allies took advantage of the furore to propose

---

[171] Jewish Chronicle, March 13, 1936. Lord Allen of Hurtwood, a prominent figure on the left, suggested that "The government should at once be given powers to suppress all attempts to organise private unofficial armies, whether they are under the auspices of Mosley or Cripps." (Manchester Guardian, January 19, 1934).

[172] Cripps, as quoted in Patricia Strauss, Cripps: Advocate Extraordinary, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1942, p. 115

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

legislation restricting the latter's civil rights. For example, Thurtle asserted:

> When Fascist speakers in the East End...denounce Jewish business people...cinema magnates, or... financiers such as the Rothschilds and the Sassoons, such statements are not calculated to cause a breach of the peace because the Rothschilds and the Sassoons are far away and there is no danger of a crowd being incited to take action against them. It is a very different matter when speakers talk about shopkeepers who are within 20 yards, 100 yards, or 200 yards. When the people hear speakers say that they are being robbed and exploited by Jewish shopkeepers, or that jobs which they should have had have been taken by Jewish work people, there is a clear danger that language of that kind and in such places is calculated to cause a breach of the peace.[173]

"These [BUF] anti-Jewish demonstrations," said Hugh Dalton, "are disgusting and un-English...They have learnt this business from Berlin...from [Julius] Streicher [the anti-Semitic Nazi publisher] and his like."[174] Morrison speculated that, "Fascist propaganda was fading," and Mosley had to "adopt anti-Semitism" because it was "what the paymasters of the organization [in Berlin] demanded."[175] He offered no evidence to support this claim, however, and none has since been found. Unlike the debate after Olympia, no MPs defended the BUF, a testament to the Blackshirts' extreme unpopularity.

The Battle of Cable Street convinced many people that the BUF was a cancer that the government could no longer afford to ignore. "The Mosley movement," argued the

---

[173]Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 309, March 5, 1936, p. 1627
[174]Ibid., Vol. 317, November 5, 1936, pp. 294-97
[175]ibid., Vol. 317, November 16, 1936, pp. 1462-63

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Tribune, a Labour magazine, "agitates with clockwork fidelity for the successive objectives of the 'Mein Kampf' program...The agitational methods, the actual strategy of street warfare and mob terrorisation are those of Goebbels and its anthem is the Horst Wessel Lied." [176] An ILP pamphlet stated:

> It is clear to the most innocent babe that Mosley, following the advice of Hitler, used the Jews as a scapegoat only to build up his party after all other means had failed. It was politically expedient and gathered an unthinking membership. Isn't it clear, if you want to build up a political party and your policy is nonsense and people will not support you--then bang the big giant Jewish drum, throw the mud, blow the pipe of hate, and the simpleton will follow you. [177]

"How the fascists can claim their party to be 100 per cent. British remains a mystery," asserted the East London Observer. "They borrowed their salute from Italy, their racial prejudices from Germany, their uniforms from Italy, and their Hymn of Hate ["The Horst Wessel Lied"] from Germany. These are our 100 per cent. Britishers. Half German sausage, half Italian spaghetti, or altogether 100 per cent. boloney!" [178] Extreme right-wing journals continued to defend the party, however, such as the Patriot and Saturday Review. For example, the latter observed, "Whether Sir Oswald Mosley's creed

---

[176] Daily Tribune, September 28, 1938. Actually, the BUF had no official anthem. "God Save the King" was the tune played most commonly at their meetings. Another popular theme was "The Marching Song." In 1988, the Friends of Oswald Mosley released a cassette tape entitled, "Comrades in Struggle, The Voice of Oswald Mosley, 1934-1939," which contains several of these songs. The Italian Fascist anthem, "Giovinezza," was sometimes played as well.

[177] Sid Goldberg, What of the Jews?, Independent Labour Party, London, 1940, p. 4

[178] As quoted in Jewish Chronicle, September 4, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

is popular or otherwise, he preaches a strong Britain and his policy is intensely national."[179]

* * * *

Instead of helping to lay the groundwork for a new phase in its development, the BUF's anti-Semitic campaign raised serious questions about its willingness to pursue power through non-violent means, its fitness to exercise power, and whether or not it imitated the Nazis. At the beginning of 1937 its membership was only slightly larger than it had been when it initiated the anti-Semitic campaign more than two years earlier. The fascists found that anti-Semitism was not nearly as popular in British society as it was on the Continent. In addition, this campaign caused a mild division in the party's ranks. Some members recognized that at least a portion of the racial anti-Semites were more interested in attacking Jews than in serving the organization.[180]

The anti-Jewish campaign failed for many reasons. By the mid-thirties, most Britons held a negative opinion of Nazi Germany. Few were inclined to back an

---

179 Saturday Review, October 17, 1936.

180 For example, one former member told Thomas Linehan that the campaign "encouraged people who were not really fascist-minded but just plain anti-Semitic into our ranks... which was not a good thing politically." (Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 279).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

organization that was friendly with the regime and appeared to imitate it in some ways. In addition, racial anti-Semitism ran counter to the country's tradition of religious tolerance and freedom. Nearly all of the major national institutions--Parliament, the press, the churches, and the mainstream parties--condemned the deliberate injection of racial anti-Semitism into national politics. Bigotry and the bullying of a small minority were not what people expected from an organization that aspired to become a mass movement. John Simon, the Home Secretary, probably spoke for most people when he told the Commons, "I take the view that Fascist doctrine is un-English, and unwanted as Communist doctrine...The essence of British social life is...tolerance of things we do not like...and the objection which most Englishmen, like myself, feel to...Fascism...is that [it is] intolerant...and therefore utterly un-British in sentiment and purpose."[181] Ramsay MacDonald told the press, "Quite obviously, the Fascist conduct in the East End...must be stopped."[182] John Weiss has noted that several forces spawn political anti-Semitism, including "fundamentalist Christian anti-Judaism... reactionary

---

[181] Times, October 8, 1936. "The Jew," Simon told the Commons, "is a citizen living here under the law, like the rest of us.... In this country we are not prepared to tolerate any form of Jew baiting." (Jewish Chronicle, March 13, 1936). The Times was correct when it stated, "Englishmen in general will not tolerate the persecution of the Jews." (Times, November 2, 1936). The Guardian asserted, "Jew-baiting can be put down by ordinary police methods if the Government is determined enough." (Manchester Guardian, October 13, 1936).

[182] Manchester Guardian Weekly, October 16, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

military autocracies that hate the modern world as shaped by the French and industrial Revolutions and identify its coming with the Jews; virulent ethnic nationalist movements; and artisan... organizations who represent those who cannot adjust to the modern market system and believe it to be a Jewish creation."[183] Signficantly, none of these factors with the possible exception of the latter were present in Britain in the 1930s. This anti-Jewish campaign also deflected people's attention from issues such as unemployment and housing, a problem recognized by an East End Catholic priest who wrote: "Fascists should not use the Jewish question to draw a red herring across the trail. There are serious economic and social conditions which need remedy." [184]

Clearly, the BUF did not introduce anti-Semitism into Britain, but in the interwar years some of the prejudices and misconceptions Jews and Christians held about each other had begun to break down. An increasing number of people understood that the vast majority of Jews were not like those depicted by the BUF. The fact that Jews comprised a small segment of the population also won them some sympathy. The spectre of a well-financed fascist movement conducting a hostile propaganda assault against a group that comprised less than one percent of the population dismayed many people. Bullies

---

[183]John Weiss, personal correspondence, May 10, 2000.
[184]Daily Herald, October 13, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had never been particularly popular in British politics; one reason Mussolini and Hitler were disliked was that they were perceived as wishing to intimidate weaker groups, such as the Ethiopians, Czechs, and Poles.[185] It is difficult to know precisely how people responded to the BUF's anti-Jewish efforts. A large proportion of Jews lived in Jewish enclaves in communities like Stepney and Whitechapel. Therefore, most people had little contact with them and possessed no strong feelings about them one way or the other. Further, since public opinion polling was then in its infancy, no reliable surveys were taken on the issue.[186]

Throughout the thirties, Jewish groups on both the left and right condemned the BUF and organized anti-fascist demonstrations, distributed anti-fascist literature, and lobbied local and national politicians.[187] By far the most influential was the Board of Deputies. It published articles and pamphlets showing that Jews had made important contributions to

---

185 "Fascism... is based upon the grovelling subservience of little bullies to the arch-bully. It is the apotheosis of the cad."(Austin Hopkinson, "Reflections on Fascism," The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 115, No. 686, April 1934, p. 389). David Levitt, a Hackney architect, has recently recalled: "Ethnic intolerance is less accepted among the British than Continental Europeans, such as the Germans." (Interview with David Levitt, April 11, 1999).

186 The first professional public opinion research organizations--the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) and Mass-Observation--were not founded until the latter half of the thirties. It was not until the same period that the B.B.C. began to survey listeners' opinions.

187 Jewish Chronicle, August, 14, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"the economy and culture."[188] Other Jewish groups like the Jewish People's Council, the United Synagogue Council, the Co-ordinating Committee against Fascism, and the Blue and White Association all publicly condemned fascism, and the Ex-Servicemen's Movement Against Fascism sought to demonstrate that British Jews had not shirked their military obligations. Most of these groups were based in London. although several were founded in the provinces, such as the North Manchester Co-ordinating Commitee Against Fascism, which came into existence in 1936.[189] These groups never formed a united front, however, partly because of philosophical differences. The rift appears to have been widest in London where the Board of Deputies, which enjoyed good relations with the government, and more radical groups like the Jewish People's Council could not agree on the most effective strategy to check the Blackshirts. Complicating matters was the schism in the Board of Deputies between non-Zionists and Zionists, with the latter becoming more influential as the decade wore on.

---

[188]"Jews," one of its pamphlets boasted, "came here... as refugees from lands of persecution [and] brought new ideas and established industries which increased the wealth of the nation and created employment for hundreds of thousands. In recent times many productive industries have been created and expanded by Jews on which the livelihood of many workers of all religions depend." (Board of Deputies, as quoted in Ibid., September 4, 1936).

[189]Daily Worker, March 10, 1936

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

On the whole, Jews exercised restraint in the 1930s.[190] By seeking solutions mostly through the established legal channels they gained sympathy for their cause. The Board of Deputies set the tone by lobbying behind the scenes to persuade public officials to enact legislation against the BUF rather than trading charges publicly with the fascists.[191] The Jewish Chronicle advised Jews to stay away from the Battle of Cable Street while the United Jewry Fellowship chose to fight the BUF with propaganda not physical force.[192] In this way, Jews undercut one of the Blackshirts' favorite arguments; namely, that they sought special privileges from the government and were unwilling to follow British customs and laws.

Christians also played a key role in the anti-BUF efforts. They helped organize rallies, lobby government officials, and publish and circulate anti-fascist literature.[193]

---

[190]The Jewish World advised Jews on " no account [to] be rattled.. or to lose their self-control " (Jewish World, May 4, 1933).

[191] For example, in the autumn of 1936 during the height of the turmoil in the East End, Neville Laski met with Herbert Morrison and Harry Pollitt several times in an effort to organize a wide anti-fascist front. (Colin Holmes, "East End Anti-Semitism,1936," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 32, Spring 1976, pp. 27-28). Also see Jewish People's Council, Jewish People's Council against Fascism and Anti-Semitism and the Board of Deputies, no publisher, London, 1936

[192]Blackshirt, March 1, 1935.

[193]See, for instance, National Council for Civil Liberties, Statements of Persons Assaulted by Fascists and Eyewitness Accounts of Fascist Violence at the Fascist Meeting Hornsey Town Hall, 8th January 1937, National Council for Civil Liberty, London, 1937; Elizabeth Allen, It Shall Not Happen Here; Anti-Semitism, Fascists and Civil Liberty, National Council for Civil Liberty, London, 1943. Also consult Jewish Chronicle, July 6, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

One handbill published by the Council of Citizens of East London announced:

> CITIZENS OF EAST LONDON. Forces are at work to destroy the commonsense and toleration and good humour on which we pride ourselves. We must work against these forces. The easy way to work against them is simple. Boycott provocative Demonstrations. Maintain Calm and good Temper. Discourage abuse and mockery Remain good neighbours. Stand together for fair play [194]

Most mainstream newspapers had a low opinion of the fascists and their anti-Semitic campaign, including the Times and Manchester Guardian. A typical newspaper letter in 1936 stated:

> The detestable anti-Semitism of [the BUF] is not directed against a Jewish policy, for there is no such thing: it is directed against the Jews as persons. That is to say, against loyal lieges of the King, our fellow British. It should be intolerable to all decent people that such intimidation should be allowed to continue. No one item in Herr Hitler's policy is so rightly condemned here as his persecution of the Jews. Britain should clear her record of any slightest taint of such cruel stupidity.[195]

A letter to the editor of the Times stated:

> The deliberate encouragement of physical hostility is a common artifice of those who can give no stimulus to the brain. Neither fascists nor communists in England are important enough to have any real potential rivalry. They therefore have to make it appear real by processions and fights. The British Fascists have not the monopoly of patriotism, and there is no sight more incongruous than a band of English people in black shirts singing "God Save the King." [196]

Other national groups which contributed to the anti-fascist efforts were the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), an organization founded in 1934 to combat religious

---

[194] Times, October 30, 1936
[195] Ibid.
[196] ibid., October 6, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

discrimination and which included influential figures such as the Dean of Canterbury, Bertrand Russell, Harold Laski, and Aneurin Bevan; the New World Fellowship, a small non-sectarian group; the Youth Anti-Fascist Committee, which was affiliated with the Union of Democratic Control; and the Youth Council on Jewish and Christian Relationships.[197] In March 1935 the NCCL, the most active of these organizations, condemned the denial of public halls to anti-fascists as a violation of free speech.[198] One argument these groups used against the BUF was that the heavy police protection the fascists required for their marches was costing the ratepayers thousands of pounds annually. Many local groups were also engaged in the fight, including the Council of Citizens of East London, the Peace Committee for the East End, the Citizens Council of Toynbee Hall, and the Hackney Anti-Fascist Committee.

In the aftermath of Olympia, the single greatest setback suffered by the BUF, the fascists took a host of measures to discourage members from using physical force, such as preventing stewards from carrying weapons, and requiring that members

---

[197] Manchester Guardian., October 9, 1936; Ibid., October 13, 1936 The New World Fellowship published a small weekly newspaper called the Green Band which the Jewish Chronicle termed "the only militant anti-Fascist weekly paper " (Jewish Chronicle, July 6, 1934).

[198] Daily Worker, March 25, 1935. Among the signatories to its petition were H.G Wells, Aldous Huxley, and J B. Priestley. Among the facilities the NCCL alleged was closed to anti-fascists was the Royal Albert Hall.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

assemble in orderly groups before and after marches and demonstrations and refrain from using inflammatory language. During the anti-Jewish campaign many members ignored these regulations, particularly when tensions were high. In 1936 the BUF National Headquarters punished several branches which had allegedly provoked violence, including the one in Shoreditch. [199]

It is difficult to determine precisely why the BUF pursued the anti-Semitic campaign for so long when it clearly antagonized so many people. Perhaps the chief reason was to find a scapegoat to blame for the problems the organization and the country faced. Many of the BUF leaders had come of age in the Edwardian era, the last prosperous period before the post-war economic decline. They fondly remembered a time when Britain was the premier economic and military power in the world. Disgusted with the nation's declining military and economic prestige, they sought a group to hold

---

[199] Among the individuals disciplined was "Jock" Houston who was transferred to South Wales.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

responsible and the Jews were the most convenient one available. [200] The Jews were a large enough body to be perceived as a legitimate threat to the nation yet small enough not to pose a serious danger to the party's existence. [201] It was easier for the fascists to blame their lack of success on the Jews than to accept responsibility themselves. In addition, some of Mosley's lieutenants may have felt that they needed to pattern their policies more closely after those of the Nazis in order to obtain financial assistance from Germany, particularly after Italy cut off most of its funding in 1935.

By the late thirties, even some BUF members and sympathizers suggested publicly that the campaign had been an error. "If you believe in fascism as an ideal," John Scanlon, an ex-socialist, sagely warned in Action, "there is a great field for you to work in. There are thousands of earnest men and women seeking for a new faith and a new

---

[200] W F. Mandle has cogently observed:

> In late 1934 the BUF was faltering. He [Mosley] had misjudged the possibilities of Fascism in England, and had bungled his campaign. Rather than blame himself, however, he acted in his customary fashion by inflating a minor opponent into a major cause of failure. A reason external to himself had to be found, and it had to be made a very powerful one, powerful enough to explain ultimate defeat. Here... we find the explanation for Mosley's conduct: he was both sincere and self-deluding, he became an anti-Semite because, in a very deep sense, he had to. (Mandle, Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists, p. 11)

[201] There were only approximately 385,000 Jews and 200 synagogues in Britain in the late thirties (D E. Butler and Anne Sloman, British Political Facts, 1900-1979, Macmillan, New York, 1980, p. 473)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hope...These people are yours to win if you go the right way about it, but above all don't drive them away by wrong tactics and faulty propaganda."[202] "To pick on a few leading Jews in the City of London as the cause of our troubles," cautioned the English Review, " is...foolish, for a similar list of Gentiles might be compiled. The error of Jew-baiting may be compared to the error of germ-hunting in medicine. It may be proved that the germ does the damage, but a germ-hunt is an unsatisfactory substitute for the cultivation of the body's natural resistance to germs. For national survival requires something more creative than Jew-baiting. It requires a change of heart, a binding back to the lessons of the past, a rekindling of old fires."[203] BUF leaders were not receptive to this advice. It was not until 1937 that the party finally suggested that the anti-Jewish campaign had caused it serious problems. With typical duplicity, it now asserted that anti-Semitism had all along only been a "small and incidental feature" of its domestic and international program. [204] This attempt to obfuscate the truth, however, convinced few people. In a private letter to Beverley Nichols Mosley suggested that anti-Semitism had a place in his

---

[202] Action, September 24, 1936.
[203] English Review, Vol. 59, (July-December 1936), p. 205
[204] "Our task is to build a prosperous Greater Britain. From that task we will neither deviate nor allow ourselves to be driven; and the Jews are only important in so far as they stand between us and our objective and will not be allowed to disrupt us from the great ends which Mosley has called us." (Action, March 13, 1937)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

movement however unpleasant it was.[205] Many ex-Blackshirts and UM members have suggested that anti-Semitism was a less significant element of the party's ideology than it actually was.[206] While it is true that Mosley seldom made anti-Jewish attacks the prime focus of his writings or speeches, many of his followers embraced anti-Semitism in a more fundamental way than apologists for the BUF have been prepared to admit.

The BUF continued to blame Jews for a wide assortment of the country's ills. For instance, one of the major themes of its anti-war campaign in 1938-39 was that Jews were conspiring to drag the nation into another conflagration with Germany. In short, the Jews were too convenient a scapegoat for the party to relinquish. Besides, too many members at all levels of the party were convinced of the truth of the major tenets of anti-Semitism for it to ever to be abandoned as an issue. With the sharp rise in international tensions in the late 1930s, however, the movement took a new focus and began to concentrate on international issues, such as collective security, communist expansion, and the possibility of war with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

---

[205] "I can so well appreciate the factors in our movement that repel you," he stated. "I have seen it before and the final realisation of the hard necessity is an experience sad to witness...These things are tragic and...they only come to our way when there is no other [way]." (Mosley, as quoted in Beverley Nichols, Men Do Not Weep, Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1942, pp. 21-22).

[206] For example, a leading Mosleyite has recently maintained that anti-Semitism was "always confined to only a minute or so of his speeches or a few paragraphs in his books." (Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER V

AGAINST THE GRAIN: THE BUF AND THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE,1935-1939

During the first half of the thirties, the BUF focussed on domestic issues. Partly due to the rise in tensions between the western democracies and the fascist powers in the late thirties and the failure of its domestic program to catch on with the public, it took a new course in the latter half of the decade and devoted most of its attention to international issues, such as Collective Security, the "spectre of communism" in Europe, and the threat of another war with Germany. This chapter has a threefold purpose: to determine why it chose this strategy, to explore its views on the major international issues in the years leading up to the Second World War, such as the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and the Spanish Civil War, and to assess why it was unable to capitalize on these issues politically.

Among the questions to be examined are the following: What was its stance towards the League of Nations and the policy the latter adopted in the mid-thirties known as Collective Security? How did the BUF expect this policy to affect British interests, particularly the Empire, the pillar of its international program? What attitude did it take

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

towards the Italo-Ethiopian War? What were its views on the Soviet Union, which began to play a more influential role on the international scene after it joined the League in 1934? Finally, how effective was its international program in helping it to achieve its goal of becoming a mass movement?

* * * * *

The BUF appears to have turned to international issues for several reasons. First, Mosley and his advisors gradually realized that the domestic subjects they had focussed on--unemployment, the decline of traditional industries, anti-Semitism, moral decay-- had not enhanced the party's reputation or led to a growth in membership. The severe economic crisis the BUF had predicted had not come to pass. In five years the party had failed to elect a single MP and had a woeful record at the local level as well. For years Mosley believed that the party was too weak to contest elections; it was not until the mid-thirties that he even chose to field candidates in local contests. By the late thirties, he apparently concluded that the party could not afford to remain on the sidelines any longer. In 1937, for example, 66 fascists entered races for council seats in London and the provinces. All of them were defeated. The next year BUF candidates again fought local contests throughout the country with equally disappointing results.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There were a few bright spots, however. They won nearly 20 percent of the poll in several LCC elections and did fairly well in several Manchester industrial wards. R.N. Creasy, the District Leader for Eye, a farming district of Norfolk, was elected Councillor after defeating the incumbent. Only a handful of Blackshirts attained this position. [1] In the late thirties many people argued that the party was in dire straits, although its supporters remained enthusiastic. The News Review spoke of a "near eclipse of Mosley's Fascist Movement." "At one time," it wrote, "Blackshirt activities were frequently front page news. Nowadays scarcely a line about them. One reason being lack of public interest in the movement."[2] John Harris, a Thames police court magistrate, gave expression to the popular view when he claimed that if it was only left alone the BUF would naturally "die of itself."[3] Perhaps BUF leaders thought that they could deflect some attention from these failures by focussing on international topics.

---

[1] Action, November 12, 1938. These included E.J. Bradley, who served on the Wolverhampton County Council in the early thirties; Captain Bentinck Budd, who was elected several times to the West Sussex County Council and later became the parliamentary candidate for Birmingham Ladywood, and a Mr Kitchen, a member of the Liverpool Council in 1934. (Blackshirt, February 2-February 8, 1934, and Ibid., May 25-May 31, 1934). Councillor T.W. Mainwaring Hughes, who wrote a piece on graft in local government, a favorite BUF theme, was also apparently a member. (ibid., September 21, 1934).

[2] News Review, July 28, 1938

[3] East London Advertiser, March 12, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Also in the mid-thirties, a series of foreign crises occurred and any party with hopes of becoming a factor on the national political scene had to react to them. These included the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-6, the re-occupation of the Rhineland (1936), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Anschluss between Germany and Austria in 1938, and the Sudetenland Crisis involving Czechoslovakia (1938). These episodes all placed the National Government in a difficult position. For instance, Labour and Liberals increased their share of the poll in each of the seven by-elections held in the aftermath of the Munich Agreement in the fall of 1938, which partitioned Czechoslovakia. [4] From its inception, the BUF scored the government's decision to strengthen its ties with the League of Nations. In its view, there were far more problems than advantages in belonging to this organization. If the League could not be restructured so as to give the fascist states more influence, Britain should withdraw from it. The League's prime objectives, the BUF contended, were to serve the interests of the Western democracies and undermine the fascist states. Britain, the fascists argued, was the natural ally of Germany and Italy and had no business leading an institution that was unsympathetic to them. In Tomorrow We Live, the most comprehensive

---

[4] Roger Eatwell, "Munich, Public Opinion, and Popular Front," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 6, No. 4 (October 1971), pp. 122-23.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

exposition of BUF domestic and international policy in the late thirties, Mosley asserted:

> The League of Nations...has been perverted to perform exactly the 'opposite' purpose to which it was intended to fulfill. The League was meant to overcome the division of Europe, and to eliminate forever the fatal system of the balance of power.
>
> It has [instead] been perverted to be a new and more vicious instrument of that system by which Britain, France, and Russia, in the name of the League, can mobilize their remaining satellite powers in one balance of a scale, whose other balance ...holds the armed power of Germany, Italy, and Japan.[5]

The League posed as a champion of peace and goodwill, but was allegedly a handmaiden of American and European financiers who conspired to crush fascism because it had broken their power wherever it could.[6] According to Blackshirt, the League was "no more than the embryo of an anti-Hitler coalition." Robert Gordon-Canning, who wrote as much about international issues as any Blackshirt, termed the League "a close corporation for retaining the spoils of war" and a pawn of the same "clique of international gangsters" who controlled the British economy.[7] According to his interpretation, the Soviets initiated their Five Year Plan in the late 1920s chiefly to attract Western capital. Capitalists had long since stopped fearing the Communists, who had helped destroy powerful socialist parties in Italy and Germany.

---

[5]Oswald Mosley, Tomorrow We Live, Greater Britain, London, 1938, p. 68; Action, August 21, 1937

[6] "International Finance and Jewry," warned the British Union Quarterly, "are working through the League of Nations to bring about the downfall of all fascist regimes." (Arthur Reade, "Why Reject Italian Friendship?" British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3, July-September 1937, pp. 79-81).

[7]Robert Gordon-Canning, Mind Britain's Business, Greater Britain, London, 1938, p. 6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Fuller referred to the League as a "Judaic-Masonic ideal."[8] Action warned in 1938: "Agents of internationalism are once more beating the war-drum, that Jewry and Bolshevism might rise triumphant from the ruins of Western civilization. Away with these jackals. Away with their hateful doctrine of internationalism."[9] There was of course no conspiracy between the League and "International Finance" and the Communists. Nor is there evidence that the League was financially dependent on Jewish financiers, such as the Rothschilds, Sassoons, Paul Warburg, or Bernard Baruch, as the fascists alleged. The Soviet Union, which had joined the organization in 1934, was the sole communist member and its proposals did not carry nearly the weight of the Western democracies, as BUF propagandists suggested. Soviet leaders recognized that Russia was not strong enough to fight Nazi Germany alone. Moscow needed the support of Britain and France to repel the obvious threat it faced from Germany. Therefore, in the late thirties Stalin and his advisors went to great lengths to cultivate better relations with the British and French. The BUF insisted that the League's policy of Collective Security --or "Collective Insecurity"--threatened Britain's economic and political independence and was impractical: "There would be some point in Collective Security if

---

[8]Action, May 15, 1937
[9]Ibid., October 29, 1938

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the odds against an aggressor were six to one as they would be if the League functioned according to plan; but to shout about Collective Security when it it is three to three [Britain, France and Russia versus Germany, Italy, and Japan] is sheer folly."[10] Action complained: "Collective Security...has all but led Great Britain, separated from the Dominions, into a European war."[11] Gordon-Canning referred to the League as "a flight of human fancy fit only for the madhouse."[12] Geneva allegedly had two systems of justice: one for fascist states and another for non-fascist states.[13] Averred Gordon-Canning, "Today, one sees in Europe Fascism and National Socialism... being arraigned as cruel tyrants by the decadent Jew-controlled bosses of France and Great Britain." [14] The fascists pointed to the rapid rise of the Soviet Union to a position of influence in the organization, and the decision of the three Axis Powers--Italy, Germany and Japan-- to leave the League as evidence of this.[15] Actually, Italy, Germany, and

---

[10] Action, September 18, 1939.
[11] Ibid., May 21, 1936.
[12] Blackshirt, January 24, 1936.
[13] "[Fascists] must guard against the League of Nations following the same cause as the Alliance [the Triple Alliance led by Britain and France in the First World War] and becoming the instrument of democratic reaction against Fascism. Obviously... the zeal of the democrats...against Italy [and Germany] is not dictated by love of the League, but by hatred of Fascism. " (Ibid., September 20, 1935).
[14] Action, November 7, 1936.
[15] Joyce wrote, "Subtract France from the League today and for practical purposes there remain only disarmed Britain and, armed to the teeth...Soviet Russia, where the Jew has exchanged gutter for palace " (William Joyce, "Collective Security," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 4, October-December 1935, p. 425).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Japan had all left the League on their own accord, not because they were forced out. Not surprisingly, many Blackshirts were opposed to the League's efforts to help the Jews establish a homeland in Palestine. Gordon-Canning, for example, was quite sympathetic to the Arabs. He argued that it made much more strategic sense to back the Arabs than the Jews.[16]

Further proof of the League's perfidy was its decision to slap economic sanctions on Italy during the Ethiopian crisis."The present League is unworkable [and]... always will be," Action stated, "so long as it is the arena in which France and Russia attack Germany and Italy." [17] In the BUF's view, Italy was merely responding to raids by Ethiopian tribes into Italian Somaliland "to rob, mutilate and murder." It asserted that Britain should have taken similar action against the incursions of these marauders into British Somaliland earlier in the decade. With some justification, the fascists questioned why the League had not punished Japan-- which had committed violations against

---

[16] He asserted: "There are nearly 250,000,000 Muslims in the world, and 16,000,000 Jews. To establish an Arab kingdom in close alliance with the... Empire must be surely rather the aim of British foreign policy than that of facilitating a Jewish-Communistic and Jew-financed controlled state astride our Empire's oriental communications, composed of Jews who are generally the riff-raff of Central Europe." (Robert Gordon-Canning, The Holy Land: Arab or Jew, Greater Britain, London, undated, p. 21). Gordon-Canning praised the Grand Mufti, one of the Arab leaders, as "a man of keen intelligence and of the staunchest patriotism [who]... refused to allow himself to be corrupted by the power of money." (Ibid., p. 23)

[17] Action, September 11, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

international law in Manchuria in the early thirties--in the same fashion as it had Italy.[18] Italy's burgeoning population and limited supply of raw materials allegedly gave her the right to colonize Ethiopia. The Italians were allegedly assuming the same beneficent role that Britons had played in Africa in the nineteenth century. The BUF argued that it was better for Italy to expand at the expense of "barbarous" Africans than Europeans. "Which do you want," asked Mosley, "colonial development or world war?"[19] The following passage highlights the unrealistic hopes many Blackshirts had for Anglo-Italian relations:

> It is friendship which Italy wants and has offered us. England needs that friendship. No longer is it equal to the combined navies of any two other powers... The army is efficient and gallant, but not intended for warfare on a major scale. While Britain's relative strength declines... the dangers confronting her become increasingly serious. The most formidable of these appear to be two: the first is the increased risk in view of modern weapons of a blow at the heart of the Empire... The second danger is from a successful blow in the Far East which might at once destroy Britain's Far Eastern trade and prestige...
>
> A third possibility... is a revolt in India. The handling of each of them demands extreme military efficiency. Is Great Britain to weaken that efficiency by having to keep a large fleet in the Mediterranean... in order to deal with a hostile Italy? ... If Italian friendship is conserved Britain's Far Eastern communications and Mediterranean interests could be left for a time in Italy's hands, leaving Britain free to concentrate on the major problems of defence.[20]

---

[18] "For many years," Blackshirt complained, " the Abyssinians have committed acts of aggression on the Northern frontier of Kenya. Again and again they have raided British territory. The Abyssinian Governor in the South, even promoted some of his officials who caused... the trouble... Is an aggressor named an aggressor only when it is a Fascist nation?" (Blackshirt, February 14, 1936).

[19] Also see E.D. Hart, "Italy's Case Against the League," Action, June 4, 1936, and W.J. Leaper, "Blackmail and Bluff," Blackshirt, September 20, 1935.

[20] Reade, "Why Reject Italian Friendship?," pp. 79-81.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Clearly, a contradiction existed between the BUF's support for the British Empire and its backing of Italian aggression in East Africa. Perhaps the best explanation for this inconsistency is that the BUF did not perceive Fascist Italy to be an enemy. In its opinion, the Italians had been an ally of Britain since the early nineteenth century and remained so under Mussolini. Further, it did not believe that Italy had vast colonial ambitions. The fascists suggested that the Eastern Mediterranean and East Africa were big enough for both Italian and British interests. As E. Mandeville Roe stated in an Italian journal, "The Italians are very much better neighbours to British African possessions than the Abyssinians ever were."[21] Opinion on the Right shared the BUF's displeasure with the League and cautioned against taking a strong stance against Italy. This included Churchill and Beaverbrook, who in 1929 had founded the short-lived United Empire Party together with Rothermere. Like the BUF, Churchill supported the Hoare-Laval Pact which proposed rewarding the Italians with a portion of Ethiopia if they terminated their invasion.[22] According to the BUF, collective security was simply another name for the discredited alliance system of the late nineteenth and early

---

[21]E. Mandeville Roe, "Financiers: Enemies of Fascism, Secret Dictators of Foreign Policy," Fascist Europe: An Anglo-Italian Symposium, National Institute of Fascist Culture of Pavia, Milan, February 1939, p. 71.

[22]Robert Rhodes James, Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963 Vol. VI 1935-1942, Chelsea House, New York, 1974, p. 5747

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

twentieth centuries. This system had failed to prevent the First World War, the greatest catastrophe in the modern era, and it was unwise to expect it to solve the international problems of the 1930s.[23] The BUF reasoned that since the League was dominated by the Allies, it would make the same kinds of "secret alliances secretly arrived at" that President Wilson and the architects of the organization had pledged to eliminate.

The fascists argued that the government should attend to the critical problems it faced at home instead of acting as a world policeman. "Mind Britain's Business," "No War for Warsaw," and "Fight to Live, Not Live to Fight," became a few of its favorite slogans in the late 1930s. "Great Britain today," warned Mosley, "lives in the shadow of war at a moment when the...government themselves have affirmed that they have not the means even to defend our nation and our Empire let alone attack a highly armed power. Our message to the Government is... remedy in this country conditions which disfigure this land, before you seek foreign adventure, embroilment and war."[24] Action exhorted Britons not to fight their "fellowmen in foreign lands... but poverty and want here at

---

[23] "Collective Security," asserted Fuller, "is supposed to be the panacea of war Yet during 1914-1918, Germany had to bear the brunt of an attack made by France, Russia, Italy, Japan, the U S A. and the entire British Empire. That war lasted over four years."(Blackshirt, August 9, 1935).

[24] Ibid., January 10, 1936. "We should be less prone to anxious interference in everybody else's affairs," Mosley wrote, "and more concentrated on the resources of our own country and Empire." (Oswald Mosley, The Greater Britain, Greater Britain, London, 1932, p. 143).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

home. The [real] struggle [is] against unemployment, malnutrition, slums and the evils of the present system. Before we condemn generation after generation of British manhood to be sacrificed on foreign soil on behalf of hypothetical injustice abroad let us pluck the beam from our own eyes."[25]

The League's efforts to impose an embargo on the materials Italy required for her war effort in Ethiopia would, the BUF contended, aggravate unemployment and the trade imbalance. One reader submitted a poem to Action in 1939 which suggests how some fascists felt about the issue:

APROPOS OF PACT

We will not fight that men
May once more be enslaved to greed
and lust;
We who have known the growing tyranny
Of alien hands
This is OUR land; 'Twas given us to hold
in fee for England; not to pawn or sell
To those who think to purchase with their
gold.

Nay, rather will we make a Pact with
Death,
That this our land shall keep its soul
unsnared,
E'en though it mean the yielding up of
breath.[26]

---

[25] Action, November 5, 1938
[26] Ibid., June 10, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Not surprisingly, the BUF's policy of selective pacifism did not erase the popular notion that it was an imperialistic and jingoist party.

Another reason the BUF urged the government to withdraw from the League was its belief that whites were naturally superior to non-whites. The League's policy of treating the two groups as equals was, in its view, ridiculous. "The situation where the votes of Haiti and Guatemala are equivalent to those of... France and Great Britain on problems of world importance, is just about as absurd a system as one would expect to be born from the womb of financial democracy," complained Gordon-Canning in Mind Britain's Business. This policy would place "the British Empire in the hands of negroid, mulatto, and octoroon, as well as in those of the barbarian Soviet, for final dispensation."[27] "When the League," Blackshirt asserted, "pits itself against white civilisation, it will be ruthlessly and remorselesly broken by our people."[28] "The British public," Gordon-Canning maintained, "should dismiss [Baldwin and Eden] for ever from office, because they have...threatened white rule in Africa."[29]

---

[27]Robert Gordon-Canning, "Loyalty to the League or to Our Empire?" Blackshirt, January 10, 1936 Chesterton complained, "White trade unionists in this country are fond of talking about their 'black brothers' in Africa. [but] white standards of life in Africa must be safeguarded." (Action, September 3, 1936).
[28]Blackshirt, August 9, 1935.
[29]Ibid., September 6, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The fascists often referred to dark-skinned people in insulting terms."The backward and uncivilised nations of the earth," Action asserted, "cannot be given 'freedom' to practise atrocities on white people." [30] "We must not expect [Italy]," Blackshirt observed, "to put up with injustice and insults from backward tribes."[31] Action and Blackshirt called Emperor Haile Selassie a "nigger," "Black Jew," "Black Dictator," "The Conquering Lion of Judah," and "Abyssinia's crowned poltroon." His subjects were described as "savages" and "coffee-coloured Jews" and his country as a "slave state" and "negro tyranny" "existing in a condition of the Dark Ages" where "corruption and graft flourish[ed]." [32] When Selassie emigrated to England in January 1936, Mosley led protests in the East End against his arrival. Joyce opposed sending British troops to Ethiopia because they would have to "fight side by side with the negro barbarian against a white race." [33] "We will fight for our King," Carlyon Bellairs, the former associate of Joseph Chamberlain, told a crowd at Streatham Common in 1936, "but we will not fight

---

[30] Blackshirt, June 7, 1935

[31] Ibid., October 4, 1935

[32] ibid., March 6, 1936. ibid., May 16, 1936. Action, April 30, 1936. ibid., May 9, 1936. ibid., August 22, 1936, Blackshirt, June 7, 1935 Also see Michael Pugh, "Peace with Italy: BUF Reactions to the Abyssinian War, 1935-1936," in Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 32 (1974), p. 13, and Mosley, Tomorrow We Live, p. 71

[33] Blackshirt, August 9, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for the black Emperor of Abyssinia."[34] Many fascists viewed jazz as a vile, primitive form of music.[35] The BUF suggested that the Indian leaders Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru used dishonest practices to promote their independence movement.[36] The party staged at least several "Nigger Minstrel Shows" for the amusement of its members. Many Britons in the Victorian and Edwardian Eras had, of course, also suggested that whites were racially superior to non-whites, such as Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Milner. For example, in 1897 Chamberlain suggested that the lives of the Britons who had emigrated to colonial lands were "more precious" than those of the natives they conquered while Milner doubted if blacks "would ever attain" the level of civilization whites had already reached.[37] Some Blackshirts and followers held more tolerant views, however, towards non-whites. Fascists, for example, expressed disgust at lynchings and "nauseating discrimination against the black races" in the United States.[38]

---

[34]Blackshirt, October 2, 1937. Blackshirt referred to the Chinese as "Yellow chinks."
[35]For instance, Cuthbert Reaveley, a musician, termed it a "degrading Negroid cacophony" (Ibid., December 14, 1934).
[36]ibid., December 7, 1934.
[37]Chamberlain, as quoted in George Bennett, ed., The Concept of Empire: Burke to Attlee, 1774-1947, A. and C. Black, London, 1962, p. 318. Milner, as quoted in Ibid., p. 344.
[38]See, for example, two letters to the editor in Action, January 14, 1939

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Perhaps the major reason the BUF opposed the League was that it threatened to weaken Britain's ties to the Empire. The Morning Post had made the same argument in the early 1920s.[39] The fascists recognized that it would be difficult to forge closer economic and military ties with the Empire and serve as a leading member of the League at the same time. For them, the Empire had so many advantages over the League that the choice between the two was obvious. [40] "The great danger for the future of the... Empire," Gordon-Canning warned, "is that a premise is being established whereby the League can and must intervene on the basis of collective security."[41] Fuller, who had a deep knowledge of international affairs, stated:

> To-day the prophets are shouting from the house-tops that civilization is crashing and that another war will utterly destroy it! Dire words of warning, and yet in themselves they leave us where we are. In the wake of the prophets come the quack doctors, the cranks and the crooks, the internationalists, the humanitarians, and the conference men, now a caste with their disarmament balsams, their League of Nations cure-alls, their showmanship and their chatter. Yet, the path, narrow though it may be, is straight as theirs is crooked. It is this. Let us be true to ourselves, let us have faith in. the British Empire. Before we reform the world. let us help each other to put our own house in order. As the League of Nations cannot arrive at a unanimous decision on traffic signals, we may be certain that it will decide no greater problem; let us cut ourselves off and suggest that it move to Moscow its spiritual home [42]

---

[39] Morning Post, September 29, 1920.

