

Workstation 1: Post-war antisemitism