[40] The Empire was an "established historical fact which has brought peace and order and security to large areas of the earth," while the League was allegedly "merely an idea put into shaky practice without sufficient care.. and only weakly supported." (Action, July 30, 1938). Also see Fascist Week, May 4-10, 1934 and Action, October 29, 1938.

[41] Blackshirt, January 10, 1936.

[42] J.F.C. Fuller, Empire Unity and Defense, Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1934, pp. 284-89.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Britain's natural sphere of duty, her own Empire," complained Action, "[has] been allowed to rot. Jamiaca, Trinidad, Burma, Palestine, India, Egypt and Ireland [are] in various states of disaffection. We have starved our own children to give much to foreigners. British Union... regard[s] such action as criminal."[43] Some fascists became so disgusted with the organization that they suggested setting up a new one led by the fascist states.[44] This proposal, however, elicited no more interest among the electorate than BUF opinions on international affairs in general.

The BUF opposed granting independence to India and other colonies. The fascists held that Britons had demonstrated initiative and courage in the colonies and deserved to reap the fruits they offered. In their view the the Empire was a vital and intrinsic part of Britain not an adjunct to it. As Blackshirt stated, "The colonials are a living people. They are you." [45] The BUF argued that Britain would pay dearly socially, culturally, and most, of all, economically, if it lost its colonies. "The Empire wasn't built by the Baldwins," Mosley asserted at the Royal Albert Hall in 1934. "It was built by the Drakes, the Raleighs and the Clives... It was built by men who went out on ships on storm-tossed seas

---

[43] Action, October 29, 1938.
[44] Robert Gordon-Canning, Mind Britain's Business, Greater Britain, London., 1938, p. 6
[45] Blackshirt, June 4, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

carrying in jungles the English flag to the furthest corners of the earth through hardships, sacrifices, ordeals, and triumphs!... Their spirit [is] recaptured in the... the Blackshirt movement."[46] A significant number of fascists had lived and worked in the Empire prior to joining the BUF. Indeed, few parties in the 1930s appear to have had a higher proportion of members with associations with the Empire. Table 5.1 below presents a list of some of the most prominent of these members, the colony they worked in prior to joining the BUF, and their occupations.

TABLE 5.1 BLACKSHIRTS WHO WORKED IN THE EMPIRE

MEMBER	COLONY	OCCUPATION
R.R. Bellamy	Australia	farmer
W.K.A.J. Chambers-Hunter	Ceylon	farmer
A.K. Chesterton	South Africa	soldier
E.J. Crawford	Kenya	farmer
Major Harold H.A. de Laessoe	Africa	soldier
B.D.E. Donovan	India	soldier
Capt. E.L.H. Dunkerton	India	policeman

[46]Oswald Mosley, as quoted in Comrades in Struggle, Cassette Tape, Friends of Oswald Mosley, London, 1988, Side A. After the war a Walthamstow Blackshirt recalled, "We were brought up believing that we had come from a great nation. We'd got one quarter of the world's surface and land. The Union Jack was known throughout the world...A district officer could walk about with a stick in his hand through tribes in Africa now where you'd have to have an armoured car and sub-machine gun. We were looked up to, and respected and were very proud of ourselves." ("F T.," as quoted in Thoma Linehan, East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex, Frank Cass, London, 1996, pp. 268-69). BUF recruits were required to take the following oath: "I, the undersigned, being a British Citizen, loyal to King and Empire, hereby enrol as a Member of the British Union of Fascists. I accept the principles and constitution of the UNION and will be loyal to its leadership." (Richard Saunders Papers, 119/A1/101).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 5.1 (CONTINUED)

MEMBER	COLONY	OCCUPATION
Robert Gordon-Canning	Palestine	soldier
Sir Lionel Berkeley Haworth	India	soldier
George Hoggarth	India	soldier
J.P. Horne	Australia	farmer
Ralph Gladwyn Jebb	Nigeria	miner
Hector G. McKechnie	Honduras	diplomat
Lt.-Col. C.S. Sharpe	South Africa	soldier
J.R. Smeaton-Stuart	Kenya	soldier
Capt. Charles H. Steele	Hong Kong	Aide-de-Camp to Governor of Colony
W.H. Symes	Canada	radio engineer
Rex Tremlett	South Africa	journalist

Several criticisms of the League by the BUF paralleled what others on the extreme right had been saying for years, such as the Saturday Review, and the Patriot. The League placed heavy responsibilities on major powers like Britain and had at least the potential of undermining the sovereignty of its members.[47] According to the BUF, this meant that the "doctrine of the equality of nations," one of the League's key principles, was "repudiated."[48] Only "fascism," stated Nora Elam, the County

[47]Article Ten of its charter stated vaguely that "In case of ... aggression [against Members] the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled," while Article 16 gave the Council the authority to recommend what "military, naval or air force the Members shall severally contribute to the armed forces... to protect the covenants of the League." (James Avery Joyce, Broken Arrow: The Story of the League of Nations 1919-1939, C. Davies, Swansea, 1978, p. 211)

[48]Also see Nora Elam, "The Affirmative Guaranty," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II (1936), p. 105.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Woman Organiser for Sussex, "[can] save [people] permanently from the collective mischief inherent in the provisions of the Affirmative Guaranty... Economic Nationalism... may alone... beat its breast to the blunted spearheads of the Geneva racketeers."[49] The Blackshirts usually spoke of the "equality of nations" only when it served their purposes; they always insisted that "advanced" states such as Britain, Germany, France, and Italy must dominate the League.

Generally, the public saw the League in a more positive light. Most people knew that the fascist states had been unwilling to cooperate with it for years. Examples were Italy's bombardment of Corfu and occupation of the Greek island in 1923 and Germany's unilateral decisions to rearm, restore conscription, and reoccupy the Rhineland. For many Britons the Italian invasion of Ethiopia was a simple case of a bully attempting to subjugate a much weaker power and collective security was the most effective means of maintaining peace in an increasingly unstable and dangerous international scene. Most people appear to have been satisfied, with the National Government's international policy and its stance towards the League. This is evident from by-election results, the General Election in November 1935, in which the National

---

[49]Elam, "The Affirmative Guaranty," p. 107

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Government won an overwhelming victory, and from a host of polls. The Peace Ballot conducted in 1934-35 by the League of Nations Union, a large and influential pro-League organization, found that more than 11 million of the approximately 11.5 million people it surveyed favored retaining membership at Geneva. In another study conducted in June 1937, seventy-one percent of those polled favored supporting the League. Nearly 75 percent held the same opinion later in the year.

Most Britons throughout the thirties were more concerned with domestic rather than international issues. BUF rallies in support of Italy during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis were small affairs, such as the one Blackshirts from Kingston held in the West End in 1935.[50] Some meetings on international issues attracted only a handful of people, particularly in the provinces. However, the fascists were able to attract fairly large audiences at some of the rallies they held during each of the major international crises. For instance, Mosley spoke before several large crowds during the Ethiopian crisis and to approximately 25,000 people at Hammersmith on September 25, 1938, at the peak of the Czech crisis.[51] An anti-war march in Shoreditch in May 1939 was estimated to have drawn more

---

[50]Comrade, Vol. IX, No. 33 (February-April 1992), p. 2.
[51]Action, October 1, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

than 50,000 people.[52] Women seem to have been well-represented at these meetings. Several public opinion polls suggest that they held a more negative opinion of war than men.[53] The public never saw the BUF as a peace party, however, and rightfully so.

The choice of League or Empire was not as simple for the mainstream parties. They wished to strengthen the latter but also wished for the League to become a more powerful force for the preservation of peace.[54] Prime Minister Baldwin termed the League the "sheet anchor" of the government's foreign policy and named Anthony Eden, a young Conservative MP, as the first Minister of League of Nations Affairs, with a seat in the cabinet, after the party's resounding victory in the 1935 General Election.[55] "We recognize," Arthur Henderson, an architect of Labour's international policy, stated, " that the race in armaments cannot be stopped unless we build up a solid

---

[52] Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 13, 1999.

[53] Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, Britain by Mass Observation, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1939, pp. 74-76.

[54] Daily Herald, March 3, 1937

[55] 432 Conservative MPs were returned in this contest. In a memorandum to the Cabinet in 1935 Eden reflected the thoughts of most politicians on both the right and left:

> We must be stalwart in support of the League and the collective peace system. If we appear to be weak and vacillating...then we shall encourage Germany's demands, and encourage the weaker powers to take refuge with her in her belief that the collective peace system can never be effective because England will never play her part in its support. (Anthony Eden, Facing the Dictators, Houghton Miffin, Boston, 1962, p. 199).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

system of collective defence within the League."[56] Discontent with the League and Collective Security was more prevalent on the right. With civil unrest on the rise in several parts of the Empire, such as India, Jamaica, and Trinidad, some people contended that the government was paying too much attention to the League.[57] As one man wrote to the [London] Evening News: "The roaring British lion of Palmerston's days has become the purring cat of benevolent internationalism. I look upon the Blackshirts as the future custodians of this country's safety." [58] Various polls in the mainstream press seem to demonstrate this, although they were not scientific. For example, nearly 75% of the respondents to a Daily Mail survey in the mid-thirties answered negatively the question, "Are you in favour of Great Britain remaining a member of the League of Nations?" [59]

---

[56] As quoted in William Rayburn Tucker, The Attitude of the British Labour Party Towards European and Collective Security Problems 1920-1939, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1965. Churchill, a respected if cantankerous voice on the right, had told the Commons a year earlier: "I have been trying for the last few years to seek out what would be the best way to prevent war and it has seemed to me that the League of Nations should be that instrument."

[57] "Great Britain," asserted the Daily Mail, "has no concern whatever in what happens in Austria or Czechoslovakia... Memel or Jugoslavia." (As quoted in Tribune, March 12, 1937).

[58] Evening News, April 14, 1934.

[59] Daniel Philip Waley, British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War, Temple Smith, London, 1975, p. 21. A Morning Post poll conducted in the same year found that less than five per cent of those queried supported the League as it was then organized. (Morning Post, as quoted in Ibid., p. 22).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Empire's appeal had began to wear off for many people, however. For decades the dominions, particularly Canada, had been following a more independent path. In 1926, the Imperial Conference in London resolved that Britain and the Dominions were to be considered as autonomous units with equal status. The BUF was well-aware of the apathy most people felt for the Empire. Action commented: "How the great pioneers of our Empire would turn in their grave if they could become aware of Britain's lost interest in the results of their sacrifice and suffering to make her great and respected?"[60] Still, a significant portion of the electorate continued to have warm feelings towards the Empire. They belonged to virtually all occupational groups and political parties, although most were on the right of the political spectrum. Several noted pro-imperialists became members of the BUF in the mid-thirties, including Carlyon Bellairs, a former member of the Tariff Reform League and ex-Conservative MP, Lord Errol, who had served as a diplomat in Europe, and Lt. Col. Sir Lionel Berkeley Haworth, an ex-Conservative sexagenarian who had served as Consul in Khuzestan and the Persian Coasts and Islands and Army officer in India.[61] Some members of the Junior Imperial League, or "Imps," and the India Defence League also joined the fascists like Vice-Admiral R. St.

---

[60] Action, July 8, 1939.
[61] Ibid., May 1, 1937 Comrade, Vol. 4, No. 20 (August-September 1989), p. 3

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

P. Parry, who helped found the latter organization.[62] As these men recalled, the BUF's argument that the Soviet Union was attempting to destroy the Empire was similar to ones Conservatives and Social Imperialists such as Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Curzon had made about Russian expansionism around the turn-of-the-century.

Several right-wing organizations took a position similar to the BUF on imperial issues, such as the Junior Imperial League, the India Defence League, and the Empire Economic Union.[63] "The government fear Sir Oswald Mosley, " asserted the Saturday Review, "[because he] stands for Patriotism and for a robust PRO-BRITISH POLICY and is attracting a great many Conservatives ...who are fed up with the sham 'Nationalism' of the government."[64]

While the Left lauded the economic and social advances the Communists had allegedly brought to Russia, the BUF focussed on the economic inefficiency, corruption, and brutal treatment of ethnic minorities and dissidents in that country. The BUF pointed to the artificial famine in the Ukraine in the early thirties, the imprisonment and

---

[62] Blackshirt, March 1933, p. 3, Ibid., January 4, 1935 Parry, who was a Conservative, became a BUF organizer in the Portsmouth area and later the parliamentary candidate for Westminster (Abbey). For example, Richard Bullivant, a West Ham member, had formerly belonged to the "Imps." (See Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 138)

[63] Daily Mail, January 15, 1934; Saturday Review, November 10, 1934.

[64] Saturday Review, November 10, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

liquidation of peasants who resisted the forced collectivization program, the execution of thousands of opponents in purges, and the establishment of forced labor camps across the country as evidence of the harsh character of the regime and its unpopularity with the Russian people.[65] "Communism," averred Blackshirt, "[means] asinine misgovernment, the following of vague, unworkable theories and the resultant misery of the people. [It] kills self interest, and brutally stamps out that strength of individual character which alone can give man the urge to improve the state."[66] One sign of how far the BUF was from the political mainstream is that at the time it was publishing these statements relations between the government and the Kremlin were rapidly improving and many Labourites were suggesting an alliance.

The Blackshirts grossly exaggerated the threat the Soviet Union posed to Britain and European peace. The Soviet Union, it contended, was a "dictatorship of materialism, class bitterness, and prejudice," rather than the "new civilisation" that pro-communists such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb and H.G. Wells suggested it was. "Build great cities and Communism will raze them to the dust," warned Action. "Build a religion and

---

[65]"The aim of the Bolshevik authorities," the BUF stated in its typically simplistic view, "is the complete material destruction of the whole Ukrainian population."(Fascist Week, February 23-March 1, 1934)

[66]Blackshirt, July 6, 1934. Also see Henry Gibbs, The Spectre of Communism, Selwyn & Blount, London, 1936 and Action, September 3, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Communism will turn men again to idolatry. Build a civilisation and Communism will lay it to waste."[67] According to the fascists, the Soviet Union's philosophy of dialectical materialism failed to satisfy people's spiritual and emotional needs. "Communism," Blackshirt stated, "saps the foundations of morality and sanity, killing personal ambition, the handmaiden of all progress, and destroying all the zest and romance of life. It is the illogical pulling down of everyone to the level of the lowest and was conceived by...the dregs of the human race."[68] Fascism, with its goal of establishing an "organic state," was in harmony with human nature while communism with its collectivization efforts was not because it sought to eliminate the natural differences between people. According to the BUF, fascism allowed for human nature while Communism attempted to crush it. The BUF conveniently ignored serious conflicts between church and state in both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.[69]

In the BUF's view, one of the Communists' key mistakes was their contention that societies were split into two antagonistic classes--the proletariat and bourgeoisie.

---

[67] Action, October 16, 1938.
[68] Ibid., August 31, 1934.
[69] For instance, thousands of Protestants demonstrated in Munich against the ouster of Dr. Meiser, a popular bishop, by Dr. Muller, the Nazi Primate, in the autumn of 1934. Owing to protests like this against its anti-Christian policy the NSDAP eventually took a less antagonistic position towards the Catholic and Protestant churches.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Only when the fallacy of class conflict was recognized could nations progress to the more advanced stage of the corporate state. Joyce, one of the most extreme anti-communists, stated, "No doctrine is further removed from justice than the [Marxist] proposition that value is determined by the amount of labour expended...The fundamental fallacy of materialism is the supposition that creative intellect can be correlated with labour at all."[70]

The BUF pointed to the Soviet Union's persistent economic problems with famines, shortages of consumer goods, and decaying infrastructure as proof that communism did not work.[71] The Soviet economy sacrificed "everything to industrial development and armament manfufacture" and would allegedly collapse without the "reintroduction of private enterprise," and the loans from the foreign capitalists which it pretended to despise.[72] "While [the Soviets] pretend to denounce financiers they never hesitate to provide [them] with an adequate 'rake-off,'" noted Blackshirt after Russia obtained a loan from French businessmen. "While they give lip-service to peace, they create civil and international war. While they denounce financiers, they use the financial system and

---

[70]Blackshirt, October 26, 1934. Ibid., November 9, 1934.
[71]ibid., April 12, 1935.
[72]ibid., January 9, 1934; ibid., April 5, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

indeed, have a vested interest in maintaining it."[73] Russia certainly experienced severe economic problems in the 1930s, but not all of them were due to its communist institutions, as the BUF suggested. The backward social and economic development of the country under the Tsars and unfavorable weather conditions for agriculture, one of the major industries, were partly responsible for the shortages of vital supplies.

Another international issue which the BUF sought to capitalize on, especially in the latter half of the decade, was Soviet expansionism. The fascists knew this had been a fruitful issue for Continental fascists and apparently hoped it would pay dividends for them as well. "The bolshevization of the rest of the world," was much a goal of Stalin as it had been of Lenin and Trotsky. Pacific statements and calls for "building socialism in one country" were ruses "designed to create complacency in the West."[74] Blackshirt, for instance, quoted a statement which appeared in Pravda in 1928: "Our ultimate aim is world-wide Communism...[and] world revolution; for...the establishment of a world proletarian dictatorship."[75] The Soviets' original goal was allegedly to have local communists establish Marxist regimes in their own countries, as Bela Kun had done

---

[73] Blackshirt, July 7, 1935. From the days of the Revolution," Gordon-Canning asserted, " Russia has been financed by great New York banking firms and. is being used by them." (Gordon-Canning, Mind Britain's Business, p. 68).
[74] Action, August 20, 1938, ibid., May 14, 1936.
[75] Blackshirt, June 14, 1935; ibid., March 22, 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

briefly in Hungary and as German communists vainly attempted to do in Bavaria in 1919. When these local regimes failed to take root-- with the exception of one in Outer Mongolia-- they adopted a more deceptive policy, namely, to stir "up strife among the nations of Europe while publicly expressing a desire for peace."[76] The Soviets aimed to sow dissension among the Western European states and then set up a "world dictatorship" based in Moscow.[77] Blackshirt warned: "The [Soviet] war budget in 1934 was 1,665,000 roubles...but the actual expenditure had been 5,000,000 roubles..The air fleet has been increased by 330 per cent. within the last four years, light tanks by 760 per cent., air machine guns had been increased by 435 per cent and light torpedo craft by 330 per cent."[78] Some evidence exists that suggests that the Soviets had not totally abandoned the goal of fomenting revolution abroad in the thirties.[79] A case in point was the Spanish Civil War in which the Soviets sent advisors and arms to the Republicans in their

---

[76]Blackshirt, June 14, 1935

[77]Ibid., August 30, 1935

[78]ibid., April 12, 1935 Ian Dundas, the Chief of Staff, warned. "Russia... is only awaiting the day when she can sweep into the West with hordes of uneducated, uncivilized and barbaric soldiers, carrying with them the fertile seeds of Communism." (ibid.).

[79]According to Kermit McKenzie, an authority on the topic: "The Comintern had [not] abandoned the idea of struggle for world Communism. A careful reading of the report of the Seventh Congress, as well as of Comintern literature of the next four years [1935-1939], reveals that the Comintern still insisted upon the necessity of a violent overthrow of capitalism ...and still retained as its... ultimate goal the establishment of world Communism." (Kermit E. McKenzie, Comintern and World Revolution 1928-1943: The Shaping of Doctrine, Columbia University Press, London, 1964, p. 158).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

struggle against the pro-fascist Nationalists led by Gen. Francisco Franco. According to the fascists, Soviet foreign policy under Stalin was guided by aggressive nationalism and expansionism more than concern for the international working class. The internecine conflict in Spain between Stalinists and Trotskyists supported this because view because it hurt the Republican cause, which championed the working class. In addition, the Soviets gave generous financial assistance to the German Communist Party (KPD). The fascists exaggerated the expansionist aims, however, of Soviet foreign policy makers.

Throughout the thirties the Soviets strove to forge an alliance with Britain and France in the hope of forming a counterweight to the military threat from Nazi Germany. This was no mean task. Suspicion and distrust had existed among these countries since the Bolshevik Revolution. Indeed, there were no diplomatic ties between Britain and the Soviet Union until 1924. Three years later relations again became strained when police suspected the Soviets of spying in the Arcos case. The Soviets naturally knew that Britain (and her ally France) would be more willing to cooperate with her if it refrained from planting seeds of revolution across Europe, and, therefore, it had little to say on the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

subject after the Nazis' rise to power. [80] Besides, Stalin did not have much faith in the ability of foreign communist parties to undertake successful revolutions. The BUF contended, however, that Russia would "welcome a European war" since it would weaken the west and make it easier to spread communism across the Continent. [81]

The BUF, like others on the extreme right, held that the Soviets had designs on the British Empire.[82] It alleged that the Kremlin had "funnelled millions of pounds of subversive money into various countries of the Empire." [83] India was supposedly the prize objective; it intended to cause "sedition" there even if it meant starving her own rural areas to pay for it. [84] The fascists warned that the treaty Moscow signed with Sinkiang, a western Chinese province in 1935, put "the remaining piece of Chinese

---

[80] See, for instance, the Comintern journal, World News and Views, March 15, 1939

[81] Action asserted:

> At first it was thought that Communism would gain power in each country (helped of course by Moscow gold) and as each nation succumbed to the poison of Marx, so would the International be built up and the world revolution accomplished. [But] it became obvious that Communism would never take root in the Fascist countries. And so the original plan was buried. The second (and present) plan is the war plan. After a European war the poverty and suffering would be colossal. Poverty and misery make a fertile breeding-ground for Communism... Soviet policy is therefore, to leave no stone unturned in the task of stirring up strife among the nations of Europe while publicly expressing a desire for peace.

(Action, November 13, 1938). Also see Ibid., September 25, 1937.

[82] "The Soviet Weathercock and its Neighbors," ibid., April 30, 1936.

[83] Ibid., October 23, 1937

[84] Blackshirt, August 9, 1935

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

territory converging on India in the power of the Soviet Government [and Russia]...nearer to its ultimate aim of attacking...[the] Indian Empire."[85]

The BUF always considered itself to be a nationalist movement, born of "British Blood and soil, and of British inspiration alone." Its favorite slogans were patriotic ones such as "Britain First, " "Dare All for Britain," "Britain for Britons," "For King and Country," "Britons Fight for Britons Only," "British Union Springs from the Soil of Britain," and "Not a Penny for Aliens While Britons Starve." As Gordon-Canning stated, the BUF's "first... principle [was] to be national."[86] As one member recalled, "Our movement was made up of British patriots. We [left it to] the little people...to get on with their party squabbles." [87] Another recalled, "I love Britain. I would do anything for her. It was natural for me to be attracted to Mosley's policy of keeping Britain great."[88] According to Action,"The prosperity of our people [can be] increased [only] if...we can arouse real love of country and pride of race."[89] John Warburton, a Blackshirt from East London, states that the BUF's "motivation went deep down into the past of these

---

[85] Blackshirt, December 31, 1935. "Ever since the war," the British Union Quarterly warned, " these people have been trying to undermine British influence, not only in Europe, but in Africa, in China and in India." (Reade, "Why Reject Italian Friendship?" p.82).
[86] Blackshirt, January 10, 1936.
[87] Anonymous member, as quoted in John D Brewer, Mosley's Men, Gower, Aldershot, 1984, p 34
[88] Ibid., p 18.
[89] Action, October 24, 1937

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

islands."[90] This helps explain why the BUF opposed Scottish and Irish nationalism.[91] Some Blackshirts compared the BUF to the Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts' motto, "For God, King, and Country," was almost identical to the BUF's slogan, "For King and Country." [92] Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouts, publicly praised both Mussolini and Hitler. Stuart Rawnsley has noted that many Blackshirts in the North were ex-Scouts.[93] Among the fascists who had been Scouts were "Mick" Clarke and Henry Williamson, the writer.[94] Many books, pamphlets, and articles the BUF published highlighted the importance of native tradition to the movement, including the pamphlet Fascism in Relation to British History and Character and Mosley's The Greater Britain.

The BUF saw Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as states pursuing national reconstruction, but not necessarily as models to follow. According to the BUF, fascism

---

[90]Interview with John Warburton, July 6, 1999.

[91]For example, Blackshirt warned, "Some of the more extreme proposals of the Scottish Movement would tend to break up national unity." (Blackshirt, June 16, 1933).

[92]Daily Worker, January 29, 1935; Ibid., October 2, 1934; Morning Post, April 6, 1933. Also see Blackshirt, October 5, 1934. For one Scout's favorable view of the BUF see Action, January 2, 1937.

[93]Stuart Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," Kenneth Lunn and Richard C Thurlow, eds., British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Inter-war Britain, Croom Helm, London, 1980, p. 156.

[94]Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 219.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was a national movement not an international one like communism. Thomson asserted:

> Fascism... is essentially a Nationalist creed...The urgent need of our present age is a planned economy ...There is no super world authority capable of devising or carrying into effect such a plan. The only solution is for each country to put its own house in order and to devise and execute its own national plan.[95]

BUF propagandists often suggested that the British people and British institutions were superior to foreign ones. For example, Mosley asserted in 1939: "You are Englishmen with the greatness of your forefathers in your hearts. Because you are English, because you have within you that undying greatness, because that flame still burns within you, because you are a great people--you must unite and save the world."[96] Mosley maintained that the BUF's "only contact with its foreign precursors, is...that it was a spur to us... to observe what could be done in countries with less than a tenth of this country's resources."[97] "The basic Aim--the 'Grand Design' of Mosley's BUF," an ex-member recalled, was "PEACE AND PROSPERITY WITHIN AN ISOLATIONIST EMPIRE not an Alliance with Germany or Italy--or any other major World Power."[98] Frank Hawke,

---

[95]Blackshirt, April 12, 1935.
[96]Action, April 22, 1939
[97]Ibid., February 18, 1939. Mosley told an audience at the Earls Court: "I resent this idea that the Englishman is a lazy, incompetent fellow... I resent that charge because it is a travesty and a lie on the whole of British history and... character." (Mosley, as quoted in "Comrades in Arms," Cassette Tape, Friends of Oswald Mosley, London, 1988, Side A).
[98]Letter from Leonard Wise to Prof. Richard Thurlow, British Union Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, undated.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the District Leader for Norwood, has stated, "The Fascist movement led by Mussolini seemed to give a lead to replace muddle with discipline and order, and many were inspired to do the same in England, but in a way that was suitable to our British way."[99] A.W. Brian Simpson, who has written a valuable study of the persons interned under Regulation 18B, has noted that there was no "organizational link between Mosley's party and foreign parties which would serve to create an international fascist orthodoxy."[100]

The BUF's critique of Soviet foreign policy was flawed Although the Soviets had agents throughout the Empire, especially India, the Blackshirts exaggerated their activities and resources and gave very little consideration to Russia's legitimate security needs. The BUF often used statements by dead or repudiated officials like Lenin or Trotsky to support their arguments as well as statistics taken out of context. [101]

In the BUF's view, the National Government was incapable of meeting the Soviet menace. The India Act was proof of this: "If MacDonald and Baldwin succeed in their betrayal of India," Blackshirt warned, "then the day will not be far

---

[99]Interview with Frank Hawke, June 29, 1999.

[100]Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, p. 122.

[101]For example, Blackshirt illogically implied that the obscure leader of the Union of Young Communists spoke for the Russian government when he stated, "[The] young people of the U.S.S.R. will decide who shall destroy whom in the whole world" and suggested that a minor official named Stetsky expressed official policy when he asserted, "In order to fufill its mission the Soviet Power must triumph in the whole world." (Blackshirt, January 17, 1935; Ibid., December 27, 1935).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

distant before India...will be directly under the control of Moscow." Some champions of the Empire espoused a similar view. For instance, Lord Willingdon, a Liberal peer who served as Viceroy of India from 1936 to 1943, warned that the communists posed "a very real... menace" to British rule in the mid-thirties. Anti-communism was a powerful force in British politics in the inter-war era, especially on the extreme right. Conservatives used rumors of a secret association between the Soviets and the Labour Government--the spurious Zinoviev Letter, for example--to help it regain control of the government in 1924. "Unless Europe slays Bolshevism," warned Lady Houston, "Bolshevism will slay Europe." [102] The majority of the British people, however, do not seem to have perceived communism as a grave threat to India in the thirties.

Another argument the BUF used against a possible Anglo-Soviet rapprochement was that the Stalinist purges had deprived the Russian armed forces of many of its most experienced and talented officers and made it less valuable as a potential military

---

[102]For an interesting discussion of the Zinoviev Letter controversy see Lewis Chester, Stephen Fay, Hugo Young, The Zinoviev Letter, Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1968.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

partner. Many on the right shared this not entirely inaccurate view."[103] The fascists also held that the Soviet Union made a poor trading partner. "Economically we could thrive if Russia did not exist," stated Blackshirt. "All the timber and wheat we need could be supplied by Canada alone, and better timber and wheat at that." The fascists suggested that some of the social and economic reforms implemented in recent decades such as social insurance laws and tax reforms at the expense of the rich were leading the country on a path towards communism. They warned that unless stronger measures were taken against the Communists Britain might follow the pattern of Spain:

> The Communists of Britain are just as virulently anti-religious as those of Spain. Leading prelates of the Church... will be wise if they cease to encourage the Left in its materialist dogmas, unless they wish to see hooliganism pass over into incendiarism.
>
> Although we stand horror stricken at the devilish carnage and destruction wrought by the Red Front in Spain today, we realise there is some measure of self-congratulation to be gained from the dreadful warning these events must spell to the people of Britain. No intelligent man or woman can willfully ignore such a warning nor the threat that bolshevism will, within a very short time now, make a determined assault on Great Britain. ..People of Britain, believe us before it is too late![104]

The fascists contended that British Communists were a tool of Moscow and posed a

---

[103]"There was an almost universal opinion in Britain [in the late thirties]," Anthony Eden later recalled, "that the military power of the Soviets was in disarray and of poor quality." (Anthony Eden, Facing the Dictators, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1962, p. 181). According to Sir Curtis Keeble, the Ambassador to the Soviet Union, the government conducted a survey of the country's defence requirements in the late thirties and concluded that Russia was "neither a positive or negative factor "(Curtis Keeble, Britain and the Soviet Union, St. Martin's, New York, 1990, p. 126). David M. Glantz' Stumbling Colossus: The Red Army on the Eve of World War, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KS, 1998, confirms this view of Soviet military forces on the eve of the conflict.

[104]Blackshirt, March 27, 1937; Ibid., September 5, 1936

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

threat to national security. "Bolshevist agents," warned Blackshirt, "were operating in the ports to spread communism among our seamen" and "efforts were being made to influence the men in our Army, Navy, and Air Force."[105] The Communist Party was actually no larger than the BUF itself until the late thirties and early forties when it enjoyed a modest growth.[106] Even then it totalled only about 30,000 members, which hardly made it a serious threat to national security. Its economic resources did not come close to matching BUF estimates. Many of its members worked part-time or not at all.[107]

The Spanish Civil War confirmed the BUF's fears of communist expansion. It seemed to demonstrate that the Soviets had not abandoned their goal of world revolution.[108] In the BUF's typically simplistic view, communist agents hired by the Kremlin precipitated the conflict, such as Bela Kun, who had briefly headed a communist regime in Hungary after the First World War.[109] "Soviet Russia," wrote Joyce, "has exerted every resource available to set up in Spain a government subservient

---

[105] Blackshirt, June 22, 1934

[106] Kenneth Newton, The Sociology of British Communism, Allen Lane, London 1969, p. 21

[107] Francis Beckett, Enemy Within, The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party, London, 1995, p. 12 Kenneth Newton, an authority on the party, maintains that in 1930 nearly twenty per cent of its members were jobless. (Newton, The Sociology of British Communism, p. 34).

[108] Action, August 27, 1936

[109] Blackshirt described Kun as a "classic red murderer" who had "inaugurate[d] a reign of terror over the Spanish people." (Blackshirt, August 1, 1936). Also see Ibid., September 12, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to Communism and the international Jewish finance by which bolshevism is maintained."[110] The Soviets seek "to set Spaniard against Spaniard, and to break down one more buttress of nationalism in [their] quest for internationalism and world domination," Action maintained. [111] As proof, the BUF cited the large volume of anti-Christian and anticapitalist propaganda the Soviets disseminated before the war and their generous shipments of arms and advisors after it began. Its argument that the Soviets were a major source of aid to the Loyalists was sound. [112] Typically, the BUF had little to say about Germany and Italy's role in the conflict, although the two countries sent more troops and arms to the peninsula in violation of the non-intervention agreement they signed in 1936 than any foreign power, including the U.S.S.R. (Approximately 50,000 Italian troops were stationed in the country by

---

[110] Blackshirt, August 1, 1936.
[111] Action, August 13, 1936.
[112] Bill Alexander, a British volunteer who served with the Loyalist forces, has estimated that the Soviets sent "2,000 military personnel, 800 aircraft, 360 tanks, 1,555 artillery pieces and half a million rifles" to the Republicans and helped re-organize their army. (Bill Alexander, British Volunteers for Liberty, Spain 1936-1939, 1982, p. 23). Robert H. Whealey, an American scholar, has written, "The International Brigades. were supplied by Moscow and its friends in Paris." (Robert H. Whealey, Hitler and Spain. The Nazi Role in the Spanish Civil War, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 1989, p 23). "More than 50 percent of the planes used by the Republicans between August 1936 and April 1937 came from the USSR. . .Almost all of the tanks were also of Russian origin." (Pierre Broue and Emile Temime, The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain, pp. 369-70). In 1936, the Sunday Chronicle reported that hundreds of Spaniards had received military training in Russia the previous winter. (Sunday Chronicle, October 24, 1936).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

February 1937 and the Battle of Guadalajara, one of the major campaigns of the war, was fought principally between Italian and Republican forces). According to the BUF, a Soviet Spain would be a strategic disaster for Britain because it would control sea lanes that were crucial to communications with the Empire.[113] In 1937, it urged the government to give the rebels "diplomatic recognition."[114] Some Britons, mostly on the right, took a similar position, including Churchill and Blackfriars, a Catholic journal, but few people paid attention to the BUF's views on this issue.[115]

The Nationalists were supposedly defending Western civilization against "Oriental" materialism and barbarism. General Franco's cry of "no table without bread, no home without a fire," asserted Action, "is comparable to Mosley's slogan of 'None shall stuff while others starve.'"[116] Franco and his followers had revolted because the Republicans were leading the country into chaos by persecuting landowners, clergymen, and

---

[113] Action, August 13, 1936

[114] Blackshirt, September 11, 1937

[115] Churchill told the Commons: "Why, but for the Russian Communist propaganda the intrigues which for more than six months racked Spain before the outbreak, the Spanish horror need never have occurred." (Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 317, November 5, 1936, p. 318). Charles Sarolea, who favored the rebels, admitted, "Most of the British intelligentsia and especially the Press, the churches, the B B C and universities" preferred the Republicans. (Charles Sarolea, Daylight on Spain. The Answer to the Duchess of Spain, undated, pp. 19-20) "Perhaps it cannot be proved," stated Blackfriars, "that this orgy was engineered by Moscow, but it bears the unmistakable mark of the cloven hoof." (Blackfriars, Vol. 18, No. 9, September 1936).

[116] Action, July 23, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

businessmen and by tampering with ballots in a host of elections, including the 1936 General Election. Their rebellion was the "only action left to patriots," a view that ignored the rebel generals' duty to defend the Republic.[117] For the BUF the war was part of a global struggle between Christianity and "atheistic" communism, not a local conflict. It especially made this argument in heavily Catholic areas of the North of England. [118] This was part of its strategy of overstating the Communist threat in the hope of presenting fascism as a more appealing alternative. Franco's Nationalists were allegedly "dedicated to their country" and paragons of social justice and Christianity, while the Republicans were pawns of Moscow who promoted "Judaic" communism, atheism, terror, and chaos.[119]

Several Christian publications praised the Blackshirts' pro-Nationalist position, including the Catholic Herald, a London journal. [120] In addition, a host of Christian clerics and laymen wrote articles and letters to the editor on the conflict which were published in the BUF press. Fascism and Christianity, these pieces suggested, were perfectly compatible whereas Christianity and communism were antithetical. The BUF

---

[117] Blackshirt, August 7, 1937
[118] Action, July 2, 1938.
[119] Ibid., September 17, 1936; Blackshirt, September 11, 1937
[120] Action, April 29, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pointed to the Concordat between Mussolini and the Pope in 1929 and the Spanish rebels' ties with the Spanish Church as proof that the two ideologies could exist in harmony. A.K. Chesterton, who took a keen interest in the subject, observed:

> The Christian religion no matter what the faults of its presentation from age to age, has served to integrate the life of the West on a civilised basis, and it is because of the challenge to it in the practice of a rampaging commercialism, and more recently in the direct attacks of red terrorism, that mankind is being dragged down into the dark hinterlands of the spirit where the creatures of nightmare have their masterdom.[121]

Beckett, who had a gift for coining phrases, termed the Spanish conflict a "war between the symbol of the clenched fist and Cross of civilization."[122] Championing Christianity, which had roots in Britain for more than a millenium, lent credence to the BUF assertion that it was a home-grown movement.

The accounts of murders, rapes, and extensive destruction of homes, businesses, and churches by the Republicans and their Anarchist allies appear to have made a strong impression on British Catholics. For example, one Catholic journal warned, "Red Terror is at its diabolical work in Spain...The issue is between Christ and anti-Christ, and the forces of the Evil One are venting their insane rage upon the ministers and servants of

---

[121] Blackshirt, August 22, 1936.
[122] Action, September 17, 1936. He referred to the Soviet Union during the Great Purge as "the land of liquidated workers." (Blackshirt, July 31, 1937).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

God."[123] One historian has found that a substantial number of Catholics, particularly in the North, joined the BUF during the Spanish conflict.[124] A letter sent by a Catholic trade unionist to Blackshirt during the war probably reflected the views of many of his co-religionists:

> May I thank you for the assistance you have given us Catholics in your exposing the methods of the Communists and Anarchists in Spain in their brutal murders, pillage, burnings, etc. of Spain's treasure, and it is just what the Communists would do here, if they got the chance.
>
> After 50 years in the Trade Union movement and Labour Party I am disgusted at the action of both parties [Conservative and Labour] in assisting those Communist brutes in Spain. There was no Labour Government in Spain. If there were, they would not allow those red yahoos to arm. It would be far better for Labour and Trade Unionist, instead of sending money to those who murder priests and outrage women, if they thought of thousands of their unemployed here who cannot even afford to pay their Union.[125]

However, it is still not possible to know precisely what effect the fascists' stance on the war had on recruiting since Mosley refused to release any figures prior to his death in 1980. It is risky to draw conclusions on this issue because the fascists did not always classify members according to religious affiliation, occupational status, or

---

[123] Blackfriars, Volume 18, No. 9 (September 1936). Another Catholic journal, the Universe, saw the war "as part of the struggle of the Church against the forces of paganism, anti-Christ and Bolshevism, which it believed were threatening to overwhelm civilisation." (Jim Fyrth, The Signal Was Spain, St. Martin's, New York, 1986, p. 193). Also consult D.S. Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987, pp. 192-93.

[124] Rawnsley, "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," in Lunn and Thurlow, British Fascism. Also see Colin Cross, The Fascists in Britain, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1961, p. 187.

[125] D.J. Phelan, letter to the editor, Blackshirt, October 24, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other precise categories.[126] Most Britons apparently rejected the view that the rebels were primarily interested in defending Christianity and restoring order, as the BUF suggested.[127] Polls taken by the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO), a branch of the Gallup Poll, found that only approximately 10 percent of Britons supported the rebels in the conflict. [128]

The BUF attempted unfairly to blame all of the atrocities in the conflict, including the German air attack on Guernica, a shrine for the Basques, on the Republicans and their Anarchist and Communist allies.[129] To be fair, neither side had a monopoly on terror and barbarism. The Soviet Union gave substantial assistance to the Republicans, but not at the level suggested by the BUF. Soviet leaders recognized that a Republican victory would help prevent the encirclement of France--with whom they had signed a mutual defense treaty in 1935-- and that the longer the war dragged on, the more men

---

[126] Action, August 13, 1938.

[127] Many Britons agreed with the Catholic Herald, which stated, "Many Catholics . used the Church as an excuse for preserving an inadequate social order." (Catholic Herald, August 21, 1936).

[128] Hadley Cantril, Public Opinion, 1935-1946, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1951, p 808

[129] "Guernica was not destroyed by air bombardment," Fuller erroneously asserted, "but instead was burned down by order of the Basque government which.... attributed its total destruction to Franco's inhumanity From the point of view of the new propaganda of mendacity, this was an extremely skilful piece of work " (J.F.C. Fuller, The Conquest of Red Spain, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, London 1937, p 11) On the other hand, Blackshirt blamed the atrocity on the Republican Government which allegedly "fell out with the Basque Nationalists [and] in revenge bombed the national birthplace of the Basque people." (Blackshirt, May 8, 1937).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and *materiel* the Nazis would have to invest there, thereby leaving them with fewer resources for an invasion of the U.S.S.R. The Soviets violated the Non-Intervention Agreement which was signed in London in 1936, but so did all of the other signatories with the exception of Britain. Bolstering Soviet national security appears to have been Stalin's major objective in Spain. The many statements he made in favor of working-class solidarity seem to have been window-dressing.[130] He sent agents to Spain to enkindle revolution while at the same time formally cooperating with the Non-Intervention Committee.[131] Max Beloff, a British scholar, sagely notes that in the thirties the Soviet's efforts as "an avowed center of revolutionary activity, became less

---

[130]For example, Stalin wrote to the head of the Spanish Communist Party: "The toilers of the Soviet Union only fulfill their duty when they give aid to the Spanish revolutionary masses." He also stated, "The liberation of Spain from the yoke of the fascist reactionaries is not the private affair of the Spaniards, but the common cause of all advanced and progressive mankind." (Stalin, as quoted in E.H. Carr, The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War, Pantheon, New York, 1984, p. 25).

Walter Krivitsky, the Chief of Soviet Military Intelligence in Western Europe during the Spanish conflict, has recalled: "His [Stalin's] idea was to include Spain in the sphere of the Kremlin's influence. Such a domination would secure his ties with Paris and London, and... strengthen... his bargaining position with Berlin... The problem of world revolution had long before that ceased to be real to Stalin. It was solely a question of Russia's foreign policy." (Walter Krivitsky, I Was Stalin's Agent, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1940, p. 88). After the Nazis came to power in 1933, Stalin clearly recognized that the Western democracies were his most valuable potential allies. But after he signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany in 1939, Soviet relations with Britain and France naturally soured.

[131] David Cattell, an American proponent of this theory, states, "A satellite in Spain [had] no strategic value to the Soviet Union which feared above all a threat of Nazi and Japanese aggression. If Spain became a Communist state the Soviet Union would be forced by self-interest to protect it. The Communist policy in Spain was [to] sacrifice everything (including the creation of a Soviet Republic) to make war on the Fascists." (David Cattell, Communism and the Spanish Civil War, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1965, pp. 162-63).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and less compatible with a diplomatic course which was directed towards ever closer relations with individual capitalist countries."[132]

Throughout the conflict, the BUF advocated a non-intervention policy.[133] "Spain," asserted Mosley at the beginning of the conflict, "is not worth the blood of a single Englishman."[134] He was wrong. Spain's strategic importance at the crossroads of the Atlantic and Mediterranean was great as all of the major European powers recognized.[135] British non-intervention indirectly aided Nazi and Italian Fascist intervention in Spain, but this was by no means the only reason the BUF took this stance. The fascists also called for non-intervention because they were concerned with improving the domestic economy and recognized that any resources Britain poured into the conflict would be unavailable to improve conditions at home. It was foolish to risk British lives "in a foreign quarrel," when there were "so many evils here in Britain which should be fought with all our energies."[136] They pointed to widespread unemployment in the North and West and the failure of small businesses throughout the country as examples of the

---

[132]Max Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, Volume I 1929-1936, Oxford University Press, New York, 1947, p. 93
[133]Blackshirt, August 8, 1936
[134]Ibid., August 22, 1936
[135]See Henry Brinton, Christianity and Spain, United Editorial, London, 1937, pp. 63-64.
[136]Blackshirt, January 16, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

government's practice of paying too much attention to foreign affairs. Britons who sent aid to Spain or fought on behalf of either side were taking supplies and using skills that were desperately needed at home.[137] "Any man who can ignore his own brethren," wrote a fascist from the Birmingham area , "and part with what little money he possesses for a foreign cause, has no right to call himself an Englishman."[138] The Labour Party was allegedly more worried about the fate of the Spanish Republicans than with the "men and women" in the Distressed Areas of the country who were "starving nigh unto death." [139]

The BUF forbade its members from serving as volunteers in Spain and publicly at least, made no effort to raise funds for the Nationalists, unlike the Left which gave substantial aid to the Loyalists and a small Irish fascist party called the Blueshirts, which sent volunteers on behalf of the rebels. This was consistent with Mosley's effort to deny the Security Services, who were monitoring the BUF, any rationale for banning his organization."Despite our sympathy with the Spanish people and Church," the fascists insisted, "we have never recruited for the Nationalist armies, nor collected a single penny

---

[137]Action, July 23, 1938.
[138]Blackshirt, April 3, 1937
[139]Ibid., April 17, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in Franco's support."[140] This is not, however, entirely true. During the war, the Nationalists in Spain contacted at least one local BUF branch and informed it that they had several ships loaded with arms but no one to deliver them. About 20 members of the branch made at least two missions to deliver the weapons to the rebels. It is not clear if Mosley learned of their efforts and, if so, what action he took against the participants. He expelled a few Liverpool fascists for attempting the same feat. [141] A few Blackshirts fought on behalf of the Nationalists, including Peter Keen from the Streatham branch, who was awarded a medal by Franco.[142]

The BUF's stance towards the Spanish Civil War apparently had no effect on how Britons viewed the conflict. For instance, a poll conducted by BIPO found that the public backed the Republicans by a ten to one ratio.[143] Many people recognized that the BUF misread some fundamental causes of the conflict: the growing gap in income between

---

[140] Blackshirt, January 16, 1937

[141] Stephen Cullen, "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 1987), p. 131

[142] Edmund Warburton, "The Press Photographer," in Jeffrey Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986, p. 52.

[143] Hadley Cantril, ed. Public Opinion, 1935-1946, Princeton University Press , Princeton, 1951, p 808. Hugh Thomas has noted that less than ten percent of Britons supported the Nationalists while 72 percent preferred the Republicans. (Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, New York, Harper, 1961, p 875) In October 1938 BIPO asked, "In the present conflict... are your sympathies with Franco or with the government?" Fifty-seven percent of the respondents chose the government, 9 percent selected Franco and 34 percent expressed no opinion. (George H. Gallup,ed. The Gallup International, Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain, 1937-1975, Vol. 1, 1937-1964, Random House, New York, 1976, pp. 10-11)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

large landowners and the peasantry, a sharp division between the Republican government and the conservative army, and worsening relations between the Church and its parishioners, many of whom were indigent.[144] They ignored the BUF's contention that Britons had supported foreign rebellions in the past, such as Edmund Burke's support for the American Revolution, and that this support was no reflection on their patriotism. The Blackshirts disregarded the fact that much of the anti-clerical violence (which claimed the lives of 8,000 monks, priests, and nuns and the destruction of millions of dollars of Church property) was primarily caused by Anarchists and trade unionists not the Communists. [145] The BUF also failed to note that many Catholics, such as the Basques, fought on the side of the Republicans. [146]

---

[144]For instance, the Catholic Herald stated, "The Church had in many parts of Spain, become disassociated in the popular mind from the interests of the poor, and had given reason for the view that it was the Church of the rich class." (Catholic Herald, August 21, 1936)

[145]Jose Sanchez writes: "Most of the anticlerical violence occurred during the revolutionary terror which resulted from the Popular Front Government's arming of the labour unions and left-wing political organizations." (Jose Sanchez, The Spanish Civil War as a Religious Tragedy, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN 1978, pp. 11-12). According to David Cattell, "The Church burnings were the most widespread in Anarchist areas," partly because Anarchist leaders had "less control over their followers" than any other pro-Republican group. On the other hand, "The Communist attitude was one of refraining from open persecution of the churches as a dangerous policy. There is no evidence to show that they supported the burning of churches in any way." (Cattell, Communism and the Spanish Civil War, p. 63).

[146]Henry Brinton, Christianity and Spain, Charles E. Raven, London, 1937, p. 289. Herbert Matthews, a reporter for the New York Times, stated, "The Roman Catholic Church is by no means all on the side of Franco. The Cardinal Archbishop of Tarragona, the Bishop of Vittoria, and the Bishop of Oriheula, have refused to support the rebels. The Church in the Basque country have remained loyal.. to the Government." (Matthews, as quoted in Ibid., pp. 28-29).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Many people in Britain saw the Soviet Union with its vast human and material resources and strategic location on Germany's eastern flank as a potentially valuable ally against the Nazi menace. More than 80 percent of those queried by the Gallup Poll in March 1939 favored a military alliance between Great Britain, France, and Russia.[147] A survey taken two months later by the same organization yielded nearly the same results.[148] The Manchester Guardian echoed many ordinary people's opinions when it wrote: "A country strong enough for Germany to fear as an enemy, is certainly strong enough for Britain to welcome as a friend."[149] BUF membership remained fairly steady in the latter half of the thirties at approximately 18,000. Its stance on the Spanish Civil War and the Soviet Union does not seem to have affected it one way or the other. Sales of its two weekly newspapers also remained fairly stable, as the two tables below indicate.

---

[147]Cantril, Public Opinion, p. 366.
[148]Ibid., p. 366.
[149]Manchester Guardian Weekly, March 3, 1939. Also see Blackshirt, March 15, 1935. For more information on the British press attitude towards Nazi Germany consult, Benny Morris, Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany during the 1930s, Frank Cass, London, 1991

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE 5.2A : SALES OF BLACKSHIRT

DATE	APPROXIMATE SALES PER WEEKLY ISSUE
October 1935	22,000
September 1937	12,250
October 1937	13,250
February 1938	12.000

TABLE 5.2B: SALES OF ACTION, FOR KING AND PEOPLE

DATE	APPROXIMATE SALES PER WEEKLY ISSUE
October 1936	20,000
September 1937	16,5000
October 1937	17,500
February 1938	14,000
September 1939	14,000[150]

The BUF had difficulty admitting that its international policies were having as little effect on the electorate as its domestic ones. It attempted to shift the blame for this to the

[150]This data was gathered by the Home Office's Security Service. The tables are based on those compiled by G.C. Webber and published in his article, "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 15, No. 4 (October 1984), pp. 575-606

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

usual scapegoats, namely, financiers and Jews. In the fascists' view, the Jews' supposed stranglehold on the banks and media made it impossible for it to obtain a fair hearing. It was always easier for the fascists to blame their failures on these groups than accept it themselves.[151] But the vast majority of newspapers, magazines and financial institutions were actually controlled by Christians (some by small businessmen) and their position was almost universally antpathetic to Mosley and his organization.[152]

In the next chapter another aspect of the BUF's international policy will be examined: its complex relations with Nazi Germany. We shall see that in spite of the BUF's failure to persuade Britons to adopt its positions on major domestic issues such as unemployment and on international ones like Collective Security and the Spanish Civil War, it did not give up. Instead, it continued to call for better relations between Britain and Germany and attempted to prevent the war between the two powers that appeared increasingly probable.

---

[151]For example, Mosley, who contended that Rothermere broke with the BUF because of pressure from Jewish advertisers, complained.

> The press is in the hands of the English Jews, if not directly, then through the financial pressure which the Jewish stockholders exercise indirectly through the Advertisement departments. There is over 20,000 pounds a week at stake. Under these circumstances, you can understand the few non-Jewish publishers adjusting their political views to suit the plans of the Jewish moneygivers. (Jewish Chronicle, July 6, 1934).

[152]Viscount Camrose, British Newspapers and Their Controllers, Cassell, London, 1947, pp 39-42.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER VI

THE BUF AND THE NAZIS

In this chapter the BUF's association with Nazi Germany will be explored, an important aspect of the party's history which has not received the attention it deserves. Once again it is only in relation to events on the Continent that the party's development can be fully understood. Among the issues to be examined are the following. Did the BUF and the German National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP) share a common philosophy and pursue similar goals? What were the BUF's views of the Third Reich, and, conversely, what were the Nazis' opinions of it? What financial support, if any, did the German fascists give to the Blackshirts? In the event of a German invasion of Britain did the BUF, as its opponents alleged, intend to fight on the side of the Nazis?

Clearly, there were many ideological parallels between the BUF and the NSDAP. Both espoused anticommunism, anti-Semitism, and ultra-nationalism, and had a sympathetic attitude towards farmers and large businesses. But it is wrong to suggest that the BUF was an imitation of the Nazis since it relied for its inspiration on native sources, such as the BBL and Social Imperialists as well as the Nazis

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and Italian Fascists. Richard Thurlow, D.S. Lewis, and Robert Skidelsky have discussed some of the issues to be explored in this chapter. None of them have probed several of the questions in any depth, however, such as whether the Blackshirts and Nazis shared a common fascist philosophy, the attitudes of Hitler and his lieutenants towards the BUF, and the party's alleged financial association with the Third Reich.

Many of the BUF's outward trappings, such as its banners, marching songs, and the jack-boots and red arm-bands its elite members wore were borrowed from the Nazis. Mosley and other fascists occasionally made statements which suggested they sought closer ties with the NSDAP.[1] For example, in 1937 a 20-person BUF contingent visited Julius Streicher, the anti-Semitic publisher and Gauleiter of Franconia. One of the members of the group declared, "We rejoice that we have seen the world leader in the fight against Semitism. From his Sturmer we forge the best weapons for our fight in

---

[1] For example, in 1935 Mosley wired Julius Streicher, Hitler's long-time friend and Gauleiter of Franconia

> I thank you very much for your telegram regarding my speech in Leicester, which arrived in London during my absence. I value this message of yours greatly. The might of Jewish corruption must be overcome in all great countries before the future of Europe can be assured in justice and peace. Our fight is a difficult one, our victory certain. Thank you.

(The Truth About Anti-Semitism, Workers' Bookshop, London, undated. This bookshop was affiliated with the Communist Party of Great Britain).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

England."[2] In reviewing a book by Joseph Goebbels, Chesterton wrote:

> It is repeatedly stated that fascism is national and not international; that Fascism looks solely inwards, and ignores those considerations outside the boundaries of its own State. That is not true. Fascism, in Britain, as in Germany and Italy, is certainly national in its first instance. 'Britain First,' is our motto; and 'Britain First' will continue to be our main objective. But 'Britain First' does not mean 'Britain Only'--and the frightened and ignorant critics of fascism may rest assured that our international relationship will be strengthened rather than weakened under a fascist government.[3]

This attitude was hardly a strategy calculated to earn the public's trust and to help the BUF regain some of the momentum it had briefly enjoyed in 1933-1934. Yet there appear to have been several reasons it took this tack. After the Italian Fascists cut off most of the funds they had been sending, some Blackshirts apparently hoped the Nazis would pick up the slack. They seemingly did not realize the grave political risks they took by associating with a potential enemy, risks which might have crippled even a much stronger party.

---

[2] News Chronicle, August 28, 1937

[3] A.K. Chesterton, a review of Joseph Goebbels, The Making of a Revolution, Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No 3 (July-September 1935), pp 384-85. He also stated:

> The parallels [between the BUF and NSDAP] are remarkable, [and] are likely to become still more strongly underlined as British Fascism advances. It has met and overcome the same kind of Red mobs; it has stood its ground against the same order of debased Yiddish calumny; it has had to contend with the same lying attacks of politicians and a reptile Press; it has had to kick out from its movement the same sort of defeatists and opportunists as those who caused the National-Socialists such embarrassment in the critical days of their struggle. (Blackshirt, August 19, 1933).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF and NSDAP were analogous in certain respects, but they always pursued different goals. The BUF was too nationalistic a movement to take its direction from the Nazis or any other foreign organization. This is not to say that BUF leaders did not admire German society and culture.[4] The BUF favored an Anglo-German settlement, but one based only on equality. The notion of making Britain a pawn or client of Germany ran directly counter to its philosophy."We shall make friendship with the European powers of the new renaissance [Germany and Italy]," Action vowed, "as between strong men, mutually respecting each other." [5] Mosley was always careful not to draw comparisions with the NSDAP, because he recognized that this would alienate many people. "National Socialism" for him and most of the Blackshirts meant "National Service," not an imitation of Nazism or Italian Fascism. [6] This helps explain why many former Blackshirts and UM members are still upset today that the government treated the BUF as a potential fifth column for Nazi Germany.[7] As an

---

[4]Mosley, for example, learnt German while he was interned, and Goethe and Nietzsche were among his favorite authors. Languages were one of the few subjects he was permitted to study during his detention.
[5] Action, October 22, 1938.
[6]Ibid., February 25, 1939.
[7] Interview with Prof. Martin Durham, Politics Department, University of Wolverhampton, March 5, 1999. Ronald F. Webb, who enlisted as a volunteer in the Second World War and lost an eye fighting the Germans in Italy, has asserted that the fact that "a great many [BUF] leaders [had] served in the First World War" should have alone demonstrated that the movement was not a fifth column. (Interview with Ronald F Webb, August 24, 1999).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ex-UM member told me, "I don't believe the accusation of being Fifth Columnists is tenable because Mosley said, 'The greatest misfortune that I can conceive of for this country is to be defeated and occupied by a foreign power.'"[8] According to Jeff Wallder, "BU would fight against anybody who threatened [Britain]...but they did not believe that Germany represented any threat." This seems to be an accurate view. For example, Mosley argued that Nazi Germany should be allowed to expand eastward since she did not threaten the British Empire. Frank R. Hawke, an ex-member who won distinction in the R.A.F., recently recalled, "Rather than copy an ideology, Mosley particularly wanted a change of spirit...and...a new policy for solving Britain's problems"[9] Based on the research I have done and the interviews I have conducted in England this seems like a valid interpretation.

Like the Nazis, the BUF promised to regenerate the country economically and culturally and sweep away the "corrupt" and ineffective parties, or "Old Gang." "Beware," warned Mosley, "lest the old dead men with their dead minds embalmed in the tombs of the past creep back to dominate your age, cleansed of their mistakes in the

---

[8] Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999.
[9] Interview with Frank R. Hawke, June 29, 1999

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

blood of your generation."[10] "The British Union," boasted Blackshirt, "is the real Party of Youth. It realises that the future of our great land is in the hands of youth." Sometimes the BUF referred to itself as "the Modern Movement" and "the National Awakening." One of the Nazis' favorite slogans was "Deutschland Erwache," or "Germany, Awake." The Fascist Quarterly termed the BUF an "Order dedicated to the...unity, Welfare, and progress of the British nation."[11] Virtually every member of the BUF Policy Directorate was under 45 in 1935, including Mosley.[12] The fascists organized a Youth Corps similar to the Nazis' Hitler Jugend, which offered youths physical training, discipline, and ideological instruction.[13] In return the youngsters were required to perform two afternoons of service a week.

---

[10]Oswald Mosley, My Life, Nelson, London, 1968, p. 128.

[11] Blackshirt, June 1, 1933, C R. Miller, "Party-State or Order-State?" Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II (1936), p. 423.

[12]W F. Mandle, "The Leadership of the British Union of Fascists," Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. XII, (December 1966), pp. 370-80.

[13]It did not found a parallel organization for girls and young women, however, as the Nazis did with the Bund Deutscher Maedel (B D.M.), or League for German Girls. A valuable study of the Nazi youth organizations is Gerhard Rempel, Hitler's Children, The Hitler Youth and the SS, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1989. The Italian Fascists also made a cult of youth. They founded an organization for young males known as the Balilla which boasted approximately 575,000 members in the late twenties. (Herbert W. Schneider and Shepard B. Clough, Making Fascists, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1929, p. 155) In the 1930s it was reorganized into the Italian Youth of the Littorio, or G I.L. In 1938 it boasted more than seven and a half million members. (Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, Fascism in Action: Documented Study and Analysis of Fascism in Europe, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1947, p. 31). G.W H. Webb praises the Balilla in "A Great Youth Movement," Action, June 4, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF also spent a considerable sum recruiting youths and young men and women.[14] Unlike the Nazi example, the Youth Division did not offer pre-military training or exclude young men who came from elite families.[15] Nor were youths permitted to carry weapons as were some members of the Hitler Youth. The Youth Corps was divided into two units: the Youth Division trained boys from 9 to 14, while the Cadet Division taught young men 15 to 18. Members of both units wore grey pull-overs; hence they were sometimes referred to as Greyshirts.[16] Some Greyshirts participated in unofficial exchange visits with members of the Hitler Jugend.[17] Blackshirt boasted:

> Boys of the British Union are taught first and foremost allegiance to the King and the Empire and how to be good citizens. This is the very reverse of that which they are taught in schools. In the Blackshirt camp, they will have an opportunity of mixing freely with one another without class barriers and rebuilding their bodies with fresh air and exercise under ideal conditions.[18]

---

[14]According to Discussion, the BUF directed "the main part of their propaganda at the young people between 16 and 25." (Cecil Turner, "Youth Wants a Leader," Discussion, Vol. I, No. 10, December 1936, p. 11).

[15]Fuller had suggested that the BUF offer military training to youths.

[16]In the 1970s the National Front used the same term for the magazine for its paramilitary unit.

[17]Blackshirt, March 23-March 29, 1934.

[18]Ibid., August 17, 1937. More than 60 years later British nationalists still saw camps as a place to inculcate the young with their values. A member of the far right-wing British Nationalist Party wrote in the party magazine in 1999, "The children of the BNP must meet meet and mix socially, regularly. What about a summer children's/family camp this coming year for a start? We must look, act and think differently from the '90s society from which we come, and so must our children." (Tony Schubmehl, letter to the editor, Spearhead, Vol. 25, No. 360, February 1999, p. 22).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Greyshirts attended the summer camps organized by the party at Selsey and Bognor on the South Coast each year between 1934 and 1937 together with hundreds of members of all ages and both sexes.[19] The camps offered instruction in fascist principles and opportunities to enjoy sports, humor, and sun. [20] The Blackshirts celebrated the virtues of physical fitness, although not to the same extent as the Nazis.[21] The Selsey Bilge, a satirical newspaper produced by the party at the camp in 1937 captured the carefree spirit it engendered. According to the paper, Raven Thomson's book was The Orgasmic Corporate State and Clement Attlee served as the camp's "Bathing Attendant" because he is "always in hot water."[22] The Cadets went on various excursions to test their physical skills and for recreation.[23] Greyshirts also attended

---

[19] Blackshirt, April 17, 1934. Also see Ibid., July 30, 1934.

[20] "In many schools to-day," Action asserted, "the vile creed of Communism and Red Ruin is spread. In the Blackshirt Youth Camp our boys will be taught how to be good citizens and worthy to belong to our great Empire, ready to take their places as citizens of that Merrie England which Mosley has sworn to bring back again." (Action, May 8, 1937.)

[21] "The British people must be led back to the playing fields," Thomson wrote. "They must learn that physical fitness is an obligation which they owe to the nation. The first efforts in the organisation of leisure, especially for the young, will be devoted to the sport and athleticism, until every industry has its own sports ground and swimming pools in every industrial town, and its own teams to compete for the highest sporting and athletic honours." (Alexander Raven Thomson, The Coming Corporate State, Greater Britain, Westminster, 1937, p. 44). H.A. Smith warned, "The obsession for spectatorial sport forms a grave national danger; sporting youths who are ONLY sporting youths do not make fine citizens, they make excellent parasites." (Blackshirt, February 23-March 1, 1934).

[22] Selsey Bilge, Vol. I, No.1, 1937. Also see Gordon Beckwell, "The Blackshirt Summer Camps in Sussex," Comrade, Vol. IX, No. 44 (August-October 1994), p. 7. The Friends of Oswald Mosley (F.O.M.), which has its roots in the BUF and Union Movement, recently helped to produce a volume on the camps by J.A. Booker entitled Blackshirts-on-Sea, Brockingday, London, 1999.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

meetings at their own branches which were located throughout England and Scotland. The South London branch, for example, met twice a week at its headquarters in Streatham.[24] Youth Corps units were also organized at various schools, including Beaumont, Worksop, and Winchester. Some Britons were naturally disturbed by the parallels between the Youth Corps and its German counterpart, which may help explain why the BUF abandoned the Youth Corps in the late 1930s.[25] The BUF organized parties for working-class children in cities throughout the country in the hope of attracting their parents to join the movement. These events, which were held with more frequency later in the decade, were part of a broad strategy the fascists adopted in the mid-thirties to build themselves up from the grass-roots level. Another element of this strategy included organizing clubs and social events which attracted recruits and boosted morale, such as balls and dances, rummage sales, choirs, banquets, language, classes in self-defense, swimming and foreign languages, teams and clubs in boating, boxing, cricket, cycling, darts, debating, flying, hiking, motoring, rowing, rugby, soccer, the Blood Transfusion Corps, and the Blackshirt Band, Drum Corps, and Theatre. Through

---

[23]For example, in the autumn of 1937 Capt. C B.Tennent, one of the leaders of the Greyshirts, led Bethnal Green Cadets on hikes through the Surrey hills. (Blackshirt, November 6, 1937)

[24]Action, July 30, 1938.

[25]For example, the Glasgow City Youth Branch of the Scottish Socialist Party prevented R.A. Plathen from discussing the Youth Corps at a seminar on children's issues in 1936. (Ibid., September 10, 1936)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

membership in these associations members found comradeship and recreation and some measure of relief from the social and economic problems so many of them faced in the thirties.

The British fascists attracted a sizeable following among the young in several sections of the country, such as the East End of London and Lancashire. This was in part because they used physical force against their opponents, which some of the rougher youths found appealing. "Is it to be wondered," wrote one man to the Daily News in 1934, "that the eyes of Young Britain are turned to the Blackshirts, with their aggressive... policy, founded on a basis of patriotism and loyalty?" [26] In May 1937 BIPO asked the following question: "If you had to choose between Fascism and Communism which would you choose?" Surprisingly, 49% of those replying under the age of 30 preferred fascism to communism.[27]

Like the NSDAP, the BUF urged Britons to give the central goverment more power and rejected liberal and democratic tenets such as individualism and freedom of speech and press. "The individual is mortal," wrote Fuller, "but the State, not only the mass of

---

[26] Daily News, April 14, 1937

[27] The results were published in the journal Cavalcade and are quoted in Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1940), p. 77. Nearly two years later BIPO asked the same question and this time 74 percent chose communism and 26 percent fascism. Sixteeen percent did not respond to the question. (Ibid.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

individuals, but what is noble, inspired and inspiring in their history, in two words--national spirituality--is immortal and infinitely greater. It is for this that each individual must live, not merely in order to maintain it but to sustain it with his or her life, thought, and actions."[28] "Power," asserted Thomson, "is the monopoly of government. The...State does not exist merely to satisfy the wants and desires of its constituent members, but to effect some great cultural purpose."[29] Both fascist parties taught that allegiance to the state enabled people to attain a higher standard of freedom than was possible under democracy.[30] George Sutton, who served for a time as Director of Research, argued in Farewell to Rousseau that democracy was obsolete and that fascism represented the wave of the future.[31] In his view Britain should follow the Nazis' example and restrict voting only to those it deemed qualified because "The unwieldy herds of voters in the modern [democratic] state have become the sport of every kind of organized propaganda agency, so that their vote was "fixed." [32] The Rev. H.E.B. Nye

---

[28]J.F.C. Fuller, "Fascism and War," Fascist Quarterly, Vol I, No. 2 (April-June 1935), p. 145.

[29]Raven Thomson, "Why Fascism?" Ibid., pp. 245-52. Also see "Party-State or Order State," ibid., Vol. II (1936).

[30]According to Joyce, "In a modern scientific age, the liberty to serve the community in reconciliation of individual and collective interests is the highest form of freedom." (Blackshirt, June 8, 1934)

[31]"National-Socialist Germany," he asserted, "exemplifie[d] the new kind of State in the most self-conscious form it has yet achieved." (Claud Sutton, Farewell to Rousseau, Christophers, London 1936, pp. 217- 18) Also see his "An Interpretation of 'Fascism,'" British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1937), pp. 67-77

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

asserted, "Democracy is founded upon the principle of disunion."[33] Hitler had even less confidence in the masses' critical faculties. In Mein Kampf he stated that common folk would believe outrageous lies if they were repeated often enough. "Don't think the world revolves around you!," he told German workers in 1934. " Don't think it matters where you are or what you do! You are of no importance except as a servant of the community. Alone you are nothing. Only as an organised whole are you everything!"[34]

Shortly after coming to power, the Nazis introduced emergency legislation, including the Enabling Act, which led to a vast expansion of police powers, the banning of independent trade unions and rival political parties, and compulsory national service and work programs. Some Blackshirts praised these acts and urged the National Government to follow the Nazis' lead and take a more direct role in the economy. For example, W.G. Jenkins-Armstrong, a propaganda officer in North London, averred that the Nazis had been able to put their "house in order" because they "knew" what the people wanted and carried out their wishes. [35] Blackshirt argued that the Nazis had not

---

[32]Sutton, Farewell to Rousseau, p 217. Sutton continued to champion fascism after the Second World War. Hitler, he asserted, "restored German self-respect. He gave the workers... a prosperous life hitherto unknown to them." (Union, May 25, 1957).
[33]Action, July 9, 1938.
[34]Saturday Review, September 26, 1936.
[35]Blackshirt, October 26, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

used excessive force in their first year in power compared to other revolutionary movements, such as the Jacobins and Bolsheviks.[36] Yet other BUF members like C.H. Green, an ex-Army officer, suggested that the BUF should cut its ties with the NSDAP because the latter's policies ran counter to Western traditions of tolerance and freedom. Mosley always had mixed feelings about the Third Reich. He admired its achievements, particularly in the economic sphere, but appears to have recognized at an early date that its strong-arm tactics and racial anti-Semitism were not appropriate in Britain and that identifying the BUF too closely with the Nazis was strategically unwise.

Another parallel between the BUF and the Nazis was in its position towards the Jews. Like the Nazis, the Blackshirts suggested that special legislation against Jews was needed in order to preserve the nation's British character. Some members boycotted Jewish merchants and looted and vandalized their property, particularly in the London area.[37] After 1934 virtually all BUF branches denied membership to Jews, although party leaders do not seem to have ever issued a formal order to this effect. But

---

[36] Blackshirt, July 8-14, 1933.

[37] Sutton, Farewell to Rousseau, , p. 218; Jewish Chronicle, July 17, 1936; Ibid., August 7, 1933, ibid , April 12, 1935; Blackshirt, December 5, 1935; Oswald Mosley, Tomorrow We Live, Greater Britain, London, 1938, pp. 65-66. Several books published during the Third Reich deplored Jewish influence on British culture, including Peter Aldag (psuedonym of Fritz Peter Kruger), Das Judentum in England, Nordland Verlag, Berlin, 1940.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Blackshirts never attempted to formulate a racial code as the Nazis did when they passed the Nuremberg Laws of 1935-1936, or Laws for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, which made Jews second-class citizens, founded pseudo-scientific institutes such as the Institute for Jewish Research in Frankfurt in 1941, and created a racial hierarchy with Jews at the bottom in the lands they conquered during the Second World War. No Blackshirt official suggested banning sexual relations between Jews and Gentiles or photographing Britons who purchased goods in shops owned by Jews as the Nazis did. Nor did the BUF press accuse Jews of murdering Christian children as part of their religious ceremonies as Streicher's Der Sturmer did. With a few exceptions, BUF officials had little interest in racial anti-Semitism, as can be seen from the relatively few articles and speeches on this subject in the party's publications. Many Blackshirts suggested that the Nazis' manner of dealing with the issue was not their way. For instance, Thomson argued that each fascist state had to deal with the problem in its own fashion. "Our motto is Britain first; and we are more interested in putting things in this country right than in interfering with the internal affairs of other countries."[38] Some members, to be sure, found racial anti-Semitism appealing and defended the Nazis'

---

[38] Jewish Chronicle, February 2, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

persecution of the Jews, including Joyce and Thomson. "Until the coming to power of the Nazis," Action claimed, "Germany was under the complete domination of Jewry. Many of the big positions in the state were held by Jews; the plums of the legal, medical, and civil professions were held by the Jews; the theatre was dominated by them; until the German people in a mass rose up, regenerated, and threw off those cursed shackles."[39] The BUF suggested that Kristallnacht--the state-sponsored pogrom in Germany which claimed scores of Jews' lives, the arrest of 20,000 more, and the destruction of millions of dollars of Jewish property, including dozens of synagogues--had far less severe effects than it did and was precipitated by the economic boycott Jews had initiated against the Third Reich several years earlier.[40] This was a classic case of blaming the victim. A few Blackshirts, mostly minor officials, called for the establishment of a Jewish National Home just as some Nazis did. Palestine seems to have been the location they preferred. Most Blackshirts, however, had little to say on the subject.

---

[39] Action, September 3, 1938. A Cambridge student wrote Action: "I am heartily sick of the rubbish spoken against Nazi Germany by persons ignorant of the country they attack... Instead of harping, as press and clergy have done, on the difficulties Hitler has encountered let us concentrate for a change on the positive achievement of his regime and see what lessons we can draw from them." (Alan Moray Williams, as quoted in Ibid., July 24, 1937).

[40] Ibid., November 19, 1938. According to Thomson, "Jewry has only itself to blame when its active participation in anti-Christian activities brings the inevitable retaliation." (Blackshirt, August 22, 1936). For information on the part British Jews played in this boycott consult Sharon Gewirtz, "Anglo-Jewish Responses to Nazi Germany 1933-1939: The Anti-nazi Boycott and the Board of Deputies of British Jews," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 26, No. 2 (April 1991), pp. 255-76.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A handful of Blackshirts spoke out publicly against the Nazis' treatment of the Jews, but they were few and far between. For example, the Rev. H.E.B. Nye contended that no Christian could in "good conscience" support these policies. Yet, like many fascists, he also believed that reports of the persecution had been exaggerated.[41] Blackshirts generally do not seem to have been very interested in the widely-publicized reports of Nazi persecution against Jews, Communists, and other opponents of the Third Reich. Besides, many did not have a very high opinion of the mainstream press in the first place.

Both the NSDAP and the BUF regarded large businesses as potential allies rather than foes and cultivated better relations with them. The Nazis did not attempt to put corporate economic theories into place since these were incompatible with its goal of imperial expansion and unpopular with the big business interests they courted.[42] They also made little effort to fulfill the promises they made to their left-wing before they came to power, such as nationalizing trusts, banks, and big department stores. Indeed,

---

[41] Action, September 10, 1938. According to Nye, "Anybody who can liken Hitler's treatment of the Jews, to the dreadful horrors that have blackened the Bolshevik regime, must be gravely mentally deficient."

[42] Hitler stated in 1933, "The geographic location of Germany, poor in raw materials, does not permit complete autarky for our Reich...We know that we need connections with the world and that the sale of German commodities nourishes many million Germans." (Hitler as quoted in Franz Neumann, Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, Oxford University Press, New York, 1942, p 331-32). Mussolini was also reluctant to introduce corporate institutions. For a discussion of the Italian Fascists' failure to establish corporations until the mid-thirties see Gaetano Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism, Victor Gollancz, London, 1936, pp 147-154.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hitler ordered the assassination of many pro-socialist members in the Blood Purge in the summer of 1934, including Gregor Strasser and Capt. Ernst Roehm, two of his long-time associates. Throughout the thirties, the *Adolf Hitler Spende*, headed by Gustav von Bohlen und Krupp, the head of the enormous Krupp steel firm, solicited contributions for the NSDAP from large corporations, such as I.G. Farben. [43] The BUF likewise solicited contributions from major firms throughout the thirties such as Imperial Chemical Industries, Courtaulds, the soap manufacturers, and Saunders-Roe, an aviation concern. Sir Aliot Verdon-Roe, the president of the latter company, became a member of the BUF in the mid-thirties and an advisor to the Policy Directorate. Mosley spoke before many business groups, particularly in the early thirties. He and his lieutenants assured large firms that if they came to power they would preserve their right to earn profits and hold private property. The BUF's major goal was supposedly economic efficiency not the redistribution of wealth. Like the Nazis, the bulk of the Blackshirts' support came from the middle class. It is not known precisely how much money big businesses contributed to the BUF but it was certainly less than large German firms gave to the NSDAP.

---

[43] Gustav von Bohlen und Krupp, the head of the enormous Krupp steel firm, headed the *Adolf Hitler Spende* which was formed to collect funds for the NSDAP. It collected more than thirty million marks, thus providing the Nazis with a major source of income. (Adolf Hitler, My New Order, ed. R. de Roussy de Sales, Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1941, pp. 108-11, 121-25).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Both the BUF and NSDAP depicted their leaders as heroic, charismatic and almost superhuman figures who would lead their countries to greatness again. A cult of personality surrounded both Mosley and Hitler. Portraits of the former were displayed at many BUF branches, stores, and meetings, in party newspapers and magazines, and on postcards, buttons, and placards. For some of his followers, especially it seems those who were not particularly well-educated, he possessed almost semi-divine qualities. On the party's third anniversary, Blackshirt asserted, "Without his [Mosley's] brilliant gifts this Movement would never have progressed. Without his inspiration, both on the platform and in the inner councils of the Movement, nothing could have been achieved."[44] The Fascist Quarterly boasted: "Mosley is National Socialism, and the National Socialism of today is the Britain of tomorrow," while Blackshirt referred to him as "The Man of the Twentieth Century," or simply "The Leader." [45] The fascists and their followers scrawled "Heil Mosley" and other pro-Mosley slogans on walls, bridges, buildings, and other places throughout the country. "Germany is Hitler and Hitler is Germany," claimed Goering. [46] "Whoever serves Adolf Hitler...serves

---

[44] Blackshirt, October 4, 1935.
[45] Ibid., March 22, 1935; Unsigned, "Notes of the Quarter," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II (1936), p. 264
[46] Sunday Express, October 8, 1939

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Germany," Baldur von Shirach, the leader of the Hitler-Jugend, declared.[47] "Just as Jesus saved people from sin and from Hell," a German reading textbook stated, " Hitler saves the German 'Volk' from ruin."[48] The Fuhrer's portrait was displayed in German classrooms and in shops and offices throughout the country.

These parallels led many people to suspect that the BUF and NSDAP maintained secret ties. The BUF deepened these suspicions by adopting a favorable attitude towards the bulk of the Nazis' domestic and international programs, including some of the most controversial, such as the Blood Purge of 1934 , the re-occupation of the Rhineland, the annexation of the Sudentenland, and the Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union.[49] For example, after the Blood Purge it stated: "Had these men succeeded

---

[47]Peter Stachura, The German Youth Movement: An Interpretative and Documentary History, St. Martin's, New York, 1981, p. 121. "The National Socialist Party," asserted Dr. Robert Ley, the head of the Labour Front, "is Hitler, and Hitler is the party." (Ley, as quoted in University of Colorado Department of Philosophy, Readings on Fascism and National Socialism, A. Swallow, Denver, 1958, p. 79).

[48]As quoted in Frederic V. Grunfeld, The Hitler File: A Social History of Germany and the Nazis 1918-45, Random House, New York, 1974, p. 165 The same textbook stated, " Jesus and Hitler were persecuted but while Jesus was crucified, Hitler was raised to the Chancellorship. While the disciples of Jesus denied their master and deserted him, the sixteen comrades of Hitler died for their leader [during the Putsch of 1923]. The apostles completed the work of their lord. We hope that Hitler will be able to complete his work himself. Jesus built for heaven; Hitler for the German earth." A German composer wrote, "The son of God once brought redemption out of the night by sacrificial death. Through Hitler a redeemer has now arisen for our land to bring an everlasting dawn." (Fritz von Rabenau, "Weihnachten im 3. Reich," as quoted in the Manchester Guardian, February 17, 1934.) Beginning in 1937 civil servants were required to take the following oath: "I swear that I shall be true and obedient to Adolf Hitler, the Leader of the German Reich and the people, that I shall obey the laws and fulfil my official duties conscientiously, so help me God." (as quoted in Neumann, Behemoth, p. 85).

[49] Blackshirt, July 6, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in their designs...Germany would have been plunged into war by reactionary militarism...Surely the death of a few hundred men is preferable to the almost certain death of millions of men and women as a result of a great war." [50] The BUF drew closer to the Third Reich in the mid-thirties as Berlin's international prestige rose and Rome's waned. The shift was quite perceptible. For example, it often referred to itself during this time as Britain's "National Socialist" movement. [51] In 1936, it changed its name to the British Union of Fascists and National Socialists, although the title was seldom used. Many members simply referred to the party as the "British Union." BUF leaders had praise for the Nazis' social and economic achievements. Mosley, for instance, averred that he admired the Third Reich.[52] "Bad Mr. Hitler," Thomson observed sarcastically, "has had the cheek to sack Mssrs. Shylock and Co., International Bankers and Dealers in Bodies and Souls. That is his big 'sin.'" [53]

---

[50] Blackshirt, February 1, 1935. See also Unsigned, "Von Schleicher's Last Coup: Hitler's Stand Against Financiers and Intriguers," Ibid., July 6, 1934.

[51] Wilfred Risdon, "The Heritage of the National Socialists," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3 (July-September, 1937), pp. 23-30.

[52] Mosley, as quoted in David Shermer, Blackshirts: Fascists in Britain, Ballantine, New York, 1971, p. 99. "Herr Hitler," wrote Gordon-Canning, "[is] a man of the people...and a real friend of humanity." (Action October 8, 1938). After the war, Gordon-Canning showed he had not lost his admiration for Hitler by buying an expensive bust of the German leader at a public auction, a purchase he was criticized for in the media.

[53] Action, March 28, 1940.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In addition, the BUF press published articles by Nazi officials including Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, Alfred Rosenberg, editor of the Volkischer Beobachter, the official Nazi newspaper, Dr. Robert Ley, the leader of the Labour Front, and Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the Hitler Youth. [54] Meanwhile, German publications printed more articles by and about BUF programs and personalities, particularly Mosley and Unity Mitford, his second wife Diana's sister and a member of Hitler's inner circle Among these pieces was an article Mosley composed on the BUF membership in Volkischer Beobachter, an interview Unity had with the Fraenkische Tageszeithung and several that appeared in Der Sturmer.[55] In late 1934 Sturmer asserted: "Mosley is a great speaker, an intrepid fighter and especially a fine diplomat."[56] In July 1939 Volkische Beobachter, the official Nazi newspaper, praised Mosley's anti-war speech at the Earls Court.[57] Most German journals continued to give scant attention, however, to

---

[54]See, for instance, "The Jews in Germany,"by Institut zum Studium der Judenfrage; Rosenberg, "World Philosophy and Foreign Politics," Fascist Quarterly Vol. I, No. 4 (October 1935); Joseph Goebbels, "Communism with the Mask Off," Ibid., Vol. II, (1936); Robert Ley "Strength Through Joy," ibid., Vol. II, (1936); Baldur von Schirach, "Young Germany Today," ibid., Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1935).

[55]Frankische Tageszheitung, June 24, 1935. "Der Kampf in England"appeared in the June 1934 issue while "Mosley's Struggle" was published in the September 1937 edition. In November 1936 Mosley told the journal, Lokalanzeiger, that the BUF was approximately 500,000 strong, surely one of the most fanciful statements he made as the Blackshirts' leader. (Manchester Guardian, November 23, 1936) The articles in Der Sturmer included "Unity Mitford und die Juden," "Der Kampf in England, and "Mosley's Struggle."

[56]Sturmer, No. 48 (November 1934), as quoted in Louis W Bondy, Racketeers of Hatred: Julius Streicher and the Jew-Baiters' International, Newman Wolsey, London, 1946, p. 144

[57]Bondy, Racketeers of Hatred, p. 146.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the BUF.

Mosley met Hitler only twice: in April 1935 and October 1936. In the latter month the BUF leader and Diana Guinness were married in Berlin.[58] Critics alleged that by choosing Berlin as the site of the marriage Mosley showed how close the BUF was to the Nazi regime. Mosley claimed that he chose the German capital because he wished to avoid publicity. Contrary to rumors in Britain, Hitler, who was a friend of the bride, attended the reception but not the ceremony. In 1936 the BUF attempted to purchase a radio wavelength from the German government in order to broadcast commercial advertising and boost its income. Diana Mosley led the effort to obtain the wavelength. If it had became known that she was Mosley's wife the transaction may well have been scrapped. This appears to be the actual reason the wedding was held in Berlin. [59] Mosley did not announce the marriage until the arrangement was completed in 1938.

According to the BUF, the Nazis had restored order in Germany, put the unemployed back to work, cut Jewish economic and cultural influence, eliminated communism as a

---

[58] John Toland, Adolf Hitler, Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1976, p. 409. Mosley's only other sojourn to Germany before the war occurred in 1929. He did not meet Hitler on this visit.
[59] Diana Mosley, Loved Ones: Pen Portraits, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1985, pp. 172-74

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

national force, and reawakened pride in the national heritage.[60] A fair number of BUF members visited the "New Germany," as the organization termed the Third Reich, and some wrote glowing accounts of what they saw, including Thomson, Fuller, Gordon-Canning, Chesterton, and Hubert Sydney. For instance, one group of visitors reported on the Nuremberg Party Rallies of 1935: "Nothing could surpass the splendour of the parades of the massed formations of Germany's manhood...The sense of vigour, simplicity and faith which pervades the German people in its rebirth is a splendid omen for the future of modern Europe."[61] "Germany and Italy," observed Thomson, "have carried through [road-building] schemes with a fraction of our resources... As long as we submit to financial dictatorship which doles out money and credit only on the most onerous terms, such a scheme is impossible."[62] The notion that Hitler was a "mad

---

[60]J.F.C. Fuller, "The Cause of the Present War," The Weekly Review, Vol. 30, No. 15 (January 4, 1940), p. 284. In fact, communist and socialist movements continued to exist underground.

[61]"Salute to Hitler," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 4 (October-December, 1935), p. 407 See Frankfurter Zeitung, May 11, 1935 for more information on these visits. Among the visitors to Nuremberg was Henry Williamson, the writer.

[62]Alexander Raven Thomson, Motorways for Britain: Constructive Solution to the Traffic Problem, BUF, London, undated, pp. 5-6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dictator" was categorically rejected."[63] Among the most informative and entertaining accounts of these visits was A.K. Chesterton's series of articles in Blackshirt in 1937, entitled, "Aspects of the German Revolution." Chesterton had fought the Germans in Africa in the First World War and like many Blackshirts, had considerable respect for their organizational and creative talents which is evident from the following passage from his series:

> Even if this amazing revolutonary structure [the Third Reich] were to be brought crashing to the ground in the next instant it would still go down in history as the most comprehensive and vital experiment in the social records of mankind...
>
> In place of the deep divisions which previously were so marked a feature of post-war Germany, there is now a living kinship between men, internal peace, and abiding unity...Hitler [has] liquidated every territorial division, and thereby established one law, one administration, one people.[64]

The BUF was particularly enthusiastic about the Third Reich's social and economic achievements. It praised the regime's decision to seize control of the financial markets, establish labor camps, reduce joblessness, cut imports, inaugurate massive public works projects, such as the Autobahn and facilities for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin,

---

[63] "The word Dictator as applied to...Hitler," Blackshirt asserted, "is entirely wrong. Where certain people have been repressed or expelled it is because they interfered with progress."(Blackshirt, September 18, 1937). Mosley told the huge audience at the Earls Court less than two months before the outbreak of the war: "I am told that Hitler is mad, that he wants the whole world... But let me ask those who do not agree with me, what evidence have they got so far that this man who has taken his country from the dust to the height in some twenty years of struggle, what evidence have they got to show that he has suddenly gone mad?...I challenge my opponents to produce one shred of evidence about Hitler that he is mad." (Action, July 22, 1939).

[64] Blackshirt, April 17, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

regulate chain stores and reinstill pride in native arts. "Germany is on the move in the economic sphere," asserted James Larratt. "Every young German, physically sound, serves six months [in the Labour Service], no matter what his position in civil life...To see these radiantly healthy young men is to feel ashamed of the conditions that exist to-day for British youth."[65] "The unemployment problem is practically a thing of the past in Germany," Action stated inaccurately.[66] A typical piece in the Fascist Quarterly boasted that "unemployment in Germany numbered 272,000 less in May [1936] than in the previous month and now totals 1,491,201 ...200,000 less than the lowest figure for 1935."[67] "Germany has rediscovered her productive power," Blackshirt noted, "and is using it."[68] In his series on "Aspects of the German Revolution," Chesterton favorably compared the Nazi economy with Britain's. "Capitalism," he claimed, "has ceased to exist in Germany. In place of it there is the concept of capital subordinated at every turn

---

[65] Action, July 2, 1936. Also see, Charles Wegg-Prosser, "The Worker and the State," Fascist Quarterly, Vol II (1936), p 264.

[66] Ibid., July 10, 1937 Action also stated, "The small trader has been freed from the economic dictatorship previously exercised by the departmental and chain stores, mainly under Jewish control." (ibid., July 2, 1936).

[67] Unsigned, "Salute to Hitler," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 4 (October-December 1935), p. 407.

[68] Blackshirt, July 11, 1937 When Hitler took office," Blackshirt stated, "he had six million unemployed to deal with. He cut five millions off that figure, and now five million Germans have wages to spend.. [and] are buying lots of things which used to be luxuries." Some of the figures Blackshirt writers used were apparently taken from Nazi sources and are, therefore, not particularly reliable. (Ibid., January 9, 1937).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to community needs."[69] He also sanguinely observed:

> In every industry, in every factory, in every shop and office there is a leader whose job it is to see that the concern is run in the interests of the German nation...That is because it is the community interest which must be served, not the profit or vanity of any particular employer. The... system is integrated, through blocks of buildings, streets, districts, towns, right up to the "Gow" [Gau, or largest local administrative area]. At each stage of the integration there is leadership, responsibility and organisation If anything goes wrong the reason can be tracked down in an amazingly short time...Persuasion and enlightenment alone have been sufficient in a vast number of cases, to induce employers to provide the maximum efficiency of production and the maximum facilities for the employees rather than the minimum laid down by factory legislation.[70]

According to Chesterton, Nazi social policies were leading to the formation of a more just and egalitarian society than was "Financial Democracy" at home. Greedy, selfish "liberal man" was being replaced by community-minded, comradely "fascist man:"

> Outside the highly educated class in Britain is to be found nobody who 'counts' at all Hitler will have none of this priggishness. The peasant is as important as the doctor ...[The] German economy is always regarded as an indivisible whole.. What is regarded elsewhere as the necessary conflict between town and country has been liquidated, and one great people moves forward to a great national destiny without either fundamental or arbitrary divisions between them. The present achievement is vast; the future potentiality full of a promise which knows no bounds. [71]

The German Labour Front, which supplanted independent trade unions had supposedly

---

[69] Blackshirt, April 17, 1937

[70] Ibid., May 8, 1937. Also see ibid., July 6, 1936.

[71] ibid., May 22, 1937. "The National Socialists," the fascists boasted, "have vastly extended and developed [social welfare schemes]...[But] no one in their senses believes that Democracy will ever give us amenities which far surpass even the wildest dreams of our reformers or the glib promises of our politicians." (Action, October 29, 1938). For Thomson's views on this topic, see Blackshirt, September 4, 1937 while for Gordon-Canning's refer to the September 27, 1935 issue of the same journal.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reduced class conflict and were held up as a model Britain should emulate. British fascists were also impressed with the NSDAP's achievements in promoting health and recreation. "How many luxurious motor coaches," Action asked rhetorically, "are owned by the British Trades Unions for use by the workers? The Kraft durch Freude [Strength Through Joy, the recreational branch of the German Labour Front] owns hundreds! How many holiday cruise ships are available to the cotton workers of Lancashire...? The Kraft durch Freude owns three so far! No wonder our trade unions are jealous and seek to fool the workers by telling them of the 'suppression' of trade unionism in Germany. In Britain you will find socialism in theory and talk, but in Germany you will find it in practice."[72] Raven Thomson made similar observations after a visit to Germany in the spring of 1935. [73] Journeys to Germany and Italy under BUF auspices began in the spring of 1933. Advertisements arranging tours to Germany in cooperation with the Kraft durch Freude were published regularly in Action in the late thirties. Few Britons apparently went on these excursions.

---

[72] Action, September 10, 1938

[73] Alexander Raven Thomson, "Holiday Glimpses in Germany," Blackshirt, May 31, 1935 The BUF also had a high opinion of the Dopolavoro, the Italian Fascist national labor and recreational organization, which boasted more than three million members in the thirties. For a critical analysis of the Dopolavoro see Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism, pp. 362-70.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF usually neglected to note that Nazi economic gains were won at great cost: outlawing independent labor unions, forcing the unemployed to work in labor camps at very low wages, discouraging women from holding jobs and pursuing higher education, and granting special privileges to the regime's favorite big businesses. [74] The BUF also hardly ever acknowledged the Third Reich's chronic social and economic problems: the shortage of foreign exchange and raw materials; the persistence of areas of high unemployment, resistance to the regime on the part of women, the Evangelical and Catholic Churches, and youth groups; and pockets of continuing labor strife.[75] The BUF was sympathetic towards the Nazis' international policies. The fascists depicted Germany as a peace-loving state whose expansionist aspirations were a natural reaction

---

[74]The Exchange Telegraph reported in 1935 that "The number of women medical students has declined by 22.09 percent. The number of law students is down by more than 57 percent, chemistry students are less by 56.33 percent, and others by roughly 50 percent." (As quoted in Daily Worker, February 5, 1935).

[75]Several studies that explore the activities of anti-Nazi youth groups are Gerhard Rempel, Hitler's Children, The Hitler Youth and the SS, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1989, pp. 47-63 and Daniel Horn, "Youth Resistance in the Third Reich: A Social Portrait," Journal of Social History, Vol. 7 (1973). For workers' resistance to the Nazis, see Daily Worker, April 11, 1933, Ibid., May 27, 1933 and Tim Mason, Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 238-39, while for opposition to the regime on the part of Christians see Unsigned, "Letters from Germany," World News and Views, Vol. 13, No. 3 (January 19, 1934), pp. 65-66 and Manchester Guardian, October 12, 1934. For resistance on the part of women consult Jill Stephenson, The Nazi Organisation of Women, Croom Helm, London, 1981, pp. 17-20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to her loss of colonies, overpopulation, and "encirclement" by France and Russia.[76] The mutual assistance pact that the Soviet Union and France signed in 1935 and the treaty France previously made with Czechoslovakia were supposedly proof that the Western democracies and the Russians planned to crush fascism and "encircle" Nazi Germany.[77] In the BUF's view, these efforts, and Russia's alleged attempt to spark a German civil war, justified the Third Reich's massive rearmament program and aspirations to re-occupy her former territory like the Rhineland. "It is popular and extremely easy," warned Henry Gibbs in The Spectre of Communism, "to accept the hysterical hatred against Germany voiced by the large Jewish financiers and emissaries to Russia. But were we in Germany's position, had we endured what she has, our reply to an attempt to encircle us with a ring of nations would be the same."[78]

---

[76]For example, Thomson wrote in 1937:

> Instead of regarding Hitler as a danger to peace, Western European powers would be wise to recognise that his appeal is entirely restricted to the German-speaking peoples, while Russia has never ceased to call upon 'the Workers of the World' to unite, and has recently set the whole of Spain on fire by Communist propaganda at the other end of Europe. Instead of condemning Hitler and Mussolini, we should be grateful for the fascist bulwark they have formed across Europe against . . Russian aggression.

(Alexander Raven Thomson, "Stalin, Robespierre and the Red Napoleon," British Union Quarterly, Vol.I, No. 1, January-April 1937, pp. 70-82). Also see Mosley, Tomorrow We Live, p. 70

[77]Action, October 8, 1938.

[78]Henry Gibbs, The Spectre of Communism, Selwyn & Blount, London, 1936, p. 95. Also see "A Ring Round Germany: Sinister Plot of Jewish Finance," Blackshirt, February 14, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Like the NSDAP, the BUF traced Germany's manifold post-war problems to the Versailles Treaty, which deprived it of its colonies and adequate natural resources and carved out new nations in Central Europe with large German minorities. The BUF argued that the Nazis' efforts to repatriate the latter were consonant with the League's policy of ethnic self-determination.[79] The British public and many mainstream politicians held the same standpoint as have some scholars.[80] Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, who succeeded Eden in February 1938, were two leading proponents of this view. On the other hand, Eden and Winston Churchill (who had less public support at this time) repudiated this appeasement policy--as it came to be called-- and advocated a tougher stance towards the Nazis.[81]

In the BUF's unrealistic view, Nazi Germany posed no danger to the British Empire in spite of the many hints it had already given of its expansionist aims. The Third Reich's

---

[79]"Until this spirit [of Versailles] has been extirpated from Europe," Action warned, " there can be no gleam of hope for a stable peace." (Action, October 8 , 1938). Also see Robert Gordon-Canning, "Some Aims and Principles of British Fascism in the Conduct of Imperial and Foreign Affairs," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II (1936), p. 77.

[80]Several noted politicians who shared this opinion were Lloyd George, Lord Londonderry, who served as Minister of Air from 1931 to 1935, and Lord Lothian, an influential Conservative and journalist. See A.J P Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1961 and Gerhard Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, Vol. I and II, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980 for discussions of the topic by two eminent historians.

[81]Eden and Churchill were, however, not the allies at this time that they later became. Churchill, an ex-Liberal, was still distrusted by many Conservatives, including some among Eden's group in the Commons.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

determination to avoid racial admixture would allegedly limit its aggressive designs on the Continent.[82] As usual, the BUF blamed "international finance" for the National Government's failure to realize this and it warned that this misunderstanding might lead to another armed conflict between the two countries: "To satisfy a vendetta of international finance... the old parties prefer to take their stand on lies and deception and run the risk of involving the country and the Empire in another European War." [83] The fascists also made the peculiar argument that retaining the Mandates posed a greater risk to Britain than returning them to Berlin. [84] The BUF ignored the many signs that the Nazis sought territory outside Central Europe. [85] In its opinion, Germany was as qualified as any other European power to hold colonies. Germany's withdrawal from

---

82 "The new German," Mosley maintained, "does not desire a world wide Empire, for he believes that racial deterioration will result from such racial intercourse and that the new Germany has another mission in the world than to elevate savages." (Mosley, Tomorrow We Live, p. 72.)

83 Robert Gordon-Canning, "Germany and the Mandates: A Question for 1938," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 4, October-December 1937, p. 30.

84 According to Robert Gordon-Canning, "[The] British Union...demands that at least the Cameroons, Togoland, Ruandi-Burundi, most of Tanganyika and German Papua should be at once restored to Germany...The retention of those mandated areas is a direct menace to the British Empire in that they do delay and hinder the intensive development of those lands which are the true possessions of our Empire, and the welfare of those inhabitants." (Ibid., p. 20).

85 "The present German State," Gordon-Canning wrote, "has... an entirely different objective.. [than] the Hohenzollerns... The latter .. was definitely set on world domination and out to aggrandise itself at the expense of the British and French Empires. Under the National Socialist government the direction aimed at is the incorporation of the German-speaking people into the Third Reich." (ibid., p. 30).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the League of Nations was justified and Britain should return to Berlin the colonial Mandates that it had acquired at the end of the First World War. [86] These were not vital to the British economy or security and would allegedly help relieve Germany's shortage of raw materials and over-population.[87] Germany, like Britain, was justified in seeking to fulfill its need for raw materials and markets in colonial expansion. According to the BUF, Germany should be allowed to do as she pleased in Eastern Europe. The Eastern Europeans were "barbarous and turbulent peoples" who needed to be "kept in order" by the "big powers nearest to them, i.e., Germany and Italy."[88]

Tensions rose sharply between Britain and Germany in 1938-39.[89] The BUF continued to insist that peace could be preserved if Germany was permitted to acquire the territory it needed in Eastern Europe to satisfy its burgeoning population. This became its major theme during its anti-war campaign in 1938-1939, the most effective campaign it

---

[86]Mosley, Tomorrow We Live, p. 74.

[87]For instance, Henry J.H. Bartlett a member from Dorset, wrote to Robert Saunders, "Have you seen the report in the papers about Mosley saying...about giving away the Mandated Territories to Germany. My brother heard it and says to hell with the Blackshirts if they mean to give away an inch of the colonies. From being a helper he may do us a lot of harm. I wish you would tell me what is the truth of it. For after all it does seem mad for us to give back our land which we took from Germany and not the other countries. And in any case what are the natives going to say?" (Letter from Henry J.H. Bartlett to Robert Saunders, Robert Saunders Papers, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, undated.)

[88]Action, April 15, 1939.

[89]For an interesting account of the deterioration of Anglo-German relations see Nevile Henderson, Failure of a Mission: Berlin 1937-1939, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1940. Henderson served as Britain's Ambassador to Germany from 1937 until the outbreak of the war.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pursued. BUF membership, which had been relatively stagnant since the mid-thirties, appears to have risen. For example, Yorkshire increased its membership by several thousand. At the Earls Court Peace Rally in London on July 16, 1939, several months after the British pledged to give military assistance to Poland, Mosley addressed approximately 13,000 persons which made it one of the largest indoor meetings held in the country before the war [90] "Hitler has so far only asked for things which in a sense, belong naturally to Germany," Fuller argued. [91] "Leave Hitler and his like alone," he advised. "He has his problems and we have ours."[92] "When Hitler says he stands for peace," Fuller wrote optimistically , "we may believe him." [93] The only fight Britain should engage in should be against poverty, Action suggested. [94] "Our generation and our children shall not die like rats in Polish holes," Mosley declared. [95] Some Blackshirts compared Britain's efforts to deny Germany's annexation of German-speaking territories like the Sudetenland with her war against the Boers. Clearly, the BUF

---

[90]The meeting was organized by John Hone, one of the Assistant Director-Generals and an engineer by trade.
[91]Action, October 1, 1938.
[92]J.F. C. Fuller, Empire Unity and Defence, Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1934, pp. 289-91.
[93]J.F.C. Fuller, English Review, Vol. 58, No. 5 (May 1935), p. 58.
[94]Action, May 13, 1939.
[95]Mosley, as quoted in John Charnley, Blackshirts and Roses: An Autobiography, Brockingday, London, 1990, p. 86.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

underestimated the negative effect an Anglo-German rapprochement would have on relations with France and the United States, the country's two most valuable allies.

As proof of Hitler's pacific intentions, the organization pointed to his decision to initiate the talks which led to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935, which fixed German naval strength at 35 percent of Britain's. It also praised his public statements in favor of a western air pact (a prime goal of the British cabinet) and his willingness to recognize the Corridor as Polish. It argued that if French possession of Morocco--which had considerable strategic importance-- was not considered a threat to peace, the prospect of German holdings in Africa with far less strategic significance should cause no serious concern either. [96] But the Nazis' appetite for foreign territory was much greater than what the BUF admitted. The NSDAP had not only called for the return of the Mandates but the need to obtain Lebensraum, or living space, in "Russia and...the Russian border states." [97] Hitler asserted, "A new peace shall make Germany mistress of the globe, a peace not hanging on the palm fronds of lachrymose pacifist womenfolk, but established by the victorious sword of a master race that takes over the world."[98] The

---

[96]Gordon-Canning noted, "If Germany in Tanganyika or the Cameroons is a danger, how much more dangerous is the French control of Morocco and Tunis upon the Empire route through the Mediterranean?" (Gordon-Canning, "Germany and the Mandates," p. 30).

[97]Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1971, p. 742. "Germany will be either a world power," Hitler stated in his autobiography, "or there will be no Germany." (Ibid., pp. 652-54).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BUF compared its opposition to an armed conflict with Nazi Germany with the campagn socialists waged against the First World War. [99]

By the mid-thirties, most Britons held a darker and more accurate view of the Third Reich than the BUF did. The Nazis' brutal treatment of political opponents and their expansionist designs excited considerable anxiety amongst the British populace.[100] Anti-appeasers on the right like Churchill, Eden, and Duff Cooper, all blamed the Nazi regime for the sharp rise in international tensions and found that an increasing number of people agreed with them. [101] Eden was rumored to be a likely successor to Chamberlain. Meanwhile, prominent politicians who had shown sympathy for the Third Reich, such as Lloyd George and Lord Londonderry, saw their reputations decline.

---

[98]Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, as quoted in University of Colorado Department of Philosophy, Readings on Fascism, p. 98. Also see Klaus Hildebrand, Von reich zum Weltreich: Hitler, NSDAP und koloniale Frage, W. Fink, Munich, 1969, and Geoffrey Stoakes, Hitler and the Quest for World Dominion, Berg, New York, 1986.

[99]For example, in 1939 Action stated, "The Labour Party of to-day...stands for the complete betrayal of everything for which the...Party stood ...in the days of Keir Hardie. The young men of British Union stretch out to grasp the hand of the real Socialists of earlier days, who rallied the workers for peace by exposing the crime of capitalist war." (Action, April 22, 1939).

[100]A poll taken by the News Chronicle, one of the country's largest newspapers and one affiliated with the Liberal Party, shortly after Kristallnacht found that nearly 75 percent of Britons believed "the persecution of the Jews in Germany" was an obstacle to better relations between Britain and Germany. (Hadley Cantril, Public Opinion 1935-1946, Princeton University., Princeton, 1951, p. 382).

[101]"I feel our country's safety is fatally imperilled," Churchill presciently warned, "both by its lack of arms and by the Government's dangerous attitude towards the Nazi gangster. It is fostering in them the dangerous belief that they need not fear interference by us whatever they do. That can only encourage those savages to acts of aggression and violence of every kind." (Churchill as quoted in Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, Vol. V, The Coming of War, Heinemann, London, 1976, p. 862).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Left was more openly hostile to the Nazis. Labour leaders such as Attlee, Dalton, Morrison, Cripps, and Arthur Greenwood lambasted Berlin for its racial and religious intolerance, expansionist aims, and the establishment of a police state. The Daily Herald, the chief Labour paper, suggested that the Nazis wished to reacquire the Mandates because they desired "glory, and military power."[102] Most Britons appear to have felt that the Mandates were legitimate spoils of war that Britain should retain.[103] Most major institutions took a dim view of the Hitler regime and of the BUF for giving it support. The Labour Party asserted, "[Mosley is] following in the footsteps of Fascism in Italy and Germany, [and] is building up an anti-working class force that is intended to salvage a decaying system."[104] A cartoon in the Sunday Express, a Beaverbrook newspaper,

---

[102]Daily Herald, September 15, 1937. John Parker, a Labour MP, told the Commons that the Germans sought "to get areas in which they can raise black troops for future wars." (Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 330, December 21, 1937, p. 1860).

[103]BIPO asked the public in November 1937 "Do you favor returning any of her former colonies to Germany?" Seventy per cent of the respondents said no while only 24 per cent were in favor. (The Gallup International Public Opinion Poll, 1937-1975, Vol. One, 1937-1964, Random House, New York, 1976, p. 10). When it posed the same question the next year an even larger percentage--85 per cent--indicated that they wished to retain the colonies. In addition, nearly 80 per cent of these respondents held that they would rather fight than give them back. (Ibid., p. 10.)

[104]Labour Research Department, Mosley Fascism: The Man, His Policy & Methods, Labour Research Department, London., 1935, p. 1. An exception seems to have been the Chiefs of Staff, who justifiably feared that if Britain fought another war with Germany she might lose: "We cannot. exaggerate the importance, from the point of view of Imperial defence, of any political or international action that can be taken to reduce the number of our potential enemies or to gain the support of potential allies." (Cabinet Office, as quoted in Clive Ponting, 1940: Myth and Reality, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, 1991, p. 26).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had a brutish-looking Blackshirt tell a constable, "But why interfere constable? He says he's got nearly everything he wants," as a gun-toting Hitler shot down figures representing Poland and Czechoslovakia.[105] "It is becoming increasingly clear," asserted the Jewish Chronicle, an inveterate critic of the BUF, "that the Blackshirt movement... is modelling itself very closely upon the lines of the Brownshirt movement in Germany."[106]

The BUF insisted that Moscow posed the greatest threat to peace in Europe and did not deserve an alliance with Britain. [107] "The New Germany," Thomson wrote, "[is] a worthy...comrade...in the struggle against the enemy of mankind....Let us be thankful to Heaven that she stands as a stout bulwark against the perfidious advance of Communist World Revolution, which would otherwise overrun Europe and bring about the collapse of Western Civilization."[108] "If...Soviet Russia," asserted Joyce, "persists in her attempt to create sanguinary revolution in the hands of others, we should wish Germany success in the task of ending Bolshevism without as she has already ended it within." [109]Another reason the BUF campaigned against war with Germany was its belief

---

[105]Sunday Express, October 8, 1939.
[106]Jewish Chronicle, August 7, 1936.
[107] "British policy must choose decisively between Germany and the Soviet," Mosley warned. "If we choose Germany, France in the end is bound to follow Britain into a new union of the civilised West." (Action, May 14, 1936).
[108]Blackshirt, May 31, 1935.
[109]William Joyce, "Collective Security," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 4 (October-December 1935), p. 429

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that Japan and Russia would use the conflict as an opportunity to attack the eastern Empire.[110]

One of the best indications that the BUF was not a mere tool or imitation of the NSDAP is that it made very few efforts to coordinate activities with the Nazis. Besides attending several conferences in Germany, carrying on a correspondence with various Nazi officials, such as Streicher, and arranging for the construction of several commercial radio stations in Germany, the BUF did not have much direct contact with the NSDAP. After he was detained, Mosley told government prosecutors that he had attempted to prevent his followers from forming any close associations with the Nazi regime.[111] This was an accurate statement. Fascists who travelled to Germany were required to first obtain permission. They were also warned not to associate with pro-German organizations like the Anglo-German Fellowship. On the two occasions he met Hitler the German leader did not apparently offer him any financial or other assistance. Mosley received a lesson in propaganda techniques from Goebbels in

---

[110]See Unsigned, "The Vultures Are Gathering," Action, April 25, 1940.

[111]Mosley's precise words were that he had "attempted to combat the growing up of any international idea," in the movement. Mosley, as quoted in Thomas Linehan, East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South West Essex., Frank Cass, London, 1996, p. 284

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

October 1936, apparently the second and last time he met the Propaganda Minister.[112]

Another sign that the BUF was a nationalist party and not a tool of the NSDAP was that its views sometimes ran contrary to the Third Reich's. For instance, while the Nazis violated the Non-Intervention Agreement and sent arms and advisors to Spain, the BUF supported the government's non-intervention policy. Some Blackshirts condemned the Non-Aggression Pact that the Nazis signed with the Soviet Union only a month before the war, seeing it as a cynical betrayal of fascism. Since for many Blackshirts fascism was not a true international movement, they did not tend to feel the revulsion towards the pact that many Communists did. Mosley belonged to this group. "We differ," he asserted, "as much in form and character from both the Italian and German movements as they differ from each other."[113] For these people it was immaterial what Germany and the Soviet Union did since Britain had to rely on its Empire for security:

> As long as we bind ourselves to... commitments in Europe, we are in danger of dishonouring our real responsibilities to the Empire. Therefore the honourable course as well as the wisest course, is not to undertake any commitments in Europe... We, the millions who do the tilling, and will have to do the suffering if folly blossoms into war, do not care two raps which side wins in Europe.[114]

---

[112] He also may have discussed the art of propaganda with Father Charles E. Coughlin whom he apparently met in the thirties. Coughlin's newsweekly, Social Justice, was read by some Blackshirts. (Patrick O'Doneghan, "The North London Manufacturer," in Jeffrey Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986, p. 28).

[113] Action, October 24, 1936.

[114] Ibid., August 26, 1939

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Whether Germany is fighting in Eastern Europe or Russia is fighting in Eastern Europe," Action stated, "we say precisely the same thing. This quarrel is nothing whatever to do with the British people."[115] One member wrote in Action:

> I.. feel disgusted by the fact that there is a tendency among certain members to express admiration of Hitler and German National Socialism in strong terms such as to lead one to believe that their allegiance is to Herr Hitler rather than to our Leader. We should not regard British Union as imitative of Germany We owe no inspiration to Germany other than the sight of National Socialism at work...there are some things in Germany which, acceptable to them, would prove intolerable to British people.
>
> One can regard British Union as the culmination of a general tendency in British politics. .British Union owes nothing to any foreign source, its ideology, policy and structure is essentially British, and the inevitable outcome of condition and circumstance in Britain; it can only suffer if we are to lose sight of this, and by too frequently expressed admiration of a foreign creed we may give rise to the feeling among the public that we are, in fact, no better than the Communists, by subjecting our nation to dictation by completely foreign ideas.[116]

The editor of Action stated that he"heartily" agreed with these sentiments "as do all sincere members of British Union."[117] W.E.D. Allen complained: "Hitler...maintains the 'myth' of race [but]... confuses it with the reality of the nation."[118] Edward York, a rank-and-file member who split with the movement, asserted:

> The main reason for the decline of the party, is that, despite original protestations to the contrary, the B.U.F. has followed too closely the ideals of the Nazis and Fascists...Whether or not the systems of these two organizations are suitable for the countries in question is beside the point.. In. Britain. it is definitely unsuited..

---

[115] Action, September 2, 1939.
[116] Ibid., September 3, 1938.
[117] ibid.
[118] James Drennan, BUF: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism, John Murray, London., 1934, p. 221.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> The continued strength of Great Britain depends almost entirely upon her good relations with the outside empire. When I joined the party in 1933 the anti-Jewish problem was practically non-existent...The movement grew almost miraculously. Since then.. the decline has set in; [and] the official utterances have become more and more anti-Jewish. [119]

York's interpretation is supported by much of what I have found in my research. Wegg-Prosser suggested that the party should focus on bread-and-butter issues like unemployment and housing and that "anti-Semitism" should be "only a side issue."[120] In 1937 he sent Mosley a bitter letter condemning the party's anti-Semitic campaign.[121] C.H. Green, the parliamentary candidate for Reading, urged the party to take a similar path in a piece in Action entitled "Britain Owes No Foreign

---

[119] New York Herald Tribune, October 6, 1935.
[120] Action, May 21, 1936.
[121] Wegg-Prosser wrote:

> Anti-Jewish propaganda, as you and Hitler use it, is a gigantic side-tracking stunt, a smoke screen designed to cloud thought and divert action with regard to real problems...Hitler attacks the Jews to whip up the lukewarm... you do it to get mass support in East London and other places. I tried to interest these people in real problems, unemployment, wages, housing, and so on. I watched with dismay the mentality which said, 'get rid of the Jews and you will automatically get rid of unemployment, slums, sweating' .Our people are fair, tolerant, and humane. You introduce a movement imitating foreign dictators, you run it as a soulless despotism.

(Wegg-Prosser, as quoted in D.S Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987, p.243.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Allegiance":

> It is our business as good British Blackshirts to distinguish between those common principles which must be defended at all costs, the methods by which the different nations put them into practice--their own affair and no one else's--and the abuses which creep into every human effort, which it is dishonest as well as bad propaganda to defend. The new nations [Germany and Italy] are using different methods to put their principles into practice, and have added other things to their programme which have nothing to do with Fascism or such. When justice and decency are outraged in the sham democracies we are swift to condemn. From one point of view we should be even quicker to condemn our friends. God forbid that Action should become a carping critic...but there is a time when it is necessary to speak out and call things by their right names. That time has come when in the view of many of us no movement should forget that its principles of social justice, protecting the poor against the rich, service, sacrifice, and the subordination of self to common good spring from Christianity... [Nazi Germany] erects those principles into a mystic cult and finally comes to look upon Christianity itself as a rival which must be uprooted. British Union is never likely to fall into this disastrous mistake, for our genius is practical rather than mystical. Let us be bolder in condemning this tendency whenever and wherever it appears.[122]

According to Green, the BUF had only three major features in common with German and Italian fascism: "1. Disillusionment with the shams of party politics. 2. [The] determination to ...root out the evils of international finance and Communism. 3. A sane and healthy patriotism, not based on jingoism but on the conviction that each nation has its own contribution to make to civilization."[123] In a review of J.A. Cole's book Just Back From Germany, Action asserted that "The present Government in Germany is far

---

[122] Action, September 10, 1938.
[123] Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

from perfect." [124] Lt.-General Mac Munn warned Britons that "the coming of Hitler" had upset the balance of power in Europe and compelled Britain to spend more money on military training and arms. [125] Chesterton recalled that, "When Hitler marched into Prague and saddled himself with a new racial minority, most of us who had sympathised with his work in uniting purely Germanic peoples recoiled in dismay."[126] It is not possible to know precisely how many Blackshirts shared these views, but it is likely that a considerable proportion did. An intriguing if unanswerable question is what might the prospects for the BUF have been if it had adopted a more critical attitude towards the Third Reich at an early stage in its history.

The BUF's anti-war stance asked Britons to ignore their interests on the Continent and concentrate on developing the Empire, something few wished to do. It also betrayed a limited understanding of the country's strategic requirements.[127] In addition, it ran

---

[124] Action, July 2, 1938.

[125] Sir George MacMunn, Britain, The World, The War God, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., London, 1934, p. 159.

[126] Chesterton, as quoted in David Baker, Ideology of Obsession: A.K. Chesterton and British Fascism, Tauris Academic Studies, London, 1996, p. 138.

[127] "Mosley's assumptions," Richard Thurlow writes, "could be...attacked from the nationalist perspective. Mosley seemed unaware that the leading British geopolitical theorist, Harold Mackinder [held that with]...the control of the heartland of Russia, a combined German-Russian Empire would directly threaten Britain's interests and because of the geographical concentration of resources such a combination would be more powerful than the scattered units of the British Empire." (Richard Thurlow, Fascism in Britain, Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, p. 187).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

counter to the public's increasingly favorable view of the Soviet Union in the late thirties. With the worsening of relations with the Axis powers many Britons, especially on the left, looked to Russia as a potential ally. Polls taken throughout the late 1930s support this shift in feeling. For instance, BIPO asked, "Would you like to see Great Britain and Soviet Russia being more friendly to each other?" Eighty-four per cent said yes; seven per cent said no, and nine per cent had no opinion. [128] Six months later it asked, "Which do you think is the more dangerous to us--Soviet Russia or Nazi Germany?" Nearly sixty per cent of the respondents said Germany, less than a quarter indicated the Soviet Union, and nearly a fifth expressed no opinion.[129] More important, the BUF's anti-war position left it open to the suggestion that it might not support Britain in the event of a conflict with Germany. Robert Boothby, a Conservative MP and close

---

[128]Gallup, ed. The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Vol I, p. 27; Public Opinion Quarterly Vol. IV, No. 1 (March 1940), p. 77. In June 1939 BIPO presented Britons with this question: "Are you in favor of a military alliance between Great Britain, France and Russia?" Eighty-four per cent answered in the affirmative, nine per cent said no, while seven per cent gave no opinion. (Ibid.).

[129]The Manchester Guardian spoke for many Britons when it observed during the Czech crisis of 1938: "A country strong enough for Germany to fear as an enemy is certainly strong enough for Britain to welcome as a friend." (Manchester Guardian Weekly, March 3, 1939).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ally of Churchill, expressed a view many held when the war finally broke out: "He [Mosley] could have led his thugs to the beaches of Kent and Sussex at the time of Dunkirk there to await and to resist the impending invasion. He did not take it...But in so doing he laid himself open to the deadly charge that he was gambling at the defeat of his country." [130]

Any account of the BUF-Nazi association must also include a discussion of their differences. Had the BUF given more emphasis to these it would certainly have remained on the fringes of the political scene, but it might have had a less disreputable image. Mosley insisted that members avoid close contact with the NSDAP. "We...do not care a rap for the politics of any foreign country," he asserted in 1939.[131] He did not enforce this policy, however, until the late thirties. In the early and middle part of the decade many ordinary members and leaders made sojourns to Germany. This was not very unusual, however, since many politicians on the left also visited the country, including George Lansbury, Lord Allen of Hurtwood, and Ellen Wilkinson.

---

[130]Robert Boothby, I Fight to Live, Victor Gollancz, London, 1947, pp. 91-92.
[131]Action, September 23, 1939

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mosley sometimes chided members who sought to strengthen ties with the Nazis, such as Joyce, for "worshipping at foreign shrines." For example, he asked Unity Mitford why "if [she] liked the Germans so much... she didn't go and live there."[132] In his book Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered he wrote:

> Question 7. What are the main differences between Fascism in Britain and Fascism in Italy and Germany?
>
> The main difference is that they are Italian or German and that we are British. From this all other differences follow. Fascism in essence is a national creed finding a different national expression and method in each nation. For this reason, Fascist Movements in each country vary more than Socialist or Communist Movements, which are international... We seek to bring the creed of our age [fascism] to Great Britain by British methods in accord with British character... The British have not always originated the creed of the age, but they have usually perfected it. We claim that the policy of Fascism in Britain goes far beyond any continental analogy in constructive conception. [133]

Most members adhered to this policy. "We have no right, nor desire," Blackshirt asserted flatly, "either to condone or condemn any phase of policy which is being applied in Germany, as we are concerned with putting our own house in order in our own way."[134] John Warburton, a former member from London, recalls, "The German development under National Socialism...impressed [the BUF]. With less resources they had given new life to their people whilst Britain stagnated with mass unemployment and

---

[132] Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999.
[133] Oswald Mosley, Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered, BUF Publications, London, 1936, Question 7.
[134] Blackshirt, July 8-July 14, 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

want. British Fascism took note but right from the start made it clear that in Britain it would adopt the characteristics of the British."[135] No evidence has been found suggesting that the party received funds from the Nazis although the Home Office and MI5 looked hard for it.[136] Few BUF members showed much interest publicly at least in expanding or strengthening ties with the Third Reich. For example, C.H. Green noted, "If we must look abroad, let us recall the single-mindedness of... [Mussolini], who avoided conflict with Jews, with Church, with sectional interests of any kind, and thus established on an unshakeable basis the power of Fascism in Italy."[137] "Let no one fear," Action asserted in 1939, "that we are trying to import a Dictatorship into this country on the German or Italian model. Such an attempt would be doomed to failure and a stupid undertaking. The English character does not want it and certainly would never have it."[138] The BUF was never as adept at pointing out its differences with the Continental fascists as its opponents on the left were in drawing parallels between the

---

[135] Interview with John Warburton, July 6, 1999.

[136] A. W. Brian Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, Clarendon, Oxford, 1992, pp. 276, 280.

[137] Action, September 3, 1938.

[138] Ibid., February 11, 1939. Each of the BUF members I have interviewed insist that the Blackshirts did not obtain funds from the Third Reich. (Interviews with Frank R. Hawke, June 29, 1999, John Warburton, July 6, 1999, and Ronald F. Webb, August 24, 1999). Prof. Christopher T. Husbands of the London School of Economics & Political Science has also stated that the BUF did not receive "any NSDAP money." (Interview with Christopher T. Husbands, April 1, 1999).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

two and its label as an "un-British" movement stuck. [139]

One difference between the BUF and the Nazis that scholars have given little attention to was the former's deep faith in science. As a former UM member recalls, "There were two things that Oswald Mosley never lost faith in. The British people, and the power of modern science to increase the means to produce."[140] According to the BUF, scientists and technicians must be given more resources and authority since more than any other group they possessed the skills to help raise living standards:

> The money spent on both scientific and technical research is absurdly inadequate. With a more far-sighted policy, not only could industrial discovery one hundred-fold replace the money expended, but many of the ravages of disease might be conquered...Fascism, not only by money but by honour, will repose its faith in the scientist.[141]

Mosley asserted, "It [is]... possible with the power of modern science and of industry to produce, to solve once and for all the poverty problem." [142] Referring to the governments

---

[139] "The British Union of Fascists leaders," a Communist Party pamphlet noted, "went to Berlin and Rome ... They came back and told us what fine countries Germany and Italy had become. ... They told us that we ought to copy their methods of government: they sold literature clearly marked 'Printed in Hamburg.' Never was anything more clearly labelled 'Made in Germany'" (William Gallacher and Earl Browder, Anti-Semitism: What It Means and How to Combat It, CPGB, London, 1943, pp. 13-14). Another Communist pamphlet stated, "Mosley [is]...trying to tie the British people to Hitler's war plans." (J.L. Douglas, Spotlight on Fascists: Facts About Fascism,Landlords, Leaders, and Captain Kidd, the Plan to Goosestep over Europe, CPGB, London, 1936, pp. 8, 18).

[140] Gordon Beckwell, "Thoughts Come in a Flash," Comrade, Vol. 3, No. 12 (April-May 1988), p. 4.

[141] Mosley, Fascism: One Hundred Questions Asked and Answered., Question 33.

[142] Mosley, as quoted in Drennan, BUF, pp. 285-86. "The Code of British Union of Fascists" stated, "Poverty shall be abolished by the power of modern science." (Action, February 28, 1936). According to Mussolini, Italian Fascism should be continuously "revised, corrected, enlarged, developed." (Mussolini as quoted in Michael T. Florinsky, Fascism and National Socialism, Macmillan, New York, 1938, p. 57)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the inter-war era, John Scanlon asserted: "In 20 years of rule they have produced wars, threats of wars, and poverty everywhere. The chemist, the scientist, the engineer, the men of knowledge must take the job out of their hands."[143] Some of the BUF's pronouncements on science and technology were similar to those of the Futurists, intellectuals who celebrated technology and speed and who helped found Italian Fascism. Few scientists, however, joined the BUF. An exception was Derek Jackson, who married Lady Mosley's sister, Pam. He helped develop a device that allowed British warplanes to avoid detection by German radar known as the "window." Hitler, who held many reactionary ideas, and the Nazis held a less sanguine view of pure science. Nazi propagandists, such as Goebbels, suggested that Germans should trust and obey the government and not examine issues in a critical fashion. Scientists, for some Nazis at least, appear to have represented a potential threat to the regime. Many Nazis yearned for a return to simpler times when scientists and technicians played a less influential role in society. The NSDAP derided many scientists, including Freud, Einstein, Max Born, and

---

[143]John Scanlon, Pillars of Cloud, Chapman & Hall, London, 1936, p. 320. Scanlon, like Beckett and Gordon-Canning, broke with the BUF and joined the British People's Party shortly before the war.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

James Frank.[144] According to the Nazis, Einstein's theory of relativity was anarchistic. "Our national politics," Hitler asserted, "will not be revoked or modified, even for scientists. If the dismissal of Jewish scientists means the annihilation of German science, then we shall have to do without science for a few years."[145] Some Nazi leaders were interested in the occult and pagan supersitions, including Hitler, Rudolf Hess, and Heinrich Himmler.[146]

---

[144]Intellectuals of all sorts were suspect in the eyes of the NSDAP For example, university professors who refused to take an oath of loyalty to the regime were fired. According to Hitler, Germany suffered "from...an excess of education." (Hitler, as quoted in E.M. Forster, "Nordic Twlight," in England Speaks: A Symposium, Macmillan, New York, 1941, p. 67). "My system of education," Hitler stated, "is a harsh one. I want no intellectual instruction." (Hitler, as quoted in Nigel Fielding, The National Front, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, London, 1991, p. 108). The Nazi Minister of Science and Education asserted, "The charge of our enmity to science is true... if the complete absence of preconceptions and predispositions, unrestrained objectivity are to be taken as characteristic of science...The new [Nazi] science is entirely different from the idea of knowledge that found its value in an unchecked attempt to reach the truth." (New York Times, June 30, 1936). Most technical breakthroughs during the war were made by Allied not German scientists, such as the atomic bomb and radar.

[145]Hitler, as quoted in Ronald Lewin, Hitler's Mistakes, William and Morrow, New York, 1984, p. 55 In spite of efforts by Max Planck, the noted physicist, and others to dissuade him from this view Hitler did not waver

[146]For instance, towards the end of the war, Hitler found special significance in the death of President Roosevelt comparing the event to the accesion of Tsar Peter III during the Seven Years War which gave hope to Frederick the Great and Prussia in the conflict. See Chapter Six, "The Occult Origins of National Socialism," in George L. Mosse, The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism, Howard Fertig, New York, 1999, especially pp. 117-18 and 125-27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The NSDAP celebrated peasant values and castigated cities as centers of iniquity and warped values. [147] Blut und Boden (Blood and Soil) became one of the Third Reich's slogans.[148] In contrast, the BUF's major base of support always lay in urban communities, such as the East End of London and Manchester. Another difference between the BUF and NSDAP relates to party discipline. The BUF never had a significant division in its ranks, unlike the NSDAP, which was riven with a split in the late twenties and early thirties between those who accepted the major tenets of capitalism, including Hitler, and those who favored pursuing socialist goals, such as Ernst Roehm and Gregor Strasser. There was never any effort by rank-and-file or elite members to remove Mosley from power. In 1937, Joyce, Beckett and a few of their followers were expelled from the party for their efforts to promote racial anti-Semitism, but this group represented only a tiny portion of party membership and was smaller proportionately than the left-wing Nazis Hitler targeted in the Blood Purge of 1934.

---

[147] See Stanley Payne, Fascism: Comparison and Definition, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1980, p. 98. In an effort to boost the birth rate, the NSDAP rewarded persons who had large families and taxed single men and women at a higher rate. Also see Anna Bramwell, Blood and Soil: Walter Darre and Hitler's Green Party, Kensal Press, Buckinghamshire, 1985.

[148] Streicher published a book with this title in 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Another difference between the BUF and the Nazis was the former's conviction that the government should not interfere in religious issues. Some Nazis, in contrast, saw the Christian churches as rivals, and persecuted them. Many Catholic and Protestant churchmen, for instance, such as Pastor Martin Niemoller of the Evangelical Church, were sent to concentration camps. For the BUF, violence was sometimes necessary, but it was not the noble and rejuvenating force that it was for some Nazis and Italian Fascists. Roger Eatwell is correct when he states, "Mosley's fascism, was not based on the Romantic conception of violence as a form of transcendence that characterized many continental fascists."[149] Since its inception, the BUF urged members to refrain from using physical force except in self-defense. Many members of course ignored this directive, particularly youths. Unlike the Nazis or Italian Fascists, the British fascists did not murder a single Communist, Socialist, or Jew and apparently only one member, Capt. Charles H. Steele, died as a result of his efforts on behalf of the party.

The NSDAP had a less favorable opinion of the masses' critical faculties than the BUF. In Mein Kampf, for instance, Hitler held that the bigger the lie the more likely it was that ordinary people would believe it. Politics in his view was a ruthless struggle

---

[149]Roger Eatwell, Fascism: A History, Allen Lane, New York, 1996, p. 237

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in which the crafty and unscrupulous triumphed. It was better to make vague and contradictory statements than to commit oneself to a position. Theories and philosophies served only as window dressing for Hitler and scientific investigation did not necessarily lead to progress.[150] It was dangerous to give scientists-- or any other group--too much freedom. Besides, science had been contaminated by "Jewish" concepts such as Einstein's theory of relativity and Freud's hypothesis of the unconscious. Many scientists became alienated by the Third Reich's bogus racial theories and some, like Einstein, were forced into exile. [151] In contrast, Blackshirt offered to extend a "hand of friendship" to Einstein when he took up residence in Britain during the war and termed him "a great man."[152]

---

[150]Albert Speer, a member of his inner circle, recalled: "Politics for Hitler was purely pragmatic." (Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich, Macmillan, New York, 1970, p. 174)."The New Reich," Hitler asserted, "is not dedicated to theories, but to the maintenance of our people." For an interesting discussion of Hitler's and the NSDAP's attitude towards the masses, see Wilhelm Reich, The Mass Psychology of Fascism, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1970, pp. 34-41. On the whole, the Nazis required research scientists to serve the purposes of the Nazi regime. The traditional pursuit of knowledge for its own sake was discouraged. It has been noted, "The Third Reich had room for individual technocrats, but not for a technocratic movement." (Monika Renneberg and Mark Walker, "Scientists, Engineers and National Socialism," in Science, Technology and National Socialism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 5) Also see Alan D. Beyerchen, Scientists Under Hitler, Politics and the Physics Community in the Third Reich, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977.

[151]Frederick Schuman, The Nazi Dictatorship: A Study in Social Pathology and the Politics of Fascism, Knopf, New York, 1936, p. 327.

[152]Blackshirt, October 14-October 20, 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Unlike the BUF, racial anti-Semitism was a cornerstone of Nazi ideology. Nazi propagandists systematically de-humanized the Jews, which made it easier to exterminate them during the Second World War. Jews were a dangerous alien "race" that must be expelled from Germany before they allegedly contaminated the naturally "superior Aryans." Intellectuals such as Alfred Rosenberg formulated an elaborate racial ideology and attempted to provide a philosophical basis for Nazi anti-Semitism. [153] Nazi propagandists, such as Goebbels, attacked the Jews unremittingly in print, on film, and on the hustings.[154] Later, the Nazis drew up plans to rid Germany of its Jews and re-locate them to remote lands, such as Palestine and Madagascar. The Italian Fascists, on the other hand, did not make anti-Semitism a major part of their program. Indeed,

---

[153]For instance, Point Four of the 25 Point program the NSDAP formulated in 1920 proposed denying citizenship to Jews. "None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation No Jew, therefore, may be a members of the nation." (Rosenberg, as quoted in University of Colorado, Readings on Fascism and National Socialism, p. 71). "A new faith," Rosenberg held, "is arising today The faith...that the Nordic blood represents that *mysterium* which has replaced and overcome the old sacraments." He also asserted, "The notion of race-soul is [the]secret core...which develops race-culture " (Ibid.)

[154]"Who has besmirched [our] honour," Goebbels asked in 1928, "and made it a laughing stock of the enemies? Who has taken our free soil from us and stolen our money? Who owns our mines and railways today? Who has made a profit out of our misery while we starved and suffered? It was our enemies, Jews and serfs of Jews." (Goebbels, as quoted in Ernest K. Bramsted, Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda, 1925-1945, East Lansing, MI, The Cresset Press, 1965, p. 35).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jews comprised a disproportionately high share of the Italian party membership.[155]

The BUF's brand of anti-Semitism was not based on strict racial criteria for the most part. It made no effort to deny the Jews' humanity or to assign specific racial features to them. Unlike the Nazis, they did not usually use biological determinism to explain Jews' behavior.[156] Although Jews were barred from the BUF after 1934, they continued to belong to several of its affiliated organizations for years, such as the Federation of British University Fascist Associations (F.B.U.F.A.) and Fascist Union of British Workers. [157] A poem submitted to Blackshirt by one of its readers reflected the

---

[155]Stanley Payne, an authority on fascism, states: "Five of the 191 founders of the Fasci in 1919 were Jews, and of the nine Jews in parliament two years later, one was a Fascist. In 1938 there were 10,125 adult Jewish members of the PNF. Given Italy's exiguous Jewish population (a small fraction of one percent), these statistics may be read as indicating that Jewish support for and participation in Fascism was higher than the indices for the Italian population as a whole." (Payne, Fascism, p. 86).

[156]Richard Thurlow, "Fascism and Nazism--No Siamese Twins," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 14, No 1 (January 1980), p. 13.

[157]The F.B.U.F.A., a group Joyce helped to organize, was formed to attract university students. Derek R. Stuckey, a graduate of Oriel College, Oxford, ran the organization. By the late-thirties, it had established branches at many schools and universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, London, Bristol, Manchester, Sheffield, Radley, Ampleforth, and Norwich Technical Training College. All of the major parties had already established similar organizations. The F.B.U.F.A. was much less successful attracting members than any of these groups. It also enjoyed less success than the similar groups that the Continental fascists organized. I have not been able to determine precisely how many members it had, but the number appears to have been at least several thousand. A dinner for the Oxford, London, and Cambridge branches in the autumn of 1936 drew 200 persons. (Action, November 7, 1936) The Cambridge branch met weekly and sometimes hosted noted BUF speakers, such as Clement Bruning. A column on fascism appeared weekly in the university's newspaper. R.P. May and Charles Beauclerk were two of the branch's leaders in the mid-1930s. Influential fascists at the schools and universities included P. Reeder Finch and T.H.A. Biggs at Oxford, T.D. Fenwick at Ampleforth, and Evans at Bristol. In early 1939, Action featured a regular column on the F.B.U.F.A. Contributors included Guy Chesham. During the war, the F.B.U.F.A. recruited as it had during peacetime. One of its leading recruiters in the South was Derek Stuckey, a non-Jew.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sentiments of many ordinary Blackshirts:

> There are jews and jews! and I refuse
> To condemn a man for his race!
> If he's born in this dear old land of
> ours
> If he loves her soil--her trees, her
> flowers
>
> And brings on her no disgrace.
> If he's an upright citizen,
> Who stands for fair play in a world
> of men
> And can look one straight in the face
> That man is my brother![158]

One could not find works of this sort in Germany after the Nazis came to power. A Hackney fascist spoke for many ordinary members when he recalled:

> We believed that the Jew had his place in the country if he was prepared to work for [its] benefit and not for the benefit of the big Jew. It's the big Jew that caused all the trouble. As Mosley always said, we've got nothing against the small Jew We didn't care what they were, as long as they was loyal to the British Crown and the King.[159]

It is true that in the mid-thirties some racial anti-Semites, such as Joyce, Chesterton, Beckett, and Clarke attained influential positions in the BUF and called for a tougher stance against the Jews. But these men never came close to gaining control of the movement. By 1938, all had either been expelled or resigned save Clarke. Several

---

[158]Blackshirt, November 18-November 25, 1933.
[159]Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 271.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Blackshirts suggested that Jews who had "not proved themselves worthy citizens of Britain," must be "deported."[160] But the BUF never stated precisely who those Jews were, what acts might constitute grounds for deportation, or who would decide their fate if it gained power. The significant differences between the BUF and the NSDAP's stance towards the Jews was lost on most Britons, partly because after the wave of violence in the mid-thirties most people did not pay serious attention to the the fascists and because the latter never did enough to publicize their differences with the Nazis on this issue.

Another notable difference between the BUF and the NSDAP was their attitude towards women. According to the Nazis, a woman's primary functions was to be a bearer and nurturer of children, homemaker, and wife. Generally speaking, any talents women possessed were deemed secondary to these qualities. [161] The emancipation of women in

---

[160]See, for instance, Mosley, Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered, Question 97

[161] "In the case of female education," Hitler averred, for example, " the main stress should be laid on bodily training, and after that on development of character and last of all, on intellect. But the one absolute aim of female education must be with a view to the future mother." (Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 241). For an interesting discussion of the subservient role women played in the Third Reich consult Tim Mason, "Women in Germany, 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work, Part I," History Workshop, Spring 1976, pp. 74-113 Mason asserts, "Anti-feminism was not a minor or opportunistic component of National Socialism, but a central part of it." (Ibid., p. 89). Also see, Frauengruppe Faschismusforschung, Mutterkreuz und Arbeitsbuch: Zur Geschichte der Frauen in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus, Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, 1981; Hilda Browning, Women Under Fascism and Communism, Martin Lawrence, London, 1934 and Marie-Luise Gattens, "Women's History as Archeological Work: Christa Wolf's Patterns of Childhood, in Gattens', Women Writers and Fascism: Reconstructing History, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1995, pp. 77-119

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Nazis' view was a "Jewish" and "Marxist" fantasy. Germany's falling birth-rate was a source of anxiety to the Nazis and to Hitler in particular. The NSDAP offered females a host of incentives to bear children both inside and outside of wedlock, including loans, housing, and financial awards. In 1933 the Nazis passed a law that encouraged women to marry and relinquish their jobs to men. Couples that remained childless for five years or more were taxed at a rate 40 percent higher than the average. Schools were established throughout the country which taught females mothering and homemaking skills. Families with more than one child in school paid reduced school fees. Various organizations that promoted child-bearing received state support, including the League of Large Families and co-educational work camps for young people. After the war broke out, the Nazis introduced programs to encourage women to become nurses and housewives. At the Lebensborn, or Wells of Life, S.S. men impregnated women in an effort to improve the fitness of the "Aryan race."

The BUF never proposed programs of this nature, although Britain's birth-rate was also on the decline. Indeed, the lowest birth rates on record occurred in 1932 and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1933.[162] Women comprised only about eight percent of the NSDAP's membership, whereas slightly more than 20 percent of the BUF's members were female.[163] The Nazis attempted to keep women in a subordinate, dutiful, sheltered position even after the Second World War began. The Bund deutscher Frauenvereine, or Federation of German Women's Association, Germany's largest feminist organization, was dissolved shortly after the Nazis came to power. Several women rose to prominence in the Third Reich, but this was unusual. Under no circumstances were women encouraged to seek public office or join the military, which occupied the highest rung of the Nazi social ladder.[164]

The BUF had a broader conception of women's talents. It never attempted to copy the Nazis' more conservative policies towards women. Females of all ages and social and economic backgrounds were encouraged to become members and their creative abilities were valued as well as their procreative ones. Male and female Blackshirts

---

[162]Daily Worker, December 10, 1934.

[163]Stanley G. Payne, A History of Fascism, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1995, p. 168. In comparison, in the early 1930s women comprised approximately 14 percent of the British Communist Party's membership.

[164]Adolf Hitler, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922-1939, Vol.I, Norman H. Baynes, ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1942, p. 528. Some industries offered women economic opportunities, such as entertainment. For example, Leni Riefenstahl became a leading filmmaker.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

agreed that married women were to have as much right to employment as single women and to be free to choose whether they wished to work or not.[165] Women were encouraged to join the military.[166] Mosley had supported women's equality for years.[167] Women were permitted to perform some of the same tasks as men, such as recruiting members door-to-door and selling newspapers on the street.[168] Many females took advantage of the opportunities the fascists offered. Several rose to positions of influence in the party. In several ways the Blackshirts adopted a traditional stance towards women. They organized them into a separate division with headquarters on Lower Grosvenor Place. Some Blackshirts held that there were certain innate differences between the sexes which it was unwise to ignore or eliminate. Mosley wrote, for instance, "We consider [motherhood] to be one of the greatest of human and racial

---

165"Marriage," according to the BUF, "should not be regarded as an essential disqualification from work in industry or the professions."(Action, February 11, 1939). Anne Brock Griggs was correct when she noted that there was "A differing racial tradition in [the BUF] attitude towards women," which made a comparison of Britain with Germany and Italy "impossible." Anne Brock Griggs, "Women's Position in Germany," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, (1936), p. 164. Some of the BUF's opponents on the left perceived little or no difference between the BUF and NSDAP on this issue. For instance, in 1937 G.D.H. Cole suggested that both were misogynistic. (G.D.H. Cole, The People's Front, Victor Gollancz, London, 1937, p. 147-48). For more information on this topic see Martin Durham, "Gender and the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 27, No. 3 (July 1992)

166Action, June 3, 1939

167For example, in 1919 he assisted the parliamentary campaign of Lady Astor, the first woman elected to Parliament.

168These included Olive Hawks, who wrote a column for Blackshirt, and Anne Brock Griggs, who became one of the chief instructors of speakers and Chief Woman's Organiser

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

functions to be honoured and encouraged."[169] Women were denied the opportunity to participate in many of the same clubs and groups as men. This was common in the inter-war era. A separate Women's Drum Corps was founded in 1938, which participated in many of the marches in the late thirties. Separate speakers' classes were offered for women and the Blackshirt Camp at Pagham was restricted to females for several weeks in the summer.[170] Not a single woman served on the Policy Directorate of the BUF nor did the party attempt to stop discrimination of women in the workplace, which meant men would have obtained the best jobs and highest salaries, as D.S. Lewis has noted. The first Chief Women's Organiser left the division when the BUF's promises of equality between the sexes in the organization went unfulfilled.[171] And some Blackshirts were as concerned as the Nazis with the decline in the national birth-rate and population losses due to emigration.

---

[169]Mosley, Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered, Question 32.
[170]Action, August 27, 1938.
[171]Martin Durham, "Women and Fascism," in Searchlight, Vol. 26, No. 295, p. 19.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The BUF made very few references to the positive features of war unlike the NSDAP and Italian Fascists.[172] Nazi intellectuals taught that war was an essential element of the natural order and that it was short-sighted and foolish to try to abolish it. A Nazi children's book described war as "a lovely dream" and a "miracle of achievement."[173] Although the BUF held that war was sometimes necessary, it usually maintained that it was a waste of human life and property. For instance, Mosley, who had seen many of his contemporaries perish in the First World War, termed that conflict "a mere stupidity."[174] Throughout the 1930s, the BUF campaigned against British involvement in nearly every armed conflict fought in that decade, including Ethiopia, Spain, the Sino-Japanese War, and the Second World War. As Robert Skidelsky has noted, Mosley's brand of "fascism was not as morally unrestrained as Hitler's."[175]

---

[172]Mussolini observed, "War is to man as maternity is to woman. I do not believe in everlasting peace, moreover, I consider it depressing and contrary to those fundamental virtues of mankind which only grow to their full strength in the clash of battle." (Mussolini, as quoted in Daily Worker, July 14, 1934). He also said, "War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it." (Coffey, Lion by the Tail, p. 27).

[173]George L. Mosse, "Introduction: A General Theory of Fascism," in his International Fascism: New Thoughts and Approaches, Sage, London, 1979, p. 15.

[174]Action, May 27, 1939.

[175]Robert Skidelsky, "Reflections on Mosley and British Fascism," in Kenneth Lunn and Richard C Thurlow, eds. British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Inter-war Britain, Croom Helm, London, 1980, p. 82.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Throughout the thirties, the Nazi regime made efforts--mostly behind-the-scenes-- to reach a diplomatic settlement with Britain. In Hitler's view, the British were a "great Germanic people," "a fraternal Volk." [176] He respected their cultural, economic, and political achievements, especially the Empire. In his opinion, another war with Britain would be a disaster of the first magnitude for the "Aryan race," just as the First World War had been. He believed that if Germany concentrated on becoming the premier land power and Britain was content with being the leading naval power an alliance between the two rivals was possible.[177] In this way Hitler strove to revise the Versailles system without precipitating a costly war in the West.[178] Hitler knew that he had to sacrifice some of his strategic objectives in order to reach a settlement, and he was willing to do so. In 1935 he signed the Anglo-German Naval Pact. The next year he appointed

---

[176]Hitler, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, Vol. II, p. 1105; Hitler, as quoted in Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., ed., Hitler--Memoirs of a Confidant, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1978, p. 90.

[177] "It is widely and most erroneously believed," Hitler observed in the 1920s, that "England would immediately oppose any power seeking to dominate Europe. This is...not true. England has always remained aloof from European affairs only so long as there was no immediate rival threatening her position as a world power." (Hitler, as quoted in Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, p. 15). In 1935 Hitler declared: "An understanding must be reached between the two great Germanic peoples through the permanent elimination of naval rivalry. One will control the sea, the other... the land." (Hitler, as quoted in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds. Nazism 1919-1945, Vol. III, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 1988, p. 673).

[178]Hitler always assumed the Wehrmacht could crush France or the Soviet Union in a war fought on one front. Shortly before becoming Chancellor he told Otto Wagener, a Storm Troop leader, "We must try to win over England." (Hitler, as quoted in Turner, Hitler--Memoirs of a Confidant, p. 89).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Joachim von Ribbentrop, one of his most trusted aides, as Ambassador to Britain and assigned him the task of negotiating a settlement. As Gerhard Weinberg has noted, "In Hitler's eyes the only thing required to persuade England of the wisdom of an alliance with Germany would be the abandonment of Germany's world trade and naval ambitions."[179] In the hope of achieving a rapprochement, the Nazis intensified their propaganda efforts in Britain in the late thirties. [180] In addition, they published several books specifically designed to be read by British students, such as Kurt Schulz and H.E. Lewington's Der Fuehrer des Deutschen Reiches: A Short Account of His Life and Work. [181] They also extended their intelligence network in the country. By the late thirties, it consisted of military attaches, diplomatic officials, members of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop, a private research bureau Ribbentrop established, German Military Intelligence (the *Abwehr*) agents, and members of the Auslands-Organisation (AO), a branch of the NSDAP which coordinated the activities of Germans living abroad. But

---

[179] Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, Vol. I, p. 15. Hitler reportedly enjoined Ribbentrop, "Get Britain to join the Anti-Comintern Pact, that is what I want most of all. But if our efforts are... in vain... I'm ready for war as well." (Hitler, as quoted in Noakes and Pridham, Nazism, Vol III, p. 673).

[180] They sent more than 60 "journalists" to work in the London area in this period, including Streicher's son, Elmar, who was deported for spying. Elmar was also involved in a fight between the Blackshirts and Communists on his visit. (World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, The Brown Network. The Activities of the Nazis in Foreign Countries, Knight, New York, 1936, p. 132).

[181] Z.A.B. Zeman, Nazi Propaganda, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, p. 149.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

they recruited only a handful of Blackshirts to gather intelligence for them or help them improve their image in Britain as the Italians had done on a much greater scale during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. [182]

For a time it appeared that an Anglo-German settlement might be possible with the selection of Ribbentrop as Ambassador, Sir Nevile Henderson's appointment as Ambassador to Germany (he was sympathetic to the regime), and the resignation of Anthony Eden, a staunch critic of the Third Reich, as Foreign Secretary in 1938. But thanks partly to the efforts of anti-appeasers such as Churchill, Duff Cooper, Leo Amery, and Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, both government and press took a tougher stance against Berlin. Britain launched a re-armamament drive in the mid-thirties. By 1937 Hitler concluded that Ribbentrop's mission to London was a failure and that Britain might well resist his plans to become the dominant power on the Continent by force. But he and his advisors still did not abandon

---

[182]One Blackshirt they did attempt to recruit was A.K. Chesterton. He rejected their offer to move to Germany and broadcast propaganda.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hope of reaching an accord.[183]

Hitler believed that a clash between Britain and the the United States was possible, and that if this occurred London might turn to Germany for help. His optimism may have been fueled by Britain's indecisive efforts to stem Italian aggression in Ethiopia and her decision not to intervene in the Spanish Civil War. The willingness of many prominent Britons to travel to Germany for discussions with him may have been another factor. These included Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook; Lords Londonderry and Lothian, two influential Conservatives; Lord Allen of Hurtwood, the pacifist; Thomas Jones, Baldwin's former Private Secretary and the head of the influential Pilgrim Trust, Arnold Toynbee, the historian, and Sir Thomas Beecham the conductor. Many of these men left their meetings with the German dictator with a renewed sense of the

---

[183]The Ambassador's tactlessness and arrogance made him an unpopular figure; he was sometimes referred to as "Ambassador Brickendrop." In November 1937 Goebbels told Lord Halifax that Hitler still sought an understanding with Britain. As late as 1941, Rudolf Hess, the Deputy Fuhrer, made a secret peace mission to Britain. He told his captors that Hitler still sought peace with Britain. (United States Government, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggresion, Vol. VIII, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1946, pp. 37-46). As late as January 1939 Hitler told the Reichstag that German and British interests did not conflict.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

importance of reaching a settlement.[184] For example, Rothermere contended that Nazi expansion in the East was a good thing because it served as "a counter-weight to Bolshevist...terrorism."[185] His Daily Mail referred to Hitler as "the man who has saved Europe from Communism."[186] After the Munich Agreement Beaverbrook wrote in the Daily Express, "We certainly credit Hitler with honesty and sincerity. We believe in his purpose stated over and over again, to seek an accommodation with us."[187] These were precisely the type of views the NSDAP hoped would prevail in Whitehall and Parliament.

Hitler never appears to have given very serious consideration to establishing close ties with the BUF. He was content to let the party fend for itself and made no attempt to meddle in British politics by means of it. With reason, he feared that if he became involved with the BUF and other right wing fringe groups, he would hurt his chances of

---

[184]For instance, Lord Lothian asserted, "There can be no peace or settlement in Europe until Germany is given a different position from that which is involved in the maintenance of the status quo and that it should be the first object of British diplomacy to secure it for her by positive diplomacy before she tries or is driven to take it by force." (Lothian as quoted in J.R.M. Butler, Lord Lothian, St. Martin's, New York, 1960. See pp. 333-53 for the transcripts of the interviews he had with Hitler). Londonderry wrote his cousin Churchill, "I should like to get out of your mind what appears to be a strong anti-German obsession because all these great countries are required in the political settlement of the future and Great Britain can only play a leading part if only we are not forced into ridiculous positions by people like Baldwin and Anthony Eden." (Martin Gilbert, comp. Winston Churchill, Vol. V, Companion Part 3, Documents, The Coming of War 1936-1939, Heinemann, London, 1976, p. 131).

[185]Lord Rothermere, Warnings and Predictions, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1939, p. 134; 169.

[186]Daily Mail, as quoted in World News and Views, June 1, 1935.

[187]Daily Express, October 31, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

negotiating with influential politicians and achieving the settlement in the west he wanted, which would allow him to pursue his major international goal of conquering European Russia.[188] "I do not believe that the world will become National Socialist," he stated in 1939.[189] Hitler recognized that his best chance of reaching an agreement with Britain was to work through normal diplomatic channels not fringe parties. Hitler was confident that he could make a settlement with Britain or defeat her without the assistance of the Blackshirts. Although Hitler knew both Diana Mitford, Mosley's wife, and Unity Mitford, his sister-in-law, well, he did not attempt to use these associations to strengthen ties with the BUF or any other British fascist organization.[190]

---

188 Henriette Hoffmann, the daughter of his photographer, recalls that he said that if he became too closely identified with the BUF, he "would lose his prospect of manoeuvering with other politicians, like Lloyd George." (David Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford, Weidenfeld & Nelson, London, 1976, p. 148). In most of the dozens of biographies of Hitler there is not a single reference to Mosley or the BUF. See, for example, Ian Kershaw, Hitler: 1889-1936, Allen Lane, London, 1999.

189 Hitler, as quoted in Great Britain Foreign Office, Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities Between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939, His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1939, pp. 61-62.

190 Diana Mosley has recalled a revealing anecdote:

> In early August [1939, a few weeks before the outbreak of the war], my sister Unity and I went to Bayreuth for the Festival. We lunched with Hitler [and]... he told us war was certain... Although, since the Polish guarantee, war had seemed very possible, this confirmation from Hitler gave me a feeling of deep despair. Europe wrecked, all those we loved killed--the prospect was too appalling to contemplate. ... I told him I thought my husband would continue to speak for peace as long as it was legal to do so. If he does, said Hitler, he may be shot, like Jaures in 1914.
> (Weekend Guardian, February 11-12, 1989).

Hitler termed Diana and Unity "perfect specimens of Aryan womanhood." (Hitler, as quoted in Colin Cross, The Fascists in Britain, St. Martin's, London, 1961, p. 162).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Richard Thurlow is on target when he notes, "The Nazis viewed Mosley in a relatively cool manner."[191] There does not appear to be any evidence that the NSDAP gave financial help to the BUF.[192] Thurlow has noted, "It appears certain that by far the most important contributors to BUF funds in the 1930s were Mosley himself and Mussolini."[193]

Hitler was convinced that countries which adopted Nazi doctrines would become stronger, and that this would only make it more difficult for Germany to re-establish itself as the premier power on the Continent. "I am firmly opposed," he said, "to any attempt to export National Socialism. If other countries are determined to preserve their democratic systems and thus rush to their ruin, so much the better for us." This hardly sounds like a man who intended to use the BUF as a tool. Hitler may have been referring to the British Union when he said several months before the war: "In Britain there are many people who do not in their hearts approve of the [anti-Nazi] attitude and who wish to have nothing to do with it. But they have either been silenced or are not able

---

[191]Richard Thurlow, "British Fascism and State Surveillance, 1934-45," Intelligence and National Security, Vol. 3, No. 1 (January 1988), p. 87.
[192]Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, p. 126.
[193]Thurlow, "British Fascism and State Surveillance, p. 85.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to make themselves heard." [194] Hitler always thought that Mosley had some talent, however, and he was particularly impressed with his seeming ability to mediate between the upper and lower classes.[195]

Hitler was a pragmatist who admired results more than promises and potential, and the BUF had, of course, few achievements to its name. He recognized that it had committed a serious error when it borrowed some of its ideology and paraphrenalia from his own party and the Italian Fascists and referred to itself as a "National

---

[194]Gordon W Prange, ed. Hitler's Words, American Council on Public Affairs, Washington, D C , 1944, p. 309

[195]During the war Hitler stated:

> The English have to settle certain social problems which are ripe to be settled. At present these problems can still be solved from above, in a reasonable manner. I tremble for them if they don't do it now. For if it's left to the people to take the initiative, the road is open to madness and destruction. Men like Mosley would have had no difficulty solving the problem, by finding a compromise between Conservatism and Socialism, by opening the road to the masses but without depriving the elite of their rights.

(Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Conversations, Farrar, Straus, and Young, New York, 1953, p. 208). Another sign that Hitler respected Mosley is that the Nazis considered releasing him from prison just as they liberated Mussolini in 1944, according to one German officer (Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford, p. 183).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Socialist" movement. [196] After the war, Albert Speer recalled: "Hitler would often theorize to the effect that it was a mistake to export ideas such as National Socialism. To do so would only lead to a strengthening of nationalism in other countries...and thus to a weakening of his own position. He was glad to see that the Nazi parties of other countries produced no leader of his own caliber." [197] Many Nazi officials took a similar view. [198]

Most of Hitler's advisors were apparently opposed to giving the BUF assistance. For instance, Goebbels evidently feared that giving the party help might fan anti-German sentiment and diminish the chances of a settlement. The propaganda minister was particularly critical of some brash statements attributed to Unity Mitford in the British tabloids. Her rhetoric, he complained, had the subtlety of "a

---

[196] According to Unity Mitford, who was often in the company of Hitler, he said "very emphatically that he thought it might have proved a fatal error in England to call them Fascists instead of something typically English, and suggested that if he had been starting a party in England he would have gone back to Cromwell and perhaps called his S.A. [security force] 'Ironsides.'" (Jonathan Guinness and Catherine Guinness, The House of Mitford, Hutchinson, London, 1984, p. 386). Henriette Hoffmann has recollected, that Hitler "did not approve of [Mosley]." (Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford, p. 170).

[197] Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 174.

[198] "We never intended and never can intend," Goebbels observed in 1937, " to turn National Socialism into an article for export. . . We should never be capable of believing that a political concept. which has arisen from the deepest depths of the national being in this country can be arbitrarily and unqualifiedly applied to another country." (Joseph Goebbels, The Truth About Spain, Muller, Berlin, 1937, p. 14).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sledgehammer."[199] According to Diana Mosley, Goebbels led the efforts in the German government to prevent the BUF from obtaining a radio wavelength from Berlin.[200] Nevertheless, Goebbels seems to have been against cutting ties with the BUF altogether, particularly after the outbreak of the war. "England cannot... help Finland," he noted in his diaries during the "phoney war." "London has too much trouble of its own. Mosley is making his presence felt very strongly at the moment. If he proceeds cleverly now, he may have a chance. He has written a few clever articles."[201] Goebbels does not appear to have taken, however, any concrete steps to help the BUF besides coaching Mosley in propaganda techniques during the latter's visit to Berlin in October 1936. His wife Magda, however, was a close friend of both Mitford sisters.

Rosenberg, the head of the NSDAP's Foreign Affairs Bureau, made a goodwill visit to London in early May 1933, but deliberately chose not to meet with Mosley or any other Blackshirt. Like Mussolini, he recognized that the BUF's adoption of German and

---

[199]Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford, p. 129
[200]Diana Mosley, Loved Ones, p. 175.
[201]Joseph Goebbels, Goebbels Diaries, 1939-1941, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1982, p 103

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Italian ideas and trappings were critical errors:

> I considered it a grave mistake for Sir Oswald Mosley to call his party "British Fascist." In a country as justifiably proud of her own tradition as England, it was a grave psychological error to use a nomenclature of foreign origin for a party which...was certainly not cut to the measure of British life (for example in its hierarchic-theatrical aspects). Such a movement thus deprived itself of all moral elbow room in case of a conflict with Italy. This had already become apparent during the Italo-Ethiopian war. In this event Mosley's party ..could scarcely go into opposition without being suspect of some sort of connection with Mussolini's Fascism. This in itself discredited the party from the very first and certainly limited its freedom of action. Any active attempt on Mosley's part to aid in bringing about a German-British rapprochement...would have been burdened by the same political mortgage. That's why I avoided any contact with Mosley and his crowd during two visits to London in 1931 and 1933, and why I never got to know him personally [202]

This is precisely what happened during the BUF's anti-war campaign from 1938 to 1940. Rosenberg never attempted to develop a personal relationship with Mosley and the reports he sent to Hitler on his sojourn in Britain contained no references to the British fascists.[203] Otto Bene, the leader of the Auslands-Organisation in Britain, disliked Mosley and thought Thomson would make a more effective leader. Heinz Krieger, the writer, held that the Blackshirts' non-racial brand of anti-Semitism was ill-conceived. He maintained that its argument that it attacked Jews for what they did and not who they were was in error since it was precisely because of their peculiar racial qualities that the Jews committed detestable acts. [204] Most officials in the Third Reich seem to

---

[202]Alfred Rosenberg, Memoirs of Alfred Rosenberg, Serge Lang and Ernst von Schenck eds., Ziff-Davis, Chicago, 1949, pp. 130-31. For more information on the visit see Das Archiv, Band 1 (Januar bis Mai 1933), pp. 400-402; 404.

[203]Zeman, Nazi Propaganda, pp. 152-53

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

have had no strong feelings towards the BUF one way or the other. For example, Ulrich von Hassell, the Ambassador to Italy, had no knowledge of its association with the NSDAP.[205]

The most notable exception to this attitude was the Nazis' decision to allow Mosley to establish several commercial radio stations in Germany. [206] Mosley and his wife, who worked secretly on the deal for two years, intended to use the funds from the sale advertising on these stations and others in Denmark, Belgium, Ireland, and Sark, a small island in the English Channel which lay outside the authority of the British government, to boost the BUF's low coffers. Diana Mosley, who led the effort, was one of the few people close to Mosley who spoke German.[207] Mosley recruited Peter Pendleton Eckersley, who had previously worked with the Marconi Company and served as the Chief Engineer for the B.B.C., to handle the technical aspects of the project. [208] The

---

[204]Heinz Krieger, England und die Judenfragein Geschichte und Gegenwart, M. Diesterweg, Frankfurt am Main, 1938, pp. 110-11

[205] Ulrich Von Hassell, Von Hassell Diaries 1938-1944. The Story of the Forces against Hitler Inside Germany, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1948, p. 248.

[206]Independent, October 2, 1996.

[207]This may have been because both Hitler and Goebbels' wife, Magda, were her friends. F H. Lawton, the parliamentary candidate for Hammersmith North and a barrister, assisted her with the legal aspects of the contract. (PRO, HO45/23741)

[208]For his services the BUF paid Eckersley 1,500 pounds per year. When the BUF selected Eckersley he was already serving as Director of Radio Variety Ltd. and of Wire Broadcasting Co. Ltd., two firms that developed radio stations and devices in Britain and on the Continent. (Ibid). For more information on Eckersley see his The Power Behind the Microphone, Cape, London, 1941

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Home Office has recently released Eckersley's file, although it was originally slated to be released in 2017. Although several items in his file have been deleted, it appears that Eckersley, who seemingly did not join the BUF, was sympathetic to the Nazi regime. [209] By the summer of 1939, several of the radio stations were ready to begin broadcasting, but the Second World War broke out before the facilities-- which were legal under British law--went into operation.[210] Diana Mosley has asserted that the Germans agreed to the "transaction" because they needed "foreign currency." [211] Her account has been corroborated by others. This is consistent with the Nazis attitude towards the BUF in general.

---

[209]PRO, HO45/23741. One of Eckersley's business associates, a man named Herd, told the Special Branch that Eckersley was "a great admirer of Hitler" who might divulge secrets to the Nazis. (Ibid)
[210]Comrade, Vol. III, No. 11 (March 1988), p. 1.
[211]Four decades after the war Diana Mosley recalled:

> Occassionally I saw Hitler. We did not discuss the radio project, it was the sort of thing that bored him and was left to his ministers. . It was the Minister of Posts, Ohnesorge, who, though initally unwilling to relinquish a wavelength, saw the point of it for Germany's foreign currency position and became my valuable ally. We got the concession in May 1938; it had taken me nearly two years. The terms were tough--Germany got more foreign currency out of it than France had got from [Leonard] Plugge [a Conservative MP who had recently purchased a wavelength from the French to broadcast advertising]. Of course, written into the contract was the purely commercial nature of the station. There was to be nothing controversial, no politics or propaganda, nothing but sport, or sweet music and beauty hints, and similar delights. It was aimed at the housewife, and would have covered eastern England.
> (Mosley, Loved Ones, pp. 172-74).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Nazis may have briefly considered forming closer ties with the Blackshirts. They established informal contacts with them even before they gained power and beginning in the early thirties regularly invited BUF delegations to attend the Party Days held annually in September at Nuremberg. Although several of his lieutenants attended these rallies, Mosley never did.[212] Throughout the thirties, Nazi agencies compiled a large volume of information on the BUF. Some of the most extensive reports were written by officials in the German Embassy in London, such as Prince Otto von Bismarck, the Charges d'Affair and the Iron Chancellor's grandson, who headed the embassy from 1935 to 1936, and Ribbentrop's successor as Ambassador, Herbert von Dirksen.[213] These reports, which exaggerated the level of anti-Semitism in Britain, do not appear, however, to have sparked much interest in the BUF among Nazi officials at home or abroad. For example, Dr. Fritz Hesse, the press advisor of the German embassy in London in the 1930s and Hitler's advisor on British affairs from 1939 to 1945, does

---

[212]Paul Cox, "Mad Dogs and Englishmen: 'The So-Called Fifth Column,'"unpublished essay, Summer 1999, p. 1. The essay may be consulted on the internet at www.merepseud.mcmail.com

[213]For example, Dirksen wrote in 1939: "An appreciation of the Jewish question, is... on the increase in Britain. This fact is already reflected by the suppression of all reports of Mosley's Fascist meetings, which are sometimes very well attended, as well as of the antisemitic clashes that occur almost daily in East London." (Dirksen, as quoted in Unsigned, "British Antisemitism was Hitler's Hope," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. XVI, No. 1 1962), p. 17. Also see, for instance, Bismarck's report in Germany, Auswartiges Amt, 5849H2/42798-982.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

not even mention the party in his memoirs.[214] The Nazis seem to have recognized early on that they stood to gain little by associating with a fringe party like the BUF.

A few Nazi officials held a favorable attitude toward the BUF. Julius Streicher, the publisher of Der Sturmer, the leading anti-Semitic mass-circulation newspaper, was one. A fanatical anti-Semite who held Party Card No. 2--Hitler held No. 7--he believed that the BUF's adoption of anti-Semitism proved that it deserved Nazi friendship. Streicher lived in the Nuremberg area and helped to organize the Party rallies held there since 1927. In September 1933 he greeted the BUF delegation to the Party rally, which included Unity Mitford, Thomson, and Joyce, as "brothers and sisters in the fight" against the Jews [215] A year later he praised Mosley as a "courageous man" who "has set himself the task of solving the Jewish problem." [216] In his view "The baptism which the Mosley movement has already received in bloody battles in public streets assures it a happy future."[217] After Olympia he praised the BUF for meeting "Jewish violence" with violence. [218] Streicher was a close friend of Unity Mitford, who

---

[214]Fritz Hesse, Hitler and the English, A. Wingate, London, 1954.
[215]Streicher, as quoted in Gisela Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939, Macmillan, London, 1979, p 103
[216]Der Sturmer, July 1934, as quoted in Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford, p. 121
[217]Streicher, as quoted in the right-wing journal, Truth, June 13, 1934.
[218]Streicher, as quoted in Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

became a BUF member in the early thirties, moved to Germany in 1933, and spent most of the decade there.[219] In the mid-thirties he established the Congress of Nazi Groups Abroad, and invited Mosley to serve as one of the British representatives at its inaugural meeting in Bavaria. The BUF leader chose, however, not to attend. [220] Nor did Mosley attend meetings of the Erfurt Centre, an anti-Semitic organization the Nazis founded which met annually outside Berlin. [221] Streicher praised the BUF in articles such as "Die Kampf in England,"and "Mosley's Struggle," which appeared in Der Sturmer as well as several other newspapers he controlled. [222] In 1937 a typical cartoon in Der Sturmer depicted an obese Jewish woman flattened by the BUF's trademark fasces symbol. Her sudden fall bowled over two male passersby, one obviously a Jew and the other a

---

[219]Tom Mitford became a member as well. He served as a major in the Second World War and was killed while serving in the Rifle Brigade in Burma in April 1945. E.D. Randall, who produced musical compositions for the party such as "Song of Union," and contributed occasional pieces to Action and Blackshirt, emigrated to Germany around 1938 and was not heard from again.

[220]Streicher, as quoted in Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939, p. 103.

[221] Mosley's lieutenants apparently did not go to these meetings either. Some British anti-Semites were in attendance, like Henry Hamilton Beamish, the founder of the Britons. Lt. Col. Fleischhauer, founder of World Service, an anti-Semitic and anti-communist journal published in Germany, was the architect of the Erfurt conferences. In 1936, 76 people from 24 countries attended these meetings, while persons from 25 nations attended the meeting the following year. (Bondy, Racketeers of Hatred, p. 142). However, in 1934 Mosley attended a conference in Zurich of a neo-Nazi organization known as the International Action of Nationalism. The latter may have been at least partly financed by the Nazis. (Michael Ledeen, Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, Michael Fertig, New York, 1972, p. 113).

[222]The former was published in November 1934 and the latter in No. 39, August 1937. Another piece was "Ein Englisches Blatt uber die Hochfinanze," Der Sturmer, May 1935.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

communist. The laconic caption read, "Heil Mosley."[223] Streicher warned that Jews posed a grave threat to both Britain and Germany and that both should take severe measures against them before they became too powerful. For example, he made the centuries-old allegation that Jews murdered Christian children as part of their religious services. His papers published articles by various Blackshirts, including Mosley and Unity Mitford.[224] British newspapers gave wide publicity to Unity Mitford's associations with Hitler, Streicher, and other Nazis. Unfortunately for the BUF, these accounts usually depicted the Blackshirts as possibly disloyal to Britain.[225]

Another Nazi leader who sought for a time closer ties with the BUF was Ribbentrop, who served successively as Disarmament Commissioner in London, Ambassador to Britain, and Foreign Minister from 1938 to 1945. According to Mosley, it was Ribbentrop's private research bureau, Dienststelle Ribbentrop, that organized his first

---

[223]Der Sturmer, May 1935.

[224]Mitford wrote in one of these pieces:

> For a year I have been living in Munich and each week have read the Sturmer. If only we had such papers in England. Ordinary people in England have no idea of the Jewish danger. English Jews are always presented as 'decent.' Perhaps in England Jews are cleverer with their propaganda than in other countries. In England too we shall be victorious over the world enemy, in spite of his cunning. We look forward to the day on which we shall declare with full power and might 'England for English!'

(Mitford, as quoted in Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford, pp. 119-20).

[225]See, for example, the Daily Mirror, September 11, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

meeting with Hitler in 1935.[226] The Foreign Minister was in contact with many influential figures on the British social and political scene, including Mosley.[227] According to Diana Mosley, the Ambassador invited her and her husband to dine at his London residence in 1936. On that occasion he reportedly asked the two to share with him sensitive information on political events in Britain. They declined his offer and he does not seem to have made any serious effort subsequently to form an association with them or the BUF.[228] For example, the lengthy reports he sent to Hitler on the British political scene in the late thirties contained no references to the party.

In the early 1930s, the Nazi press had a somewhat cool attitude towards the BUF. However, that changed during 1934-1935, apparently owing to the more aggressive stance the Blackshirts took towards the Jews. "For the first time," the Volkischer Beobachter observed, " Mosley clearly state[d]...his attitude on the Jewish question."[229] "We are now glad to be able to state," stated Der Sturmer, "that this movement does not

---

[226] Mosley My Life, p. 364.

[227] A Berlin society columnist observed in 1935: "[An] English group which Ribbentrop cultivates is that of Sir Oswald Mosley A train of satellites sparkles in his [Ribbentrop's] wake. Foremost, and much in evidence, is...Unity Freeman-Mitford." (Bella Fromm, Blood and Banquets: A Berlin Social Diary, 1930-1938, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1942, pp. 201-202).

[228] Based on the materials I have consulted, Diana Mosley's recollection seems plausible. For example, John Weitz has noted, "When von Ribbentrop made his first real efforts in Britain, the BUF tended to separate itself from Nazism." (John Weitz, Hitler's Diplomat: The Life and Times of Joachim von Ribbentrop, Ticknor & Fields, New York, 1992, p. 87).

[229] Jewish Chronicle, August 31, 1934.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

stand in the service of Jewry. On the contrary, it is furiously combated by Jewry, and thereby proves that it is anti-Semitic." [230] In 1934 W.E.D. Allen's B.U.F.: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism was published in Germany with a special introduction by Mosley. In his survey of European fascism, Europa will Leben, published in 1936 Werner Haas claimed that the BUF's popularity was on the rise and predicted that it would contest many more parliamentary seats in the future.[231] In the same period, the Nazis published a reader for use in the German schools entitled British Fascism and Its Leader, Sir Oswald Mosley, a straightforward account of the rise and progress of the movement.[232] The BUF press ignored the book, which was consistent with its policy to avoid appearing too close to the Third Reich. Several lectures were delivered on the BUF and Mosley at the People's Educational Institute in Berlin in 1937. Among those in attendance were members of the German Workers' Front.[233] A.K. Chesterton's hagiographical biography of Mosley was published in German in Leipzig in the same year.[234]

---

[230] Der Sturmer as quoted in New Leader, April 27, 1934.

[231] Werner Haas, Europa will Leben. Die nationalen Erneueungsbewegungen in Wort und Bild, Batschari, Berlin, 1936, p. 106

[232] Manchester Guardian Weekly, October 30, 1936.

[233] Action, May 29, 1937 "I am sincerely happy," Chesterton noted in a special preface, " at being able to present to the German people this book on the great Englishman whom I am proud to call my Fuhrer " He also called for "common action" to break the "power of the Jews." (Chesterton, as quoted in Tom Driberg, Mosley, No!, W H. Allen, London, 1948, p. 14).

[234] Chesterton's British Fascism was also issued for German readers.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Throughout the 1930s the BUF sold pro-German literature. It had a few dozen bookshops in Greater London. Its flagship store was on Great Smith Street in London. Many district offices had a small bookstore on the bottom floor. Besides extreme right-wing literature of all types, the fascists sold books and pamphlets then popular in Germany, including Goering's Germany Reborn, and Goebbels' My Part in Germany's Fight, and recommended many books that treated the Third Reich in a favorable light, including Erich Gritzbach's Herman Goering, The Man and His Work: The Only Authorised Biography, C.E.O. Knight's In Defence of Germany, and John Wolf's Nazi Germany. Action and Blackshirt, to a lesser degree, advertised literature on the Third Reich and anti-Semitism in English and German.[235] The BUF also helped organize tours to German training schools and labour camps.[236]

Several German organizations offering literature on Nazi Germany appeared regularly in Action and Blackshirt, including the Fichtebund of Hamburg, the BPA of Cologne, the

---

[235]These works included Hitler's Liberty, Art, Nationhood, "News From Germany," a periodical which may have been produced by Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, and James Murphy's Adolf Hitler: The Drama of His Career. (Action, March 12, 1936, and Ibid., June 17, 1939). BUF newspapers advertised The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and World Service, an anti-Semitic and anti-communist journal published in Germany and distributed throughout the globe. (ibid., January 28, 1939 and Blackshirt, May 31, 1935)

[236] Action, June 17, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

World Service of Erfurt, and the Anglo-German Friendship League.[237] The B.P.A. stated that its purpose was to "foster correspondence between English and German people" and to arrange "exchange visits." [238] Blackshirt had a correspondent in Berlin, although it never identified this individual; he or she may have been a freelancer.[239] It is possible that the NSDAP used one or more of these organizations to gather intelligence in Britain.

Many Blackshirts, including Mosley, thought that Fascist Italy-- which had made more efforts than Germany to put corporate economic principles into practice-- had more to teach them about fascism than Nazi Germany. Many of the fascists' economic ideas and trappings, such as the black shirt and fasces symbol were borrowed from the Italians. George Mosse has noted: "In the West...the fascist movements and the intellectuals who were involved, looked to Italy rather than central Europe for inspiration. It is, therefore, dangerous to extend the ideological foundations of the German fascist experience to that of other countries."[240] Mosse's observation is

---

[237] Action, June 18, 1936 and Ibid., March 27, 1937 Several publications promoting understanding between the two countries were also often published in Action. For example, one titled News from Germany offered "News that the 'British' Press avoid or distort, including details of broadcasts in English." It could be obtained by writing H.R. Hoffmann, Riedenerweg 1, Starnberg, Bavaria. (Action, May 13, 1939).

[238] Ibid., October 10, 1936.

[239] Jewish Chronicle, March 13, 1936; Action, March 12, 1936. One Blackshirt who perused this material was Henry J.H. Bartlett, an ex-Conservative from Bridport in Dorset. He wrote his friend probably in 1935 "I have just recieved [sic] some pamphlets from Germany and I very often get some from Italy." (Undated letter, Robert Saunders Papers, 119/A1/50 c).

[240] Mosse, as quoted in Ledeen, Universal Fascism p. 165.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

especially true for the BUF. The Blackshirts adopted a friendlier attitude towards Nazi Germany, however, in the mid-thirties. It is interesting to speculate about what the BUF's history might have been if it had continued to follow the Italian Fascist model. Mosley and Hitler's personal relationship was not a warm one. As Kim Newman and Eugene Byrne have noted, "There is little evidence that Hitler and Mosley hit it off."[241] According to Mosley's wife, Diana, Mosley did not even communicate with Hitler after 1936.[242] Neither man had the opportunity (or apparently the interest) to get to know the other well. Therefore, most of what they knew about each other came from second-hand sources. Neither spoke the other's language. Hitler considered Mosley unimaginative and uncreative, while Mosley seems to have been jealous of the German dictator's success.[243] In 1936, Mosley told the German publication Lokelanzeiger that the BUF had 500,000 members, a gross exaggeration.[244] In his autobiography published in the 1960s, he has many more favorable things to say about Mussolini than the Nazi leader.[245] One

---

[241]Kim Newman and Eugene Byrne, "British Fascist Movements up to 1940," "Alternate History Series,"1999. Website: www.angelfire.com. For more on the coolness that existed between Hitler and Mosley see Mosley, Loved Ones, p. 205.

[242]Mosley, Loved Ones, p. 215

[243]For example, after the BUF's fairly strong showing in the LCC elections in March 1937 and the three by-elections it contested in early 1940, Mosley boasted that BUF candidates had done better than their Nazi counterparts at a comparable stage in their development. (Action, March 13, 1937).

[244]Manchester Guardian, November 23, 1936.

[245]Mosley, My Life, pp. 358-72. Mosley's son Max recently recalled: "My father met Hitler twice and didn't like him." (Sunday Times, November 16, 1997). Also see Mosley, Loved Ones, p 217

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reason Mosley did not hold a very favorable opinion of Hitler was that the latter was willing to go to war to defend his policies. With reason, Mosley feared that another war with Germany would make it difficult if not impossible for Britain to recapture her prosperity and preserve the Empire.[246] After the Second World War, Diana Mosley stated, Mosley "foresaw that, win or lose, we should emerge from the war diminished...It was the 'patriotism business' that made him take a stand" against the conflict.[247]

By the mid-to-late thirties Mosley and his lieutenants became convinced that the government intended to ban their party. They recognized that a close association with a potentially hostile power was precisely the type of intelligence government agents were seeking. Therefore, they took many precautions including avoiding contacts with organizations which had links with the Continental fascists like the Anglo-German Fellowship; establishing an intelligence section known as the "Z" unit that required potential members to pass a rigorous background check; laundering payments from the Italian Fascists in foreign bank accounts; and making frequent expressions of their loyalty

---

[246]Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 11, 1999.
[247]Mosley, Loved Ones, p. 175

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to the Crown and Empire, such as during the Abdication Crisis in 1936.[248] Louis W. Bondy has stated: "Mosley's... direct communications with the German leaders...[were] scanty. Only once did he deviate from his customary caution; that was when he replied to a congratulatory message from Streicher."[249] No member of the BUF was allowed to visit Germany without permission from National Headquarters. [250] The BUF organized at least one branch in Germany, but refused to accept Germans as members as it did in other foreign countries, including Italy.[251]

In the late 1930s, public opinion turned decisively against the Third Reich. Leading politicians from all sides of the political spectrum took a tougher attitude towards the regime. The Nazis' rapid rearmament, expansionist efforts in Central Europe, bellicose rhetoric, and brutal treatment of Jews, communists, and other opponents, fueled this

---

[248]The Anglo-German Fellowship was founded in October 1935. It boasted more than 700 members by 1938 and more than 1,000 by 1939. Sixty were MPs and three directors of the Bank of England. Lord Mount Temple, the father of Lord Mountbatten, served as its chairman. Ernest W D. Tennant, a banker and friend of Ribbentrop's, was its secretary. Other members included Beverley Nichols, the writer. (Robert Benewick, Political Violence and Public Order, Allen Lane, London, pp. 289-90). For Nichols' association with the organization see his autobiography, All I Could Never Be, Jonathan Cape, London, 1949, p. 314 Also consult Tennant's True Account, Max Parrish, London, 1957, pp. 192-204

[249]Louis W. Bondy, Racketeers of Hatred, p. 141.

[250] Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999

[251]Blackshirt, February 9-February 15, 1934

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attitude.[252] A host of books and pamphlets were published which suggested that the Nazis sought to gain hegemony over the Continent and destroy the British Empire, including James Turner's Hitler and the Empire (1937) and Hermann Rauschning's Germany's Revolution of Destruction (1938). In 1938 BIPO asked Britons the following question: "Hitler says he has 'No more territorial ambitions in Europe.' Do you believe him?" Ninety-three per cent of the respondents answered no, while only 7 per cent said yes.[253] The next year, Mass-Observation found that most Britons "were against" Hitler.[254] Several agents sent to Britain by the NSDAP contacted the BUF and filed reports on its progress and activities. These included Otto Bene, Chairman of the NSDAP in London, Fitz Randolf, political director of the NSDAP in England and a confidante of Rosenberg, Guenther Tann, the London representative of the

---

[252]John Cornford, a young Communist writer, reflected a wide segment of popular opinion when he wrote in 1936: "The excesses of Hitler Fascism shocked and horrified the middle classes. It was not so much the attack on working-class organisations...that affected them. It was the murderous persecution of the Jews, the Liberals, the leading scientists and writers, the wholesale destruction of democratic liberties, the barbarous and nonsensical race theories." (John Cornford, "Communism in the Universities," in Pat Sloan, ed. John Cornford: A Memoir, Jonathan Cape, London, 1936, p. 167).

[253]Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. IV, No. 1 (March 1940), p. 77.

[254]Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, Britain by Mass-Observation, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1939, pp. 55, 108. In June 1939 BIPO asked this question, "Which is the foreign country you like least?" Nearly 55 percent of the respondents chose Germany while Japan was second with 11 per cent. (Gallup, ed. The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Vol. I, p. 20). The next month it asked, "If Germany and Poland go to war over Danzig, should we fulfil our pledge to fight on Poland's side?" Slightly more than three-quarters of those polled answered in the affirmative. (Ibid., p. 27).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Trans-Oceanic News Service, and Frederick Willis, a propagandist who worked for German diplomatic service.[255] They described the BUF as lacking popularity and solid organization. For instance, one agent, Colin Ross, reported that the BUF possessed "a fine policy and a splendid leader" but "absolutely no organizaton."[256] Their negative reports help to explain why the NSDAP lent very little assistance of any kind to the BUF.

Apparently in the hope of improving relations with Britain, Hitler did not permit the the *Abwehr* to spy there until the autumn of 1937. Nevertheless, throughout the thirties, both the *Abwehr* and the *Sicherheitdienst* (SD), the NSDAP domestic intelligence service, attempted to recruit individual Blackshirts and other Britons sympathetic to the Third Reich. [257] Their efforts bore very little fruit. Not a single Blackshirt appeared on the White List, the Gestapo's roster of potential collaborators.[258] In 1937, Nordischer

---

[255]World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, The Brown Network, pp. 266-67

[256] Ross, as quoted in Christopher Andrew, Secret Service, Heinemann, London, 1985, p. 374. For a short sketch of Ross see Louis Lochner, ed. The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-43, Doubleday, Garden City, 1948, pp. 312-13.

[257]Ladislas Farago, The Game of the Foxes, McKay, New York, 1972, pp. 130-31. For example, the Nazis attempted to recruit Chesterton to work in their overseas propaganda department. He refused.

[258]Norman Longmate, If Britain Had Fallen, Hutchinson, London, 1972, pp. 223-30. It is possible a few Blackshirts, probably lower-ranking ones, appeared on one of the additional lists the Nazis compiled. According to Farago, an authority on espionage in the inter-war period: "Aside from a single Mosley aide, a naturalized British subject of Balkan origin [Dr. Pfister]...the copious record of pro-Nazism in pre-war Britain exposed no espionage agent or saboteur." (Farago, The Game of the Foxes, pp. 130-31). The BUF may have associated with a few Nazi agents besides Pfister. See Pauline Henri, "Verge of Treason," Searchlight, Vol. 16, (September-October 1989) and John Parker, King of Fools, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1988, pp. 160-61. Neither of these writers provide documentation for their conclusions.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Gesellschaft, a Nazi group that encouraged the formation of an international fascist organization, referred to Dr. Arnold Leese's Imperial Fascist League, not the BUF, as the English branch of international nazism.[259] At least one Nazi spy, Dr. Otto Pfister, joined the BUF and served briefly as the head of the Research Department, but when Mosley discovered his true identity he fired him.[260] In 1940, the year the BUF was banned, MI5 combed the country for Blackshirts who belonged to a Nazi Fifth Column but found none.[261] The World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism captured the essence of BUF-NSDAP relations when it said that the fascists "lean[ed] to National Socialism more by nature than as a result of influence exerted by the Nazis," although the Blackshirts never came close to convincing the public of this. [262]

By 1938 another armed conflict between Britain and Germany appeared likely. The BUF launched their anti-war campaign early that year which lasted until the

---

[259]Richard Thurlow, Fascism in Britain, p. 78. The NSDAP did not, however, evidently provide the IFL with any financial assistance. Several individual Nazis apparently made small donations, however, to the tiny anti-Semitic party. See the IFL paper, The Fascist, No. 23 (April 1931), p. 3.

[260] Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999. Also consult A.C. Miles, Mosley in Motley, Ex-Servicemen's National Movement , London, 1937, p. 6. The government charged several Blackshirts and BUF followers with attempting to obtain military secrets in the late thirties and early forties. These included Mssrs. Duvivier and Crowl, who according to recently de-classified Home Office files that I have seen, sought to obtain secret "naval information." (Ibid.) PRO, HO45/23673.

[261]Nigel West, MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909-1945, Stein and Day, New York, 1981, p. 122.

[262]World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, The Brown Network, p. 131.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

organization was dissolved under Defence Regulation 18B (1A)as a risk to national security. The fascists emphasized several points in this campaign, which was perhaps the most popular one it conducted: the Nazis did not threaten British interests and should be recognized for serving as a "bulwark against communism"; if Germany could not find "living space" in the East she would try to find it in the West; the biggest beneficiary of another Anglo-German confict would be the Soviet Union; the only people who favored war were "financiers" and "warmongers."[263] The BUF argued that the Nazis had broken the bankers' control of the German economy and for that reason proved that they were the legitimate champions of the German people."The interests of Britain and the New Germany," the BUF stated optimistically, "need never conflict. Britain seeks her future on the seas and in the development of her far-flung Empire: the New Germany seeks hers in the consolidation of the German nation and the extension of her economic interests to Eastern Europe...Both have everything to lose and nothing to gain by war." [264] Peace, it warned, was possible only when the Jews' alleged economic

---

[263] Action, April 22, 1939. Mosley explored these themes in his pamphlet, The British Peace , Greater Britain, London 1939 Thousands of copies of this pamphlet were distributed throughout the country during the war.
[264] Ibid., September 3, 1938

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

power was crushed. [265] "Who...seeks this war against Germany?" asked Action rhetorically. "Certainly not the great bulk of the British people.. Is it not [the Jews], above all, who seek this war of revenge?" "We have an Empire one quarter of the globe," Mosley told a large audience at Hammersmith a week after the Munich Pact, "containing all the wealth and power that mankind can desire. Let us guard it and develop it, not neglect our heritage for foreign quarrels."[266] In March 1939, the month Germany broke up Czechoslovakia in violation of the Munich Agreement causing deep dismay among the British people and Britain issued its Guarantee to Poland, Mosley suggested that peace could still be assured if Britain pursued the following objectives "1)Disinterest in the East of Europe 2)Disarmament in the West of Europe 3)Return of Mandated

---

[265]Unsigned, "The Criminals of the Kremlin," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1937) Geoffrey Dorman warned, "Through their control of the press, the cinema, and the radio in Britain, France, [and the] U S A they [the Jews] are trying to harness public opinion to fight a blood war which will result in millions of British people being killed and maimed to make the world safe again for finance. Is it being pro-German to stand out against such a war?" The BUF's argument that the Jews sought to spark a conflict with Germany may partly explain why the organization gained popularity in 1939 A sizeable portion of the electorate seems to have shared this view For example, a Mass-Observation poll in November 1939 found that 17% of the respondents gave a cynical reason for Britain's war goals. Many of those surveyed suggested that it was "for the Jews." (Tony Kushner, The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society During the Second World War, St. Martin's, Manchester, 1989, p. 19)

[266]Action, October 7, 1938. "I don't care," Mosley said during the Czech Crisis, "if three and a half million Germans from Czechoslovakia go back to Germany. I don't care if 10 million Germans go back to Germany Britain will be strong enough, brave enough, to hold her own." (Mosley, as quoted in Ann Page, "The Suburban Housewife," in Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, p.77). "If Germany wanted war," Mosley stated sanguinely in July 1939, "Britain could defeat her without any foreign assistance." (New York Times, July 17, 1939).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Colonies we do not need 4)Development of that quarter of the whole globe which belongs to us--the glorious heritage of British Empire."[267] These proposals found little support, however, outside the party's strongholds, such as the East End and Lancashire. On May 7 a large BUF anti-war march progressed from Westminster to Hackney in the East End.

The BUF continued to call for a settlement with Germany after the outbreak of the war at the end of August. Even after the war began, many Britons from all sections of the political spectrum were unenthusiastic about the conflict and felt that it was wiser to steer clear of the problems of the Continent. This attitude helped the fascists in the autumn of 1939 to enjoy their highest level of support since early 1934, according to MI5 reports. The BUF organized large anti-war rallies in the London area in the first weeks of the struggle. It insisted that if a nationwide referendum were held on the war most people would vote against it.[268] "Let the People Vote" and "The Voice of the People Must Be Heard!" became two favorite BUF slogans.[269] In 1939 the Government

---

[267] Action, March 22, 1939

[268] "It is only the Money Power," Action claimed, "that is not prepared to negotiate." (Ibid., May 6, 1939) Also see ibid., September 2, 1939

[269] One handbill the BUF distributed at this time stated: " The government, supported by all the old gang parties, have pledged your lives to die for Poland, Greece, Rumania and all the little Balkan States. The only time Britons should be asked to fight is in defence of Britain and the Empire." (As quoted in John D Brewer, Mosley's Men, Gower, Aldershot, 1984, cover page).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

banned several BUF posters and confiscated some of its publications, including at least one edition of Action, which contained pro-German articles. In January 1939 the London Passenger Transport Board refused to allow BUF posters warning "REFUGEES TO TAKE YOUR BOYS' JOBS" on its hoardings.[270] In May 1940, Action was banned for export.[271] As it had done since its inception, the BUF continued to insist that it was totally independent of the Nazis and that it would defend the country in the event of an invasion from anywhere, including Germany. Virtually every edition of Action from mid-1939 into 1940 emphasized this point. [272] "We, the British people," vowed Mosley, "will never copy any other nation...We believe that with our own people we can make this the greatest nation in the world...I want to be able to say to Hitler: 'I don't care what you do with the East of Europe...We are going to beat you in the race for higher wages.'"[273] Almost immediately after the outbreak of the war, he enjoined his followers: "My message is plain and clear. Our country is involved in war. Therefore I ask you to do

---

[270]The poster read, "GOVERNMENT PROTECTS POLES BUT BETRAYS BRITONS." (See Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 351, September 27, 1939, pp 1352-53; Action, July 8, 1939).

[271]Minister of Information Sir John Reith, who as B B C chief had been quite unpopular with Blackshirts and their sympathizers for years, defended the informal ban. He claimed that the BUF created "misapprehension about British policy" in the minds of neutral nations. (Manchester Guardian Weekly, May 17, 1940).

[272]For instance, the July 15, 1939 issue carried the following headline in banner letters, "If Any Country in the World Attacks Britain--We Fight For Britain." According to Mosley, " We will always defend [Britain] from any attack and we will provide the means for that defence." (Mosley, Tomorrow We Live, p. 71)

[273]Oswald Mosley, The Facts, Euphorion, London 1957, p. 86.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

nothing to injure our country, or to help any other Power. Our members should do what the law requires of them, and if they are members of any of the Forces or Services of the Crown, they should obey their orders, and in every particular, obey the rules of their Service."[274] Only a handful of BUF members disobeyed his instructions.[275] In May 1940 Mosley wrote in Action:

> According to the Press, stories concerning the invasion of Britain are being circulated. In such an event every member of British Union would be at the disposal of the nation. Every one of us would resist the foreign invader with all that is in us. However rotten the existing government, and however much we detested its policies, we would throw ourselves into the effort of a united nation until the foreigner was driven from our soil.[276]

In April 1940 the BUF attacked the extremists in the Nordic League which believed in an Aryan master race as Nazi traitors. The next month Mosley vowed in Action that Blackshirts "would resist the foreign invader with all that is in us." These were not the type of statements a party which intended to serve as a Nazi fifth-column would make. The BUF was never able to shake its image as a Nazi tool, however, partly because its opponents dwelt on the issue of its disloyalty and also because many people had

---

[274]Mosley, The Facts, p. 86. Also see Action, September 16, 1939.

[275]These included Clement Bruning, John Amery, and Roy Purdy. During the war the latter served in the Navy. After his ship was sunk and he was placed in a German POW camp, he agreed to deliver English-language radio broadcasts for the Nazis in exchange for his release from the camp. (Linehan, East London for Mosley, pp. 184-85). Amery, a POW in Germany, served in the British Freikorps, a tiny unit of the Waffen-SS. After the war he was found guilty of treason and executed. Virtually all types of individuals may be found in most large organizations and the BUF was no exception.

[276]Action, May 9, 1940.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

suspected for a long time that it was receiving subsidies from the Third Reich.[277] For example, Irene Holmberg, a draughtswoman who lived in the East End of London during the war, recalls, "I heard a rumor that some areas of the East End weren't bombed as much because Mosley owned a flat in one of the areas and he sometimes stood at the top of the building waving a light at the bombers."[278] Actually, the Luftwaffe hit the East End severely. Beginning in September 1940 Nazi war planes attacked London without remit for nearly two months killing many BUF members and supporters among other civilians.

Based on my research, I believe that the BUF's goal of defending Britain was sincere. Mosley's cool relationship with Hitler, Ribbentrop, and other Nazi leaders, the *Abwehr's* almost total failure to recruit Blackshirts, the loyal service which scores of Blackshirts gave to the armed forces, the almost total absence of acts of sabotage by BUF members, and statements made by the fascists during and after the war, such as Mosley's Message to British Union Members and Supporters (1939), all support this

---

[277]For instance, in 1939, H. Beaumont, a Labour MP, asked the Home Secretary whether he was "aware of the pro-Nazi, anti-British propaganda carried on by such organisations as British Union, and if he will have enquiries made into their activities." (Beaumont as quoted in Action, August 12, 1939).
[278]Interview with Irene Holmberg, April 11, 1999.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

interpretation.[279] In Mosley's opinion, the greatest tragedy would have been for a foreign power to conquer Britain. Michael Wharton is probably correct when he notes, "Mosley was naturally anti-war, though not necessarily pro-German."[280] Norman Longmate is on target when he observes, "Misguided Fascists, admirers of Hitler... there undoubtedly were in Britain, but Quislings there were not."[281] So is Roger Eatwell who has asserted, "There were no serious...fears that Mosley was anything other than patriotic."[282] In his study of fascists in East London and South-West Essex, Thomas Linehan has observed, "The great majority of...members remained essentially patriotic 'Britain First' fascists."[283]

During the winter of 1939-1940, the BUF's popularity rapidly declined, although it continued to attract enthusiastic crowds in London, particularly the East End, which

---

[279]Leonard Wise, for instance, has written, "Expediently the BUF should have stopped its Peace Campaign on September 3, 1939. But its members were convinced that the long-term effects of a long war would be utterly disastrous for their country's position as the Leading World Power. They were right!" (Undated letter from Leonard Wise to Richard Thurlow, British Union Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield).

[280]Michael Wharton, "A Few Lost Causes," in John Raymond, ed. The Baldwin Age, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1960, pp. 90-91. Richard Thurlow has noted, "His [Mosley's] pro-Hitler foreign policy in the 1930s can be seen more as a result of Mosley's determination that the slaughter of the First World War should not be repeated, than of ideological considerations." (Thurlow, "Fascism and Nazism: No Siamese Twins," p. 8).

[281]Longmate, If Britain Had Fallen, p. 112. Frank R. Hawke, an ex-Blackshirt claims, "The movement would have expelled, and did, any traitors to England." (Interview with Frank R. Hawke, June 29, 1999)

[282] Eatwell, Fascism: A History, p. 190.

[283]Linehan, East London for Mosley, p. 185.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

caused some government officials anxiety. With a German invasion possible at any time, very few people expressed much sympathy for a negotiated settlement, as advocated by the BUF. Many people suggested that constraints should be placed on the fascists' activities.[284] Many Blackshirts were called up for military service which depleted the party's ranks. In addition, some members, torn between loyalty to the party and their country, drifted away from the former, such as Anne Brock-Griggs. [285] In early 1940, the BUF chose to enter its first--and last--parliamentary elections. These three by-elections in early to mid-1940 became referendums on its anti-war campaign. In the Silvertown contest in the East End of London-- Keir Hardie's old seat--the BUF aspirant, Tommy Moran, a R.A.F. veteran and ex-boxer who was one of the most popular figures in the party, garnered a mere one percent of the poll and lost his deposit. The next month in Leeds North-East, Sydney Allen, an ex-serviceman and farmer, captured only 3 percent of the vote, while in late May in Middleton, North Manchester, Frederick Haslam, another veteran, garnered a paltry 1.3 per cent of the poll and forfeited his deposit. The League of Ex-Servicemen, one of the few allies that the BUF made,

---

[284]For example, Viscount Elibank told the Lords: "British-born Fascists...[are] doing infinite harm by...newspaper writings" and other activities. He suggested that "in every doubtful case, whatever the hardship might be there should be immediate internment." (Times, May 24, 1940)
[285]Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 13, 1999

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

backed Allen.[286] BUF candidates often received rough receptions at these gatherings, a sign of the dismay the fascists' anti-war stance caused many people. For example, during the Silvertown contest which was won by Labour, Mosley was nearly lynched by an enraged mob.[287] Many people, particularly on the left, urged the government to place a ban on the movement. Harry Hills, a farm worker from Egham, seems to have captured the sentiments of many ordinary people when he recalled, "Mosley wanted to get in good with the Germans so that he could get more power in this country. He may have wanted to tie this country up with Germany."[288]

---

[286]Linehan, East London for Mosley, pp. 33-34. Another ally was Hugh Ross Williamson, a maverick Labour parliamentary candidate who in 1939 called for a union of Labour and the BUF as a means of achieving peace.

[287]The Times described an incident during the Middleton campaign in this way:

> Police officers had to use truncheons, and a man was led through the streets handcuffed to two policemen during...an election meeting at Middleton yesterday [which] was abandoned after an ineffective attempt by . Mosley to make himself heard. When he approached the microphone which was mounted on a lorry, there was shouting. The crowd surged forward. Police officers and special constables dragged away several men. There were a number of violent fights between individual spectators...Mosley jumped from the lorry and was lost to sight for a moment or two in the midst of the hecklers and flailing fists. When he returned to the lorry more disturbances broke out. Police men were attacked. Several had their helmets knocked off and a number had to use their truncheons...Later the crowd assembled several thousand strong outside the common rooms of the British Union. There were more fights among...the crowd. During the disturbances, stones were thrown. (Times, May 20, 1940.)

[288]Interview with Harry Hills, April 11, 1999.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Home Secretary, who had considerable experience with security issues as a civil servant in India, was not in favor, however, of proscribing the BUF. He recognized that Defence Regulation 18B gave him the authority to detain persons who were threats to national security and who had ties to hostile powers, but did not permit him to arrest citizens who were merely sympathetic to a belligerent state. Some government officials suspected that the BUF had illegal ties to the Third Reich, but it had no conclusive evidence. Mosley's contract with the Nazis for building commercial radio stations and the visits he and other members of the BUF had made to Germany were within the law. This helps explain why none of the nearly 800 persons who were detained under Defence Regulation 18B were charged with a specific crime.[289] Based on my analysis of the government records released so far, it appears that the government never did obtain proof of an illegal connection.

Since 1933 MI5 and Special Branch had monitored the BUF and sent regular reports on its activities to the Home Office. MI5 agents infiltrated the movement at an early stage and gave the government a wealth of information on its goals and activities, as

---

[289]The Blackshirts were not the first group to be interned without being charged with a specific crime in the inter-war era. In the early thirties, several Communists were imprisoned for refusing to sign a pledge that they would not be associated with any disorder for twelve months, including Tom Mann and Kath Duncan. (Imprecorr, January 5, 1933).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mosley knew. [290] Between 1932 and 1936 MI5 submitted nine reports on the British Union's activities to the Home Office. Rising tensions in the East End, persistent rumors that the party had obtained funding from Rome, and the Abdication Crisis which the BUF attempted to use to strengthen its ties with the right, caused the intelligence services to pay closer scrutiny to the organization. Around the same time, the Special Branch discovered a secret bank account which the fascists used to launder approximately 225,000 pounds they obtained from the Italian Fascists throughout the thirties.

The Home Secretary told the Cabinet in the spring of 1940, "There is no evidence that they [the Blackshirts] would be likely to assist the enemy. Their public propaganda strikes a patriotic note. In my view it would be a mistake to strike at this organization at this stage by interning the leaders."[291] However, Churchill, who succeeded Chamberlain

---

[290] Among the "Blackshirts" who were actually MI5 spies were W.E.D. Allen, P.G. Taylor, and E. Mandeville Roe. Taylor became Chief Industrial Organiser. Richard Thurlow notes: "Mosley was very conscious of the activities of the Security Service. In the late 1930s he kept the membership of Commandant Mary Allen in the BUF secret in the hope that her unofficial women's police force could provide advance intelligence if the authorities were about to move against the organization. Many important areas of BUF finances and connections were hidden from the membership...[as] an attempt to confuse the Security Service in their surveillance of the movement." (Thurlow, Fascism in Britain, p. 121). Also see Thurlow's "British Fascism and State Surveillance, 1934-45," Intelligence and National Security, Vol. 3, No. 1 (January 1988).

[291] Anderson, as quoted in Ann Page, "The Suburban Housewife," in Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, p. 18. Anderson resisted efforts to begin interning fascists at the Cabinet meetings on May 15 and 18.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in May after the Nazi invasion of Norway, believed that the Germans had established an extensive spy network in the country and that some Blackshirts belonged to it.[292] In fact, only a few minor Blackshirts belonged to organizations the government deemed subversive, such as the Link, an anti-Semitic group headed by Admiral Sir Barry Domville, the Director of Naval Intelligence from 1927 to 1930 and ex-President of the Royal Naval College. [293] Prime Minister Churchill warned that more stringent measures were needed to counter potential spies and fifth columnists and suggested that with an invasion imminent Blackshirts should be detained if there was any doubt about their loyalty. The reports on the BUF compiled by the Home Office and MI5 almost certainly added to his anxiety. During the war several MI5 agents reported that nearly one-third of the Blackshirts "would be willing, if ordered, to go to any lengths" to help insure an Axis victory.[294] The authorities never provided evidence to support this claim, however,

---

[292]In his history of the war, Churchill estimated that there were 20,000 organised German Nazis in the country in early 1939, a grossly exaggerated figure.

[293]Thurlow, Fascism in Britain, p. 199.

[294]Thurlow, The Secret State, p. 209. An internal Home Office report entitled, "Memorandum on Action" noted: "Action continually reiterates that, as our only sphere of interest is the Empire, Germany should be allowed a free hand in Europe. The Treaty of Versailles is perpetually arraigned. We have no right to meddle with the internal regime of any other country. The Government's conduct of the war is continually criticized thus inculcating defeatism." Anderson reported: " I have examined issues of the "Daily Worker" and "Action"...since the 9th of May and I am satisfied that both papers are engaged in anti-war propaganda of a most mischievious kind and that they come within the terms of [Defence] Regulation [18B]." (PRO, HO144/21540).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and it justly rankles ex-fascists to this day.[295] A.W. Brian Simpson is correct when he notes, "A British Fifth Column...existed. So far as the BU was concerned the number of their members involved was tiny."[296]

Apparently acting on Home Secretary Sir John Anderson's advice, who feared protests if arrests were made under the current Defence Regulation 18B, Churchill called for an expansion of the statute. The cabinet approved his suggestion and on May 22, 1940 a new regulation went into effect, Defence Regulation 18B (1A) giving the Home Secretary the power to detain anyone deemed a threat to national security without requiring him to file formal charges. Two factors helped convince the cabinet to take this decision: the Joint Intelligence Committee's assertion that pro-Nazi "Quislings" in Norway had played a pivotal role in the collapse of that country and intelligence reports which suggested that the Blackshirts were undermining the public's morale. A few hours later, the police arrested Mosley in his London flat and began to round up his leading followers.[297]

---

[295]Interview with Jeff Wallder, March 15, 1999; Interview with Prof. Martin Durham, March 5, 1999.
[296]Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, p. 171.
[297]The internment order stated: "There is danger of the utilisation of the organisation known as 'British Union' for purposes prejudicial to public safety, the defence of the Realm, the maintenance of public order, the efficient prosecution of the war in which His Majesty is engaged or the maintenance of supplies or services essential to the life of the community."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

By the end of June approximately 800 Blackshirts had been interned. Virtually all of the leaders of the organization were detained, while many of the rank-and-file remained free. For example, nearly every one of the Parliamentary Candidates were arrested. There were a few notable exceptions, however. F.H. (later Sir Frederick) Lawton, the Parliamentary Candidate for Hammersmith North, was one of several prominent members of the BUF to avoid internment. [298] Some members had begun to serve in the armed forces when they were detained, such as John Gough (better known as "Bowie"), Tom Brock-Griggs, and Frank Jermy, the District Leader of Kidderminster in the late thirties. [299] The detentions continued throughout the remainder of the year. The detainees were held at several internment centers on the Isle of Man, such as Port Erin, Pevril, Ramsay, Camp L and Camp X, and several sites on the mainland of Britain, such as Huyton in Lancashire and at the York racecourse. Men

---

[298] Lawton had been one of the members involved in the negotiations with the Nazis to construct radio stations. After the war he became a Chief Justice, a post he held until the mid-1990s. (Interview with Jeff Wallder, April 13, 1999). Others who retained their freedom included C.J Garnett and P Syme, former National Inspectors, Fuller, and Chesterton. The latter re-joined the Army as an officer and fought the Nazis in East Africa.

[299] Comrade, Vol. V, No. 24 (June-July 1990), p. 10; Ibid., Vol. VI, No. 28 (February-March 1991), p. 6. See Jermy's obituary in ibid., Vol. VIII, No. 37 (January 1993).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and women were confined in separate facilities. [300] With a few exceptions, no evidence has been found that these people belonged to a fifth column.[301] After an exhaustive examination of the evidence, A.W. Brian Simpson notes, "The number of 18B detainees who were straightforwardly pro-Nazi, and favoured a German victory, or who engaged in criminal conduct, was very small indeed."[302] None of the BUF leaders appear to have engaged in such activity save Joyce who of course had left the organization in 1937. Simpson also states, "The notion that the BUF represented a Fifth Column during the war is, in the view of most experts, a myth."[303] The military record of BUF members was, on

---

[300] Comrade, Vol. I, No. 1 (October-November 1986), p. 6. Camps Erin and Ramsay, for instance, were for females. (PR O, HO 215/2). Females interned included Lady Mosley and Fay Taylour, the noted race-car driver Dozens of Communists were interned as well, although they were usually held at different camps than the fascists. Huyton was an exception. (PRO, HO215/12).

[301] A few BUF members with very little influence in the party did, however, attempt to aid the Nazis As Tony Kushner has noted, these were "exceptional cases." (Kushner, The Persistence of Prejudice, p 29). These included Oliver C. Gilbert, an ordinary member who MI5 claimed had received money from a branch of the Auslands Organisation (AO) of the Nazi Party, G E. Thomas, the parliamentary candidate for Wood Green, who had also had contacts with the AO, William Saxon Steer, Rex William Freeman, and Freeman's mother, members who placed advertisements for the New British Broadcasting Station, a pseudo-British station which began broadcasting pro-Nazi propaganda in February 1940, Philip Spranklin, who joined Goebbels' Foreign Press Office in Munich by 1939, and Claude Duvivier and Alexander Crowle, two ordinary members who tracked the movements of shipping in the Plymouth area. (Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, pp. 56; 73; 178; 275; West, MI5, p. 129). For more information on Duvivier and Crowle see file DV4/57 of the F Division records of MI5, PRO

[302] Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, p. 253.

[303] Ibid., p. 285. Also see West, MI5, p. 128.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the whole, honorable.[304] Hundreds served loyally in the armed forces and scores lost their lives. Many fascists served with distinction, including George Lambert, who was awarded the Military Medal. The first two British casualties in the war were Kenneth Day, from London, and George Brocking, from Essex, two Blackshirt pilots who were shot down at Brunsbuttel at the mouth of the Kiel Canal while on a mission against German battleships.[305] A company composed mostly of young fascists from the East End helped to harass German troops at Dunkirk long enough to allow British and French soldiers to escape. [306] Ned Warburton, a fascist from Lancashire, helped organize German Army units who had surrendered for possible action against advancing Soviet forces. A poster displayed in every room at Ascot Detention Centre reflects the feelings most fascists apparently had towards their country and helps explain why many felt that their

---

[304]Action, October 12, 1939. Some members, however, did not. Among those who promised to serve in the armed forces and failed to report were S.H.E. Martin, G.E. Parry, and C.C. Hoar.
[305]Comrade, Vol. I, No. 3 (September 1986), p.1. Times, September 3, 1989. For example, at least three members of the Brighton branch were killed in the conflict. (Union, January 31, 1955)
[306]Leonard Wise, "The East London Shopkeeper," in Hamm, ed., Mosley's Blackshirts, 1986, p. 6 Others, such as E. Hamilton Piercy, C.P.P. Dick, and D. Merriman rescued the fleeing troops in boats. (Ibid.).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

internment was unjust:

> Now as always, British Union... says, 'Britain First.' We will fight for Britain because the life of Britain and the Empire is attacked. We fought for a negotiated peace with the British People safe, our Armed Forces undefeated and the Empire intact.
>
> We still work and hope for such a peace but because Britain is endangered we will do our utmost in her defence. We want our country subservient neither to International Finance, Capitalism, nor to Nazi Germany or any alien power or influence. We care only for Britain. That is why come what may, we shall continue to give ourselves to help Britain and our Countrymen.[307]

On July 10, 1940 the BUF was itself banned and its publications outlawed for the duration of the conflict. By December nearly 7,000 suspected German sympathisers, including more than 800 Blackshirts, were being held under Defence Regulation 18B. Anderson told the Advisory Committee set up to oversee 18B cases that BUF members had been interned because "they were preparing secret plans which would enable them, in the event of an invasion...either to range themselves on the side of the enemy, or, by a coup, to seize power and make terms with them."[308] He did not offer conclusive evidence to support this assertion. The truth appears to be that the vast majority of BUF members were loyal to the country and only a handful of lower-ranking members intended to collaborate with the Nazis and undermine national morale. Lord Birkett, the

---

[307] Hamm, Mosley's Blackshirts, p. 14. Frank Hawke has recently complained, "To be held in prison without charge or trial is a traversity [sic] of modern law; it is dictorial [sic] power at its worse [sic] " (Interview with Frank R. Hawke, December 31, 1999).

[308] Anderson as quoted in Thurlow, The Secret State, p. 231. Thurlow, Fascism in Britain, pp. 196-97

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

chairman of the Advisory Committee, was more accurate in his assessment. The fascists had been interned, he stated, "because their views and activities had become prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the realm. They were preaching anti-war propaganda and anti-Semitism at a time when Great Britain was nearing a crisis, and this could have had a detrimental effect on the morale of the nation."[309]

During the first few months of the war the BUF helped to organize a series of meetings with several small extreme right-wing organizations which were sympathetic to the Third Reich, such as the Link, the Nordic League and Right Club, two groups founded by Captain A. Maule Ramsay, an eccentric Conservative MP from Peebles and South Midlothian.[310] Most of the groups insisted that the war was a catastrophe for Europe, which should be ended as soon as possible.[311]

---

[309]Birkett as quoted in Richard Griffiths, Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, Constable, London, 1980, p. 371

[310]A galaxy of British fascists and anti-Semitic leaders were in attendance at these meetings, including Mosley, Francis-Hawkins, Lord Tavistock, the President of the British Peace Party, a tiny anti-Semitic party he founded with Beckett in 1939, George Lane Fox Rivers, an anthropologist and eugenicist, and Viscount Lymington.

[311]Several of them wrote pieces sympathetic to the Nazis, such as Domville's, "It Shall Be Peace," which appeared in Blackshirt and Prof. A.P. Laurie's "The Democratic Facade,"which was published in the British Union Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 1 (January-March 1939). Also see Laurie's article, "Race Suicide" in the British Union Quarterly. Laurie's book, The Case Against Germany, which was published in Germany after British firms refused to issue it, and his pamphlet, Great Britain's Policy After Munich were sympathetic to the Third Reich. During the war, Laurie delivered a speech before at least one BUF study group in which he praised the Nazis. See Richard Griffiths, Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, The Right Club and British Anti-Semitism 1939-1940, Constable, London, 1998; West, MI5, p. 134.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Since the government has still not released all of the records pertaining to the BUF, or the other far right groups, it is not precisely clear what the purpose of the meetings were.

The bulk of the documentation suggests that Mosley and his followers would have been loyal to the Crown in the event of a German invasion. The presumptive case against the fascists was not very strong. Even the Home Secretary admitted in May 1940 that the security services had found no concrete evidence "that the organisation... was engaged in disloyal activities."[312] Norman Birkett told Mosley at his last meeting with the Advisory Commission in July 1940 that none of the documents seized by the government or interviews with party members demonstrated that he was a traitor. As two scholars have noted, "The fifth column hardly existed...The sorts of offenses which brought prosecution...[were] hardly the sort of offences likely to seriously impair the war effort."[313] Mosley and nearly all of his lieutenants were extreme nationalists who wished to re-fashion the economy, rebuild the Empire, and restore

---

[312]Kushner, The Persistence of Prejudice, pp. 26-27.
[313]Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War, Basil Blackwell, London, 1986, p. 96.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Britain's international prestige.[314] The Third Reich naturally did not wish to achieve any of these things and the BUF understood this. It is unlikely that the Nazis would have chosen Mosley to help them govern the country if their invasion had been successful. It is true, however, that a minority of Blackshirts would have been willing to collaborate with the Nazis. Yet there is no evidence that the Nazis had an interest in cooperating with the BUF in the event of a German victory. Several plans they prepared for the occupation of Britain called for enlisting the help of mainstream politicians but not Mosley. [315] Even if Mosley had chosen to collaborate, his long record as a political maverick and cool personal attitude towards Hitler and the Third Reich suggests that he would not have been a willing tool. As A.W. Brian Simpson notes, "The claim that the party was the British branch of the NSDAP was simply ridiculous; it is hardly surprising that no reference was made to it in Mosley's interrogation, or in any later source."[316]

The government's decision to disband the BUF and detain most of its leaders was a popular one. By the spring of 1940, an increasing number of people were demanding that

---

[314]The case of Clement Bruning, the BUF speaker, illustrates this. Bruning, who was born in England but whose father was German, was in Germany when the war broke out and like all British nationals was arrested. Under Nazi law Bruning was an Auslander, or German living overseas, and was required to fight for the Third Reich. He died in a Nazi concentration camp in 1942, possibly because he refused to serve in the German armed forces.

[315]Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims, Norton, New York, 1973, pp. 157-64.

[316]Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, p. 136.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the fascists be detained. In June the Home Office stated that "the fifth column hysteria is reaching dangerous proportions." [317] Many fascists were harassed and ostracized by their neighbors. Reports of fascists and fascist sympathizers attempting to hamper the war effort appeared regularly in the press.[318] Some criticized the government for not taking action sooner. For example, the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, one of the unions most bitterly opposed to the fascists, termed Mosley "the personification in this country of... all those foul and beastly deeds and ideas against which thousands of our members are fighting in the armed forces and on the high seas."[319] Some Blackshirts insisted that they were being held unjustly.

---

[317]Home Office as quoted in Aldgate and Richards, Britain Can Take It, p. 96.

[318]See, for example, Times, June 1, 1940. Lucy Cotton, a BUF member from Devon, told the government that before her arrest many of her neighbors "disliked her" because they thought she "was anti-British."(PRO, HO 45/23673). Some fascists had difficulty coping with the animosity they felt from some of their neighbors. For example, Joan Reeve, parliamentary candidate for South-West Norfolk, hanged herself during the war.

[319]Executive Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, as quoted in Unsigned, "Mosley--Nation Wide Protest," World News and Views, Vol. 23, No. 49 (December 4, 1943).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

However, the Advisory Commission rejected virtually all of the appeals.[320] Harry Hills, an East End veteran, probably spoke for most people when he recalls, "The Blackshirts deserved to be interned. We were all Englishmen fighting for England."[321] In spite of opposition, particularly from the left, many Blackshirts were freed before the end of the war. Mosley was released from Holloway Prison in 1943 because he was suffering from phlebitis, a condition aggravated by his incarceration. Several doctors warned that he

---

[320]The following passage from an interview between Lucy Cotton and the Advisory Commission helps illustrate why many fascist ex-detainees still hold hard feelings toward the government. ("Q." refers to the Advisory Commission and "A." signifies Mrs. Cotton.) This file was originally closed until 2019.

> Q. You were detained because you were a member of British Union.
> A. But I have never been accused of doing anything wrong. . .What I want to know is what you have against me. That is the only thing they had against me at all and that was perfectly legal.
> Q. Of course, you had been a member of British Union. . .and you were a fairly keen member.
> A. Oh yes, I went to all my son's [her son, Rafe, served as District Leader in Devon] meetings.
> Q. I suppose that is the point, the Government take a very serious view of British Union and British Union ideas.
> A. But what did I do wrong?. . .
> Q. I do not know if your views have changed at all, but I suppose at the time you were detained you were in favour of a negotiated peace with Germany
> A. Yes.
> Q. Are you still in favour?. . .
> A. I have no views on politics now .
> Q. For the time being?
> A. Yes, until the war is over.
> Q. Very well, if that is all we will think [your case] over and report it to the Secretary of State. (PRO, HO 45/23673.)

[321]Interview with Harry Hills, April 11, 1999.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

might die in jail and Churchill, who had been monitoring his condition and did not wish to make a martyr of him, ordered his release. Raven Thomson obtained his freedom the next year. Twenty-two detainees remained in detention until Parliament revoked Defence Regulation 18B after Germany surrendered in 1945, including Francis-Hawkins.

In 1948, Mosley and some of his followers attempted to revive British fascism. The new organization they founded took a different name--the Union Movement (UM)--but it sought to achieve many of the same goals as its predecessor, such as giving the state greater control over the economy, limiting immigration, strengthening ties with the country's overseas possessions, building more housing, combatting communism at home and abroad, and improving conditions for ex-servicemen. [322] It was organized along similar paramilitary lines with a youth and drum corps. In addition, Mosley Book Clubs were formed throughout the country.[323] Many ex-Blackshirts joined the organization, such as Thomson (who became editor of Union, its chief organ, and the

---

[322]For instance, Union stated:

> Eleven years ago this week Adolf Hitler fell in Berlin fighting Communist enemies of Europe. The peril which he warned the West now face the men who helped to bring him down. . .Britain and Germany cannot overcome Communism separately. They must go beyond even the friendship Adolf Hitler wished to see between them. The two related countries of the same civilization and stock, must unite to lead all Europe to the European Socialism that will rise above Communism. (Unsigned, "Adolf Hitler: In Memorium," Union, May 5, 1956).

[323]Comrade, Vol. V, No. 30 (June-August 1990), p. 1.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

smaller East London Blackshirt and a leader of the Book Clubs), "Mick" Clarke, George Sutton, Jorian Jenks, Mary S. Allen, Arthur Beavan, Robert Saunders, C.H. Bentinck Budd, Tommy Moran, Jeffrey Hamm, Mosley's Welsh ex-bodyguard who became General Secretary, and E.D. Hart, former head of the BUF Research Department.[324]

However, the UM was not a carbon copy of the BUF. For instance, it called for the formation of a European Union to resist the spread of both American influence and communist expansion. Under this proposal, which Mosley developed in The Alternative (1947), Britain and her European allies would furnish Africans and others in the developing world with capital and technical expertise in exchange for raw materials and access to markets. Several of these themes were included in the European Declaration which Mosley and fascists from across Europe signed at a conference in Venice in 1962. Furthermore, the Union Movement made the restriction of specifically non-white immigration-- which had risen sharply from the colonies after the war-- one of its major planks. Unless this was curbed, the UM warned, non-whites would gradually undermine the country's traditional culture and deprive natives of employment opportunities. It was an argument which bore striking parallels to the BUF's anti-Jewish

---

[324]"Fascists in Britain," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 5 (July 1948), p. 32. But many did not, including Francis-Hawkins, who died in 1950, Gordon-Canning, Bill Risdon, and Henry Gibbs.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

campaign. Like the BUF, UM organized marches and demonstrations in immigrant communities in London in the 1950s.

The mainstream media was as antipathetic to the UM as it had been to the BUF. And the UM had as little success at the ballot box as its predecessor. In 1955 Thomson contested a seat on the LCC from Bethnal Green and fared worse than he had nearly 20 years earlier. Hamm also lost his bid in the 1950s for a seat on the LCC from Shoreditch and garnered less than two percent of the poll in the Middlesbrough East by-election in 1962. In 1953 Mosley ran as a candidate in the LCC election in Stepney, the old BBL and BUF stronghold, and captured 10 percent of the poll. Six years later he competed for the parliamentary seat for North Kensington in London with immigration restriction as his major plank and forfeited his deposit after obtaining only eight per cent of the vote. After UM candidates received even fewer votes in the 1966 General Election, Mosley, (who spent much of his time in Ireland and France where he owned real estate), decided to dissolve the UM and retire from active politics.[325] In 1966 he established the Mosley Directorate to carry on his political ideals. The leaders of this small organization included Hamm, Sid and Fred Bailey, two

---

[325]UM continued, however, to fight local elections until the early 1970s. For example UM candidates garnered more than 10,000 votes in the 1970 Greater London Council elections.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ex-Greyshirts from Bethnal Green who became UM members, and Michael Quill, a young ex-UM member who led the group in the mid-1990s.[326] These men later founded the Friends of Oswald Mosley (F.O.M.), a tiny organization which still meets infrequently today. In December 1980 Mosley died in a Paris suburb at age 84.

---

[326]Hamm died in 1992.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion several major themes of the study will be reviewed and an attempt to explain why the BUF achieved success in only a few areas and among several occupational groups and did not become a mass movement. One reason the fascists remained on the fringes of the political scene was that the severe financial crisis they expected to help propel them into power never occurred. This rendered their economic proposals, which struck Britons as based principally on Italian and Nazi models, as irrelevant. Many Britons were dissatisfied with the government's economic policies in the thirties, but very few saw the BUF as an effective vehicle for implementing needed reforms. Unfortunately for the fascists, the economic recovery was strongest in the South and East, the regions where they enjoyed the greatest strength. For centuries Britons had seemingly preferred gradual not radical solutions to their problems. The 1930s were no exception. Most people were convinced that the solution to the world economic crisis lay in the capitalist system and not in an untested Continental one. The Blackshirts' inability to win a single election prevented them from putting any of their economic

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

proposals into effect. A few occupational groups found their corporate economic ideas appealing such as cab drivers, hotel and restaurant workers, and some of the unemployed, but they constituted only a small segment of the population and did not have much political influence. It was no accident that the BUF enjoyed its greatest success in East London where these groups were heavily concentrated.

Another reason the BUF failed was that it borrowed from the Italian Fascists and the Nazis for its ideology, symbols, paraphrenalia, and paramilitary organization. Shortly after it was formed it became associated in the public's mind with the excesses of these regimes and acquired a reputation as "un-British," which it was never able to shed. Every nation takes pride in its culture and institutions and Britain was no exception. As clever as Mosley was in many ways, he never fully appreciated this. He and his advisors never made enough of an effort to demonstrate the party's nationalistic character, especially during the late thirties and Second World War, when nationalistic fervor ran high. The BUF was not an "un-British party"; many of its ideas owed more to Old English models such as those offered by the Social Imperialists than to either Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany. Although the BUF failed to tap important elements of that tradition, such as economic liberalism and freedom, it did draw on other elements of that heritage with its racial intolerance and calls for a protectionist trade policy, immigration

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

restriction, and slum clearance.[1]

The BUF's reliance on native tradition suggests that the notion that it was a British version of Italian Fascism and Nazism is less accurate than some scholars have suggested. It was neither a carbon copy of Continental fascism, as opponents alleged, nor a purely natural outgrowth of British nationalism, as some of its defenders contended. Its commitment to strengthen ties with the Empire, reduce immigration, cut imports, and rejuvenate traditional industries such as coal mining, agriculture, shipbuilding, and textiles, borrowed from home-grown not foreign sources. It was somewhere in between these two points of view. D.S. Lewis is correct when he notes, that although the BUF's policies and style were certainly influenced by fascist movements abroad, it developed in response to the "problems of British capitalist society."[2] The BUF attempted to capitalize on several issues which were critical in British politics throughout the twentieth century, such as anti-communism, nativism, and anti-Semitism. Both before and after the BUF was formed, a host of movements on the right made these major planks of their program, which support the

---

[1] An interesting discussion of racial intolerance in modern British history is Colin Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939, Holmes & Meier, New York, 1979.

[2] D.S. Lewis, Illusions of Grandeur, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987, p. 83.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

notion that the fascists pursued British goals not foreign ones and that they were part of the British political tradition. Before the Blackshirts they included the Social Imperialists and the BBL, while after the Second World War they included the Powellites, the National Front, and the British National Party.

The BUF offered many nationalistic slogans and promises like "Britain First," "Britain for the British," "The Greater Britain," and "Mind Britain's Business," but owing to its failure to gain political power it was unable to offer concrete evidence of its patriotism. Further, it paid too little attention to the needs of several key groups which had not shared in the economic recovery and which were receptive to some of its social and economic arguments, such as small businessmen and non-unionized workers. In addition, too often it facilely blamed the nation's problems on "financiers" and "Jews," instead of offering practical solutions.

There were several notable exceptions to this, such as the work of the Fascist Union of British Workers, which helped the unemployed to obtain jobs and poor relief, the British Traders' Bureau, which gave advice to small shopkeepers in the London area in the late thirties, and the party's efforts to help drought-stricken farmers obtain water in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the late thirties.[3] Almost from its inception, most Britons assumed that the BUF was a copy of the Italian Fascists and Nazis, and Mosley and his advisors did not seem to understand that perception is often as important as reality in politics. Many people on both the left and right agreed with Lord Boothby, who observed: "Mosley had to depend on the political support of the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany. He was therefore obliged to compromise on the one issue which is fundamental to fascism, the source of all its power, the sole cause of its success--the issue of patriotism."[4] From the beginning the BUF made many promises it could not fulfill and took contradictory positions on a host of issues. It boasted that it would do well in General Elections and then it failed to contest any. It vowed that it would capture many parliamentary seats and then it fought only three of them. The absence of a proportional system of representation--such as the one in the Weimar Republic -- meant that the BUF needed to win national and local contests outright in order to obtain representation. But it never enjoyed nearly the strength to achieve this except in several districts in the East End of London and Lancashire. Its boast that it was a "a movement of the people" rang hollow in view of the paltry number of trade unionists it attracted and its largely unsuccessful

---

[3]Peter Heyward, "Traders in Union," Action, August 27, 1938.
[4]Robert Boothby, I Fight to Live, Gollancz, London, 1947, pp. 91-92.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

efforts to recruit businessmen at social functions across the country. Its appeals to shut factories down in colonies that competed with domestic manufacturers--such as India--made its claim to be a champion of the Empire less than convincing. Nor did the BUF enhance its credibility with its claim to judge Jews as individuals not as a race, while some of its leading officials such as Joyce, Chesterton, and Beckett branded them as traitors and morally inferior, and alleged that they sought economic and cultural hegemony without offering any evidence.

Another factor that prevented the BUF from having much of an impact was Mosley's leadership skills. Although he possessed a fine intellect and was an outstanding orator, he lacked organizational abilities. For instance, he appointed several individuals to key positions who lacked loyalty to him or were ill-suited for their posts. Joyce, Beckett, and Wegg-Prosser, all of whom left the organization by 1938, fell into the former category, while Geoffrey Dorman, one-time editor of Action, belonged to the latter. Consequently, the party was never able to utilize its human and material resources in the most efficient way. Mosley's arrogant, stubborn personality also alienated potential allies and supporters. For instance, in the early thirties Lady Houston reportedly proposed giving the party a gift of 200,000 pounds, but when Mosley made light of unflattering remarks some members had made about her, she rescinded the offer.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Thanks to Mosley's personality and, more important, the party's extreme right-wing ideology, the BUF made few allies. "My father," recalled his son Max recently, "always thought the British people would realize that there was only one British leader...himself."[5] His cousin, James Lee Milne, justly said of Mosley, "He did not know the meaning of humility. He brooked no argument, would accept no advice. He was overbearing and overconfident. He had in him the stuff of which zealots are made."[6] In spite of his faults, Mosley was perhaps the most talented and easily the most widely-known figure in the BUF. The fascists would have probably enjoyed even less success had he not served as their leader.

The fascists failed to recruit a single well-known politician to their cause and only a few nationally-known intellectuals supported them, such as Henry Williamson, the nature writer and novelist. Thus, its reputation as an extreme, "un-British" movement on the fringe of the political landscape was reinforced. The Blackshirts' decision to present their positions on the corporate state, autarkic empire, international affairs, and many other issues in detail before they had won a major election gave their

---

[5] Sunday Times, November 16, 1997.
[6] Milne, as quoted in Robert Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1975, p. 279. Also see Baroness Ravensdale, In Many Rhythms, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1953, p. 141

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

adversaries the chance to refute their views before they had been tested even on a small scale. This was an error which the Italian Fascists and Nazis did not make. Mussolini once sagely stated, "Our programme is simple: we wish to govern Italy. It is not programmes that are wanting for the salvation of Italy but men and will-power." The BUF took simplistic positions on many issues. Those things it liked, such as the Empire, were inherently good while those they disliked (Jews, Communists, and blacks) were debased. Some Blackshirts disagreed with this approach, such as W.E.D. Allen and John Scanlon, whose columns on labor and economic issues in Action and Blackshirt, like "The World of Labour," were virtually free of anti-Semitism. But they were always in the minority, and generally the public ignored the views of these dissenters. Another BUF error was to take contradictory positions on a wide range of issues. For instance, it claimed to champion peace and freedom, but defended Italian intervention in Ethiopia and efforts to quell independence movements throughout the Empire and in India in particular. It took positions on a wide range of issues instead of focussing on several topics of significance to a broad segment of the electorate, such as unemployment and rearmament.

The government handled the BUF in a shrewd, patient fashion which prevented a groundswell of sympathy for the fascists from those who might have believed that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

liberties were being infringed. It was not until the party discredited itself with street violence and anti-Semitism that the authorities took legal measures to control it. When the government finally acted it did so in a strong manner. The Public Order Act of 1936 not only prevented the fascists from wearing their uniforms but gave police and local authorities wider control over when and where meetings were held and how they were to be conducted. It led to the cancellation of many fascist marches and gatherings in areas where the party had begun to pick up some momentum, such as the East End of London and Lancashire. Another brake on BUF growth was the informal blackout which the major print media, the B.B.C., and even pirate radio stations such as Radio Luxembourg and Radio Normandie, placed on it in the mid-thirties. Since the party lacked the capital to publish journals which might have helped to reduce the effects of the blackout, the public usually learned about it through the major media, which often focussed on the organization's most unappealing features. Some of its largest meetings garnered virtually no publicity, such as the one at Hammersmith during the Czech crisis.

Perhaps the most significant obstacle the BUF could not overcome was that Britons embraced those liberal principles which it condemned, such as free market economics, cultural pluralism, and party politics. This left the BUF little political space in which to grow. The fascists failed to demonstrate the intellectual kinship that existed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

between themselves and earlier nativist movements, such as the Social Imperialists and the British Brothers League. Fascism grows best in societies where traditional economic and social institutions have been weakened. Fascist movements in Italy, Germany, and Rumania in the 1920 and 1930s all benefited from economic chaos and the public's loss of faith in democratic principles. But this never occurred in Britain. The economy remained relatively stable and the parties on the right and center of the political spectrum remained strong. Fascism is a radical doctrine and in Britain people were clearly not seeking extreme solutions for the country's ills. The BUF's decision to organize itself along paramilitary lines was an example of this radicalism. This arrangement was better suited for Continental conditions. The sight of men dressed in jack-boots and military uniforms marching in the streets of London shocked many Britons. The absence of a powerful communist party as an enemy also retarded its development. Unlike its counterparts in Italy and Germany, the CPGB never posed a legitimate threat to the established order in the inter-war years. Therefore, the Blackshirts' pledge to save the nation from "the spectre of communism" and "red anarchy" was not taken seriously.

It is impossible to know if the BUF might have enjoyed a larger following if the economy had remained consistently weak, if it was perceived to have adopted less of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

German and Italian fascists' ideology and trappings, if it presented a more intellectually consistent domestic and international program, or if the Second World War had not broken out. It is evident, however, that the proposals it did offer and the way it comported itself were perceived by most as counter to British tradition, which goes a long way to explaining the movement's failure.

The BUF's history offers several valuable lessons for the student of modern British politics. It highlights the obstacles which anti-democratic, racially intolerant movements have in achieving electoral success in a country as dedicated to parliamentary democracy and libertarian principles as Britain. The National Front discovered this in the 1970s and the British National Party did the same in the 1980s and 1990s. The BUF's history also illustrates the difficulties parties have which lack the support of powerful allies, such as the mass media and established political parties. Finally, it serves to remind us that parties which appear to cultivate ties with potentially hostile powers run grave risks, particularly during wartime.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. INTERVIEWS

Aspden, Laurence, Curator, Special Collections Department, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England, personal interviews, April 8 and 9, 1999.

Durham, Martin, professor, Politics Department, University of Wolverhampton, written interview, March 5, 1999.

Farzani, Edward, electrical worker and East End resident since the 1930s, personal interview, April 11, 1999.

Hawke, Frank R., former BUF District Leader of Norwood (South London), written interviews, June 29, 1999 and December 31, 1999, January 25, 2000, April 11, 2000.

Hills, Harry, retail clerk and resident of East End since the 1940s, personal interview, April 11, 1999.

Holmberg, Irene, draughtswoman and East End resident in the 1930s and 1940s, personal interview, April 11, 1999.

Husbands, Christopher T., Reader in Sociology, London School of Economics and Political Science, written interview, April 1, 1999.

Lecomber, A., British Nationalist Party member and Romford resident, written interview, February 16, 2000.

Levitt, David, student in the 1930s and resident of Bedfordshire, personal interview, April 11, 1999.

Lunn, Kenneth, Lecturer, Department of Social and Cultural History, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, England, written interview, March 5, 1999.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nelson, Dorothea, East End resident and nurse since the 1930s, personal interview, April 11, 1999.

Phillips, William, East End resident since the 1930s, personal interview, April 11, 1999.

Saunders, Ruth, sister of Robert Saunders, BUF District Leader, Dorchester, written interview, August 2, 1999.

Skidelsky, Robert, Professor of Political Economy, Department of Economics, University of Warwick, Coventry, England, written interview, March 2, 1999.

Thompson, Willie, Professor of History and Director of Centre for Contemporary History, Caledonian University, Glasgow, Scotland, written interview, February 23, 2000.

Thurlow, Richard, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England, written interviews, March 1, 1999 and January 7, 2000.

Wallder, Jeff, former UM member, written interviews March 15, April 20, May 15, and July 10, 1999, February 8-9, 2000, April 3, 2000; telephone interviews April 11-12 1999; personal interview, April 13, 1999.

Warburton, John, former BUF and UM member and current editor of Comrade: Newsletter of Friends of O.M., written interviews, April 7 and July 6, 1999.

Webb, Ronald F., BUF and UM member. UM Borough Council candidate in the Watford area in the 1960s, written interviews, August 24, 1999, January 18 and April 29, 2000.

II. UNPUBLISHED PRIMARY MATERIALS

British Union Collection. Documents relating to the BUF and Union Movement, from 1932 to 1996, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Great Britain. Public Record Office. Home Office files relating to BUF and to Blackshirts detained under Defence Regulation 18B, 1933 to 1941, Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, London, England.

Robert Saunders Papers. Administrative files of the Dorset West District of the BUF and Union Movement, 1933-1952 and miscellaneous letters and papers, Department of Special Collections, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England.

Rosenberger Collection. Pamphlets, leaflets, and books relating to anti-Semitism and the history of the Jews in Britain and Europe, University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, Chicago, Illinois.

III. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Action for King and People, London, 1936-1940.

Das Archiv, Berlin, 1934-1938.

Blackshirt, London, 1933-1939.

British Union Quarterly, London, 1937-1940.

Communist Review, London, 1934.

Comrade: Newsletter of Friends of Oswald Mosley, London, 1986-1999.

Daily Herald, London, 1932-1936.

Daily Mail, London, 1932-1936.

Daily Worker, London, 1932-1936.

Discussion: A Journal for Political Controversy, London, 1936-1938.

East London Advertiser, London, 1935-1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

East London Blackshirt, London, 1953-1956.

The English Review, London, 1932-1940.

The Fascist, London, 1932-1937.

Fascist Europe: An Anglo-Italian Symposium, Milan, 1939.

Fascist Week, London, 1933-1934.

Fascist Quarterly, London, 1934-1936.

G.K.'s Weekly and the Weekly Review, London, 1937-1938.

Illustrirte Zeitung, Leipzig, 1932-1940.

Jewish Chronicle, London, 1932-1939.

Jewish World , London, 1932-1934.

Labour Magazine, London, 1932-1933.

Labour Monthly, London, 1932-1936.

Manchester Guardian, Manchester, 1932-1939.

Manchester Guardian Weekly, Manchester, 1933-1940.

N.S.-Monatshefte: Zentrale Politische und Kulturelle Zeitschrift der NSDAP, Berlin, 1934-1940.

New Leader, London, 1932-1937.

New Statesman and Nation, London, 1932-1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Nineteenth Century and After, London, 1933-1934.

The Patriot, London, 1932-1940.

The Ratepayer, London, 1933-1937.

The Saturday Review, London, 1932-1937.

Searchlight: The International Anti-Fascist Monthly, London, 1997-1999.

Sheffield Catholic Herald, Sheffield, 1932-1934.

Shoreditch Citizen, London, 1933-1939.

Der Sturmer, Nuremberg, 1932-1938.

Sunday Express, London, 1939.

The Times, London, 1932-1940.

Time and Tide, London, 1932-1937.

Tribune, London, 1937-1940.

Union, Incorporating Action, London, 1948-1954.

United Empire, London, 1910-1914.

Weekly Review, London, 1939-1940.

World News and Views, London, 1932-1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

IV. OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Communist International. Seventh World Congress of the Communist International: Resolutions and Decisions, Moscow, 1934.

Great Britain. Hansard Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons, 5th Series, Vols. 133-423, October 1920-June 1946.

_____. Report of Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, 3 Vols., London, 1903.

_____. Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, and Others, Vol. X, October 26 1937-November 4, 1938.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Foreign Policy Documents, Vol. XVIII, Moscow, 1972.

United States. Office of Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, 10 Vols., Washington, D.C., 1946.

V. MEMOIRS

Boothby, Robert. I Fight to Live, Victor Gollancz, London, 1947.

Brockway, Fenner. Inside the Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament, Allen & Unwin, London, 1942.

Charnley, John W. Blackshirts and Roses, Brockingday, London, 1990.

Citrine, Lord. Men and Work, Hutchinson, London, 1964.

Cornford, John. John Cornford: A Memoir, Jonathan Cape, London, 1936.

Dalton, Hugh. The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945, Muller, London, 1957.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Darke, Bob. Cockney Communist, John Day, New York, 1953.

Dirksen, Herbert von. Moscow, Tokyo, London: Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1951.

Domville, Barry. From Admiral to Cabin Boy, Boswell, London, 1947.

Eden, Anthony. Facing the Dictators: 1923-1938, Houghton, Miflin, Boston, 1962.

Fromm, Bella. Blood and Banquets: A Berlin Social Diary, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1942.

Goebbels, Joseph, The Goebbels Diaries, 1939-1941, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1982.

_____. The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-43, Doubleday, Garden City, 1948.

Grundy, Trevor. Memoirs of a Fascist Childhood: A Boy in Mosley's Britain, Heinemann, London, 1998.

Henderson, Sir Nevile. Failure of a Mission: Berlin 1937-1939, G.P. Putnam's, New York, 1940.

Hesse, Fritz. Hitler and the English, A. Wingate, London, 1954.

Hewins, W.A.S. Apologia of an Imperialist: Forty Years of Empire Policy, Vol. I, Constable, London, 1929.

Hitler, Adolf. Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944, H.R. Trevor-Roper, ed., Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1953.

Jacobs, Joe. Out of the Ghetto: My Youth in the East End, Communism and Fascism, 1913-1939, Simon, London, 1978.

Jones, Thomas. A Diary with Letters 1931-1950, Oxford University Press, London, 1954.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Krivitsky, Walter G. I Was Stalin's Agent, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1940.

_____. In Stalin's Secret Service: An Expose of Russia's Secret Policies by the Former Chief of the Soviet Intelligence in Western Europe, Harper, London, 1939.

Martin, Kingsley. Critic's London Diary, From the New Statesman, 1931-1956, Secker and Warburg, London, 1960.

Mosley, Diana. A Life of Contrasts: The Autobiography of Diana Mosley, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1977.

Mosley, Nicholas. Rules of the Game; Beyond the Pale: Memoirs of Sir Oswald Mosley and Family, Dalkey Archives, Elmwood Park, Illinois, 1991.

Mosley, Oswald. My Life, Nelson, London, 1968.

Nichols, Beverley. All I Could Never Be, Jonathan Cape, London, 1949.

_____. The Sweet and Twenties, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1958.

Nicolson, Harold. Diaries and Letters 1930-1939, Nigel Nicolson, ed. Atheneum, New York, 1966.

Page-Croft, Henry. My Life of Strife, Hutchinson, London, 1948.

Petrie, Sir Charles. Chapters of Life, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1950.

Pollitt, Harry. Serving My Time: An Apprenticeship to Politics, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1940.

_____. Selected Articles and Speeches, Vols. I and II, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1953-1954.

Price, George Ward. I Know These Dictators, Harrap, New York, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ravensdale, M.I. Curzon, Baroness. In Many Rhythms. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1953.

Ribbentrop, Alfred. The Ribbentrop Memoirs. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1954.

Rosenberg, Alfred. Memoirs of Alfred Rosenberg, ed. by Serge Lang and Ernst von Schenck, Ziff-Davis, Chicago, 1949.

Templewood, Viscount. Nine Troubled Years, Collins, London, 1954.

Thurtle, Ernest. Time's Winged Chariot: Memories and Comments, Chaterton, London, 1945.

Tremlett, Rex. Easy Going, H. Jenkins, London, 1940.

Trory, Ernie. Between the Wars: Recollections of a Communist Organiser, Crabtree, Brighton, 1974.

Vansittart, Sir Robert. The Mist Procession, Hutchinson, London, 1958.

Von Hassell, Ulrich. Von Hassell Diaries: The Story of the Forces Against Hitler Inside Nazi Germany, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1948.

VI. PUBLISHED PRIMARY BOOKS, PAMPHLETS AND ARTICLES

Allen, Elizabeth A. It Shall Not Happen Here. Anti-Semitism, Fascists and Civil Liberty, National Council for Civil Liberty, London, 1943.

Allen, W.E.D. "Fascism in Relation to British History and Character," Quarterly Review, Vol. 126, No. 3 (October 1933).

Allen of Hurtwood, Lord. "Public Opinion and the Idea of International Government," International Affairs, Vol. III, No.2 (March 1934).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Atholl, Katherine Marjory Stewart-Murray, Duchess of. Searchlight on Spain, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1938.

Baldwin, Stanley. This Torch of Freedom: Speeches and Addresses by the Right Honourable Stanley Baldwin, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1936.

Banister, Joseph. Our Alien Makers of Revolution, Joseph Banister, London, 1925.

_____. England Under the Jews, Joseph Banister, London, 1901.

Beckett, John. "Fascism and Trade Unionism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 3 (July-September 1936).

_____. "Facts About Parliament," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, (1936).

Beckett, John and A. Raven Thomson. "Problems of the Distributive Trade," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 1 (January-March 1936).

Bell, Tom. The British Communist Party: A Short History, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1937.

Bevin, Ernest. The Balance Sheet of the Future, R.M. McBride, New York, 1941.

Blatchford, Robert. Britain for the British, Clarion, London, 1902.

_____. Dismal England, Walter Scott, London, 1899.

_____. Merrie England, C.H. Kerr, Chicago, 1900.

Board of Deputies of British Jews. Annual Reports, Board of Deputies of British Jews, London, 1932-1940.

British Union of Fascists. Britons You Are Pledged to Die for Poles, BUF, London, 1939.

_____. British Miners, BUF, London, undated.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. The Empire and the British Union, BUF, London, 1937.

_____. Fascism and Agriculture, BUF, London, 1936?

_____. Labour Means War: Stop the War Mongers, BUF, London, undated.

_____. The Miners' Only Hope, BUF, London, undated.

_____. British Union Pictorial Record, BUF, London, 1939.

_____. Red Violence and Blue Lies, BUF, London, 1934.

_____. Why Should Britain Assist Abyssinia?, BUF, London, 1935.

Browner, Fred. "Fascism in Britain," The Class Struggle: Official Organ of the Communist League of Struggle, Vol. 4, No.38 (June-July 1934).

Carter, Boake. Black Shirt, Black Skin, Telegraph, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1935.

Cantril, Hadley, ed. Public Opinion, 1935-1946, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1951.

Camrose, Viscount. British Newspapers and Their Controllers, Cassell, London, 1947.

Chesterton, A.K. "The Apotheosis of the Jew," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, (1936).

_____. Creed of a Fascist Revolutionary, BUF, London, undated.

_____. Oswald Mosley: Portrait of a Leader, Action, London, 1937.

_____. "The Problem of Decadence," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, (1936).

Chesterton, G.K. What's Wrong with the World, Cassell, London, 1910.

Clarke, E.G. The British Union and the Jews, Abbey Supplies, Westminster, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Cole, G.D.H. The People's Front, Victor Gollancz, London, 1937.

Communist Party of Great Britain. For Peace and Plenty!: Report of the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1938.

_____. For Soviet Britain, Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1935.

_____. Hitler's Agents Exposed, Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1943.

_____. Sidelights on the Cliveden Set: Hitler's Friends in Britain, Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1938.

Cripps, Stafford. The Struggle for Peace, Victor Gollancz, London, 1936.

Dalton, Hugh. Practical Socialism for Britain, Routledge, London, 1935.

Distributist League. The Distributist Programme, Distributist League, London, 1934?

Drennan, James . B.U.F.: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism, John Murray, London, 1934.

_____. "Studies on Soviet Imperialism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No.4 (October-December 1935).

Driberg, Tom. Mosley? No!, W.H. Allen, London, 1948.

Dutt, Rajani Palme. "The Cotton Industry and the Fascist Offensive in Lancashire," Labour Monthly, Vol. 17, No. 4 (April 1935).

_____. Fascism and Social Revolution: A Study of the Economics and Politics of the Extreme Stages of Capitalism in Decay, International, New York, 1935.

_____. "The Path to Proletarian Hegemony in the Indian Revolution," Communist

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

International, Vol. VII, No. 13 (November 15, 1930).

Ex-Servicemen's National Movement. The BUF by the BUF, Anchor, London, 1938.

Fascist Confederation of Industrialists. Capitalism and Fascism: Three Right-Wing Tracts, Arno, New York, 1972.

Florinsky, Michael T. Fascism and National Socialism, Macmillan, New York, 1938.

Fuller, J.F.C. "The Cancer of Europe," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I., No. 2 (April-June 1935).

_____. Conquest of Red Spain, Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, London, 1937.

_____. Empire Unity and Defence, Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1934.

_____. The First of the League Wars: Its Lessons and Omens, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1936.

_____. "Foreign Policy and Imperial Strategy," British Union Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 3, (July-September 1938).

_____. "The War in Spain: Its Character and Form," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2, (April-June 1937).

_____. Towards Armageddon: The Defence Problem and Its Solution, L. Dickson, London, 1937.

_____.What the British Union Has to Offer Britain, Action, London, 1937.

Gallacher, William and Earl Browder. Anti-Semitism: What It Means and How to Combat It, CPGB, London, 1943.

Gibbs, Henry. The Spectre of Communism, Selwyn and Blount, London, 1936.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Goad, H.E. and M. Currey. The Working of a Corporate State, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, London, 1933.

Goebbels, Joseph. The Truth About Spain, Muller, Berlin, 1937.

Golding, Louis. The Jewish Problem, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1939.

Gollancz, Victor. Russia and Ourselves, Victor Gollancz, London, 1941.

Goldberg, Sid. What of the Jews? You Have Heard So Many Lies--Now Read the Truth, Independent Labour Party, London, 1940.

Gordon-Canning, Robert. The Holy Land: Arab or Jew, Greater Britain, London, undated.

_____. The Inward Strength of a National Socialist, Greater Britain, London, undated.

_____. Mind Britain's Business: British Union Foreign Policy, Greater Britain, London, 1938.

_____. "Some Aims and Principles of British Fascism in the Conduct of Imperial and Foreign Affairs," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, 1936.

Graham, Alistair. Fascism in Britain: An Account of the Rise & Decline of Fascism in British Politics, Pharos, Badminton, England, 1966.

Grant, Ted. The Menace of Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It, Revolutionary Communist Party, London, 1948.

Griggs, Anne Brock. Women and Fascism, BUF, London, undated.

Groves, Reginald. East End Crisis, Socialist League, London, 1937.

Guerin, Daniel. Fascism and Big Business, Pioneer, New York, 1939.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Haas, Werner. Europa Will Leben, Batschari, Berlin, 1936.

Hamm, Jeffrey. The Inside Story of the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940, Sanctuary Press, London, 1986.

Hannington, Wal. Fascist Danger and the Unemployed, National Unemployed Workers' Movement, London, 1939.

_____. The Problem of the Distressed Areas, Victor Gollancz, London, 1937.

Hardie, Keir. From Serfdom to Socialism, George Allen, London, 1907.

Hawks, Olive. Women Fight for Britain, BUF, London, undated.

Heyward, Peter. Menace of the Chain Store: British Union Policy for the Distributive Trades, Greater Britain, London, undated.

_____. Shopkeepers Against War and Monopoly, London, undated.

Hill, F.D. 'Gainst Trust and Monopoly; Commercial Travellers and Shopkeepers Action, Abbey Supplies, London, undated.

Hillson, Norman. I Speak of Germany: A Plea for Anglo-German Friendship, Routledge, London, 1937.

Hitler, Adolf. My New Order, edited by R. de Roussy de Sales, Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1941.

Independent Labour Party. They Did Not Pass: 300,000 Workers Say No to Mosley. A Souvenir of the East London Workers' Victory over Fascism, I.L.P., London, 1936.

_____. Through the Class Struggle to Socialism: The I.L.P. Attitude to: Spanish Struggle, Popular Front Unity Campaign, Fight against Fascism, Resistance to War, The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Internationals, Soviet Russia, Unemployed, Distressed Areas, Unofficial Strikes, I.L.P., London, 1937.

Jenks, Jorian E.F. "Precious Acres," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No.1 (January-March 1937).

Jenks, Jorian E.F. and John Taylor Peddie. Farming and Money, Christian State, London, 1935.

Jerrold, Douglas. Georgian Adventure, Collins, London, 1937.

Jewish People's Council. Jewish People's Council against Fascism and Anti-Semitism and the Board of Deputies, no publisher, London,1936.

Joyce, William. "Analysis of Marxism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, (1936).

_____"Britain's Empire Shall Live," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 (January-April 1935).

_____. "Collective Security," Fascist Quarterly, Vol I., No. 3 (July-October 1935).

_____. Fascism and India, BUF, London, 1933.

_____. Fascism and Jewry, BUF, London, 1936.

_____. National Socialism Now, National Socialist League, London, 1937.

_____. Twilight over England, Imperial War Museum, London, 1992.

Kirkpatrick, Clifford. Nazi Germany: Its Women and Family Life, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1938.

Krieger, Heinz. England und die Judenfrage in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Diesterweg, Frankfurt am Main, 1938.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Labour Party. For Socialism and Peace: The Labour Party's Programme of Action, Victoria House, London, 1934.

Labour Research Department. Mosley Fascism: The Man, His Policy and Methods, Labour Research Department, London, 1935.

_____. Fascism--Fight it Now, Labour Research Department, London, 1937.

_____. Labour and the Distressed Areas: A Programme for Immediate Action, Labour Research Department, London, 1937.

_____. Mosley Fascism: The Man, His Policy & Methods, Labour Research Department, London, 1935.

_____. Who Backs Mosley? Fascist Promises and Fascist Performances, Labour Research Department, London, 1934.

Lane, Arthur Henry. The Alien Menace: A Statement of the Case, King, London, 1933.

Laski, Neville. Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs, Soncino, London, 1939.

Laurie, Arthur Pilans, The Case for Germany: A Study of Modern Germany, Internationaler Verlag, Berlin, 1939.

Londonderry, Lord. Ourselves and Germany, R. Hale, London, 1938.

Lore, L. "Can a Jew Be a Fascist?," The Nation, August 13, 1938.

Martin, Kingsley. "Fascism and the Daily Mail," The Political Quarterly, Vol. V, No.2 (April 1934).

Melville, Cecil F. The Truth About the New Party, and Much Else Besides Concerning Sir Oswald Mosley's Political Aims, the 'Nazis' Movement of Herr Adolph Hitler, and the Adventure in Political Philosophy of Mr. Wyndham Lewis, Wishart & Co., London, 1931.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Miles, A.C. Mosley in Motley, Ex-Servicemen's National Movement, London, 1937.

Mosley, Oswald. Blackshirt Policy, BUF, London, 1934.

_____. The British Peace, Greater Britain, London, 1939.

_____. "Economic Nationalism and World Peace," Age of Plenty: A Quarterly Journal of British Fascist Economics, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1934).

_____. Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered, BUF, London, 1936.

_____. The Greater Britain, Greater Britain, London, 1932.

_____. "Il Fascismo Come Fattore di Pace Universale," Gerarchia, Anno XII, 1932.

_____. My Answer, Ramsbury, Wiltshire, Mosley, London, 1946.

_____. Mosley: The Facts, Euphorion, New York, 1961.

_____. "The Philosophy of Fascism," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. I., No. 1 (January 1935).

_____. Tomorrow We Live, Greater Britain, London, 1938.

_____. "The World Alternative," Fascist Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 3 (July-October 1936).

Mullally, Frederick. Fascism inside England, Claude Morris, London, 1946.

Murphy, J.T. Fascism: The Socialist Answer, The Socialist League, London, 1934.

Mussolini, Benito. "The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism," Political Quarterly, Vol.IV, No.3 (July 1933).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

National Council of Labour. What Is This Fascism?, The National Council of Labour, London, 1934.

Neumann, Franz. Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1942.

Nichols, Beverley. News of England: Or, A Country Without a Hero, Jonathan Cape, London, 1938.

Nye, Rev. H.E.B. "The Religious Peace of Europe," in Erminio Turcotti, ed., Fascist Europe: An Anglo-Italian Symposium. Vol. I, No. 1 (1939).

Osborn, R. The Psychology of Reaction, Victor Gollancz, London, 1938.

Piratin, Phil. Our Flag Stays Red, Thames, London, 1948.

Pitigliani, Fausto. The Italian Corporate State, King, London, 1933.

Pollitt, Harry. Selected Articles and Speeches, Vol. I, 1919-1936, Laurence & Wishart, London, 1953.

Rauschning, Hermann. The Revolution of Nihilism: Warning to the West, Longmans, Green, New York, 1939.

Reade, Arthur. "Why Reject Italian Friendship?" British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3 (July-September 1937).

Rennap, I. Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Question, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1942.

Risdon, Wilfred. "The Heritage of National Socialism," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3 (July-September 1937).

_____. Strike Action or Power Action, Abbey Supplies, London, 1938?

Ross, J.E. "Catholics and Anti-Semitism," Catholic Digest, Vol. IV, No. 6 (June 1939).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Rowan-Robinson, Henry. England, Italy, Abyssinia, W. Clowes and Sons, London, 1935.

Rudlin, Walter A. The Growth of Fascism in Great Britain, Allen and Unwin, London, 1935.

Rust, William. "Mosley and Lancashire," Labour Monthly Pamphlets, Vol. 3, No. 5 (May 1935).

_____. Mosley in Lancashire, The Trinity Trust, London, 1936.

Sacks, George. The Intelligent Man's Guide to Jew-Baiting, Victor Gollancz, London, 1935.

Salvemini, Gaetano. Under the Axe of Fascism, Victor Gollancz, London, 1936.

Scanlon, John. The Decline and Fall of the Labour Party, P. Davies, London, 1932.

_____. Pillars of Cloud, Chapman and Hall, London, 1939.

Schirach von, Baldur. Der Hitler Jugend. Idee und Gestalt, Verlag und Bertriebs-Gesellschaft, Berlin, 1934.

Schneider, Herbert W. and Shepard Clough, Making Fascists, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1929.

Schuman, Frederick. The Nazi Dictatorship: A Study in Social Pathology and the Politics of Fascism, Knopf, New York, 1936.

Simpson, W.W. Youth and Anti-Semitism, no publisher, London, 1938.

_____. Jews and Christians To-day: A Study in Jewish and Christian Relationships, Epworth, London, 1940.

Spengler, Oswald. The Decline of the West, Allen & Unwin, London, 1971.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Spivack, Robert G. "Will Mosley Succeed in England?" B'nai B'rith, Vol. 27, No.12 (December 1936).

Strachey, John. "Fascism in Great Britain," The New Republic, August 22, 1934.

_____. Menace of Fascism, Covici, New York, 1933.

Sutton, Claud. Farewell to Rousseau, Christophers, London, 1936.

Thomson, Alexander Raven. Big Fish and Little Fish: Finance, Democracy, and the Shopkeeper, BUF, London, 1937.

_____. "Causes of the Slump," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I., No. 4 (October-December 1937).

_____. Civilisation as Divine Superman, Williams & Morgate, London, 1932.

_____. The Coming Corporate State, Greater Britain, Westminster, 1937.

_____. Cotton! Communists and Socialists Exposed, BUF, London, 1935

_____. The Economics of British Fascism, Bonner, London, 1933.

_____. Motorways for Britain: Constructive Solution to the Traffic Problem, BUF, London, undated.

_____. Our Financial Masters, Abbey Supplies, London, undated.

_____. "Stalin, Robespierre and the Red Napoleon," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1 (January-March 1937).

Trades Union Congress. Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement, Trades Union Congress, London, 1933.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. The Menace of Dictatorship: The Debate at the Brighton Trades Union Congress, Trades Union Congress, London, 1933.

_____. United Against Fascism, Trades Union Congress, London, 1934.

_____. Report of Annual Trades Union Congress, Trades Union Congress, London, 1934-39.

Unsigned, "Abridged Draft of the Political Theses of the CC of the CP of India," Imprecor, Volume 14, No. 20 (July 20, 1934).

_____."The Criminals of the Kremlin," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1937).

Walter, Thomas. "Spain: Problem and Opportunity," British Union Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 2 (April-June 1937).

Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?, Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936.

Wegg-Prosser, Charles F. Fascism Exposed, Jewish People's Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism, London, 1938.

Wilkinson, Ellen and Edward Conze. Why Fascism?, Selwyn and Blount, London, 1934.

World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism. The Brown Network: The Activities of the Nazis in Foreign Countries, Knight, New York, 1936.

Wynn, John, It Might Have Happened to You, Strickland, Glasgow, 1945.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Addison, Paul. "Patriotism Under Pressure: Lord Rothermere and British Foreign Policy," in Gillian Peele and Chris Cook, eds., The Politics of Reappraisal, 1918-1939, Macmillan, London, 1975.

Aldgate, Anthony. Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War, Basil Blackwell, London, 1986.

Alexander, Bill. British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain, 1936-1939, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1982.

Anderson, Gerald D. Fascists, Communists and the National Government: Civil Liberties in Great Britain, 1931-1937, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1983.

Andrew, Christopher. Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community, Heinemann, London, 1985.

Armstrong, Keith and Huw Beynon, eds. Hello? Are You Working? Memories of the Thirties in the North East of England, Strong Words, South Wellfield, 1977.

Baer, George W. Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia, and the League of Nations, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1976.

Baker, David. Ideology of Obsession: A.K.Chesterton and British Fascism, Tauris Academic Studies, London, 1996.

Barnes, James and Prudence Barnes. "Oswald Mosley as Entrepreneur," History Today, Vol. 40, No. 3 (March 1990).

Barrett, Neil. "The Anti-Fascist Movement in South-East Lancashire, 1933-1940: The Divergent Experiences of Manchester and Nelson," in Tim Kirk and Anthony McElligott, eds. Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Beckett, Francis, The Rebel Who Lost His Cause: The Tragedy of John Beckett, MP, London House, London, 1999.

Benewick, Robert. Political Violence and Public Order: A Study of British Fascism, Allen Lane, London, 1969.

Beloff, Max. The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, Vol. 2, 1936-1941, Oxford University Press, London, 1949.

Beyerchen, Alan D. Politics and the Physics Community in the Third Reich, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977.

Billig, Michael. Fascists: A Social Psychological View of the National Front, Academic Press, London, 1978.

Booker, J.A., Blackshirts-on-Sea: A Pictorial History of the Mosley Summer Camps 1933-1938, Brockingday, London, 1999.

Branson, Noreen. History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1985.

Brewer, John D. Mosley's Men: The BUF in the West Midlands, Gower, Aldershot, 1984.

_____. "The British Union of Fascists: Some Tentative Conclusions on its Membership," in S.U. Larsen, et al. eds., Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism, Universitetsforlaget, Bergen, 1980.

_____. "Looking Back at Fascism: A Phenomenological Analysis of BUF Membership," in Sociological Review, Volume 32, 1984.

Butler, David and Anne Sloman. British Political Facts: 1900-1975, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1975.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. The Electoral System in Britain, 1918-1951, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1953.

Butler, J.R.M. Lord Lothian, St. Martin's, New York, 1960.

Caffrey, Kate. '37-39: Last Look 'Round, Gordon & Cremonesi, London, 1979.

Capie, Forest. The Interwar British Economy: A Statistical Abstract, Manchester University Press, Dover, New Hampshire, 1983.

Carr, E.H. The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War, Pantheon, New York, 1984.

Cattell, David T. Communism and the Spanish Civil War, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984.

_____. Soviet Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1957.

Challinor, Raymond. The Origins of British Bolshevism, Croom, Helm, London, 1977.

Cohen, P. "The Police, the Home Office and Surveillance of the British Union of Fascists," Intelligence and National Security, Vol. I, No. 1 (January 1988).

Cohn, Norman, Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Harper, New York, 1967.

Conway, John. The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1968.

Cooper, Howard and Paul Morrison. A Sense of Belonging. Dilemma of British Jewish Identity, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1991.

Coupland, Philip M. "The Blackshirted Utopians," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1998).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Cowling, Maurice. The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy, 1933-1940, Cambridge University Press, London, 1975.

Cronin, Mike ed. The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition, St. Martin's, London, 1996.

Cross, Colin. The Fascists in Britain, Barrie and Rockliff, London, 1961.

Cullen, Stephen M., "The Development of the Ideas and Policy of the British Union of Fascists, 1932-40," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 22 (January 1987).

_____."Political Violence: The Case of the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April 1993).

Dewar, Hugo. Communist Politics in Britain: The CPGB from Its Origins to the Second World War, Pluto, London, 1976.

Durant, Henry. "Results of a Gallup Poll on Fascism in Britain," in A.G. Weidenfeld and H. de C. Hastings, eds. Britain Between West and East, London, 1946.

Durham, Martin. "Gender and the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 27, No. 3 (July 1992).

_____. Women and Fascism, Routledge, London, 1998.

Eatwell, Roger. Fascism: A History, Allen Lane, New York, 1996.

_____. "Munich, Public Opinion and the Popular Front," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 6, No. 4 (October 1971).

Eldridge, C.C., ed. British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, Macmillan, New York, 1984.

Farago, Ladislas. The Game of the Foxes: The Untold Story of German Espionage in the United States and Great Britain During World War II, McKay, New York, 1971.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Fielding, Nigel. The National Front, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, London, 1981.

Fishman, Nina. The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions, 1933-45, Scolar, Aldershot, 1995.

Fyrth, Jim. The Signal Was Spain: The Spanish Aid Movement in Britain, 1936-1939, St. Martin's, New York, 1986.

Gainer, Bernard. The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905, Crane, Russak, New York, 1972.

Gallup, George H. ed. The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain 1937-1975, Vol. 1, 1937-1964, Random House, New York, 1976.

Gattens, Marie-Luise, Women Writers and Fascism: Reconstructing History, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, 1995.

George, Margaret. The Warped Vision: British Foreign Policy 1933-1939, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1965.

Gewirtz, Sharon, "Anglo-Jewish Responses to Nazi Germany 1933-39: The Anti-Nazi Boycott and the Board of Deputies of British Jews," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 26, No. 2 (April 1991).

Glassman, Bernard. Anti-Semitic Stereotypes without Jews: The Images of Jews in England, 1290-1700, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1975.

Goldman, William East End My Cradle, Art and Educational, London, 1940.

Griffin, Roger. The Nature of Fascism, Routledge, London, 1993.

Griffiths, Richard M. Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-1939, Constable, London, 1980.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Gupta, Sobhanlal Datta. Comintern, India and the Colonial Question, K.P. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1980.

Haslam, Jonathan. The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933-1939, St. Martin's, New York, 1984.

Higginbotham, Melvyn David. Intellectuals and British Fascism: A Study of British Fascism, Janus, London, 1992.

Hillgruber, Andreas. "England's Place in Hitler's Plans for World Dominion," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 9, No. 1 (January 1974).

Holmes, Colin. Antisemitism in British Society, 1876-1939, Holmes & Meier, New York, 1979.

_____. "Champion of 'English Race Feeling': Joseph Banister's Antisemitism," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 4, No. 4 (July-August 1970).

Hoover, Arlie J. God, Britain and Hitler in World II: The View of the British Clergy, 1939-1945, Praeger, Westport, Conn., 1999.

Hope, John. "Cable Street, the BUF and the Italian Subsidy," Searchlight, Vol. 25, No. 292 (October 1998).

Husbands, Christopher. "East End Racism 1900-1980," The London Journal, Vol. 8, No.1 (Summer 1982).

Jenkins, David. The British: Their Identity and Their Religion, SCM, London, 1975.

Jong, Louis de. The German Fifth Column in the Second World War, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956.

Joyce, James Avery, Broken Arrow: The Story of the League of Nations, 1919-1939, C. Davies, Swansea, 1978.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Keeble, Sir Curtis. Britain and the Soviet Union, St. Martin's, New York, 1990.

Kele, Max H. Nazis and Workers: National Socialist Appeals to German Labour, 1919-1933, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1972.

Kushner, Tony. "The Impact of British Anti-Semitism, 1918-1945," in David Cesarani, ed., The Making of Modern British Anti-Semitism, 1918-1945, Basil Blackwell, London, 1990.

_____. The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society During the Second World War, St. Martin's, Manchester, 1989.

_____ and Kenneth Lunn, eds. The Politics of Marginality, Frank Cass, London, 1990.

_____. "Politics and Race, Gender and Class: Refugees, Fascists and Domestic Service in Britain, 1933-1940." Immigrants and Minorities, Vol. 8 (March 1989).

_____ and Nadia Valman, eds. Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society, Vallentine, Mitchell, London, 1999.

Langer, William. The Diplomacy of Imperialism: 1870-1902, Knopf, New York, 1935.

Larsen, Stein U. et al. ed., Who Were the Fascists?: Social Roots of European Fascism, Universitetsforlaget, Bergen, 1980.

Lebzelter, Gisela. "Anti-Semitism--A Focal Point for the British Radical Right," in Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls, eds., Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914, Oxford, 1981.

_____. Political Anti-Semitism in England, 1918-1939, Macmillan, London, 1978.

Ledeen, Michael. A. Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936, Howard Fertig, New York, 1972.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lewis, D.S. Illusions of Grandeur: Mosley, Fascism and British Society, 1931-1981, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987.

Linehan, Thomas. East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex, 1933-1940, Frank Cass, London, 1996.

Longmate, Norman. If Britain Had Fallen, Hutchinson, London, 1972.

Lunn, Kenneth and Richard C. Thurlow, eds. British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Inter-War Britain, Croom, Helm, London, 1980.

Macleod, Ian. Neville Chamberlain, Friedrich Muller, London, 1961.

Mandle, W.F. Antisemitism and the British Union of Fascists, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1968.

_____. "The Leadership of the British Union of Fascists," Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol.XI-XII (December 1966).

Martin, Paul. "Contextualizing Mosley," History Today, Vol. 48, No.5 (May 1998).

McKenzie, Kermit E. Comintern and World Revolution, 1928-1943: The Shaping of Doctrine, Columbia University Press, London, 1964.

_____. "The Messianic Concept in the Third International, 1935-1939," in Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1955.

Michaelis, Meir. Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922-1945, Clarendon, London, 1978.

Mitchell, B.R. British Historical Statistics, Cambridge University Press, London, 1988.

Morgan, Kevin. Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-1941, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Morris, Benny, Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany During the 1930s, Frank Cass, London, 1991.

Mosse, George L., ed. International Fascism: New Thoughts and New Approaches, Sage, London, 1979.

Panayi, Panikos. Immigration, Ethnicity, and Racism in Britain, 1815-1945, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994.

Payne, Stanley. Fascism: Comparison and Definition, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1980.

_____. A History of Fascism, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1995.

Pearce, Malcolm and Geoffrey Stewart, British Political History, 1867-1990, Routledge, London, 1992.

Phizacklea, Annie and Robert Miles, "Working-Class Racist Beliefs in the Inner City," in Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea, eds,. Racism and Political Action in Britain, Routledge and Paul, London, 1979.

Pimlott, Ben. Labour and the Left in the 1930s. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1977.

Pryce-Jones, David. Unity Mitford: A Quest, Weidenfeld & Nelson, London, 1976.

Pugh, Michael. "Peace with Italy: BUF Reactions to the Abyssinian War," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 32 (1974).

Rawnsley, Stuart. "The Membership of the British Union of Fascists," in Kenneth Lunn and Richard C. Thurlow, British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Inter-War Britain, Croom, Helm, London, 1980.

Raymond, John, ed., The Baldwin Age, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1960.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reich, Wilhelm. The Mass Psychology of Fascism, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1970.

Renton, Dave. Red Shirts and Black: Fascists and Anti-Fascists in Oxford in the 1930s, Ruskin College Library, Oxford, 1996.

Robb, James T. Working-Class Anti-Semite: A Psychological Study in a London Borough, Tavistock, London, 1954.

Rosenberg, D. Facing Up to Anti-Semitism: How Jews in Britain Countered the Threats of the 1930s, JCARP, London, 1985.

Saposs, David J. "The Role of the Middle Class in Social Development: Fascism, Populism, Communism, Socialism," in Economic Essays in Honor of Wesley Clair Mitchell, Columbia University Press, New York, 1935.

Schweitzer, Arthur. Big Business in the Third Reich, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1964.

Semmel, Bernard. Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social Imperial Thought 1895-1914, Doubeleday, Garden City, New York, 1960.

Simpson, A.W. Brian. In the Highest Degree Odious: Detention Without Trial in Wartime Britain, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992.

Skidelsky, Robert. Oswald Mosley, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1975.

Solomos, John. Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1989.

Srebrnik, Henry. London Jews and British Communists 1935-1945, Vallentine-Mitchell, Ilford, England, 1995.

Stachura, Peter. The German Youth Movement: An Interpretive and Documentary History, St. Martin's, New York, 1981.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stoakes, Geoffrey. Hitler and the Quest for World Dominion, Berg, New York, 1986.

Strauss, Patricia. Cripps: Advocate Extraordinary, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1942.

Thomas, Hugh. The Spanish Civil War, Harper, New York, 1961.

Thurlow, Richard. "Fascism and Nazism: No Siamese Twins," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1980).

_____. "Fascism and Nazism: No Siamese Twins (II)," Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April 1980).

_____. Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985 Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987.

_____. The Secret State: British Internal Security in the Twentieth Century, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1994.

Thorpe, Andrew, ed. The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-War Britain, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 1989.

Times, "Public Records on Fascism in UK," February 8, 1995.

Turner, Henry Ashby, Jr. "Big Business and the Rise of Hitler," American Historical Review, Vol. 75, No. 7 (July 1965).

_____. German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985.

Tyndall, John. "Mosley: Record No Straighter After Latest Television Series," Spearhead, No. 350 (April 1998).

Trythall, Anthony John. 'Boney' Fuller: The Intellectual General 1878-1966, Cassell, London, 1977.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Unsigned. "British Anti-Semitism Was Hitler's Hope," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol.16, No. 1 (1962).

_____. "Public Records on Fascism in U.K.," The Times, February 8, 1995.

_____."The Story of Regulation 18B," Wiener Library Bulletin, Vol. 9, Nos.5/6, (September-December 1955).

Varga, William P. The Number One Nazi Jew-Baiter: A Political Biography of Julius Streicher, Hitler's Chief Anti-Semitic Propagandist, Carlton, New York, 1981.

Waley, Daniel Philip. British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War, 1935-1936, Temple Smith, London, 1975.

Walton, John K. Lancashire: A Social History, 1588-1939, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987.

Webber, G.C. The Ideology of the British Right 1918-1939, St. Martin's, New York, 1986.

_____. "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October 1984).

Weber, Eugen. Varieties of Fascism, Van Nostrand, Princeton, 1968.

Weinberg, Gerhard L. The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 2 Vols., University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970 and 1980.

Weiss, John. The Fascist Tradition: Radical Right Extremism in Europe, Harper & Row, New York, 1967.

West, Nigel. MI5: British Security Services Operations, 1909-1945, Stein and Day, New York, 1981.

Witherell, Larry L. Rebel on the Right: Henry Page Croft and the Crisis of British Conservatism, 1903-1914, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 1997.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Woolf, Stuart J. European Fascism, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968.

Zeman, Z.A.B. Nazi Propaganda, Oxford University Press, London, 1964.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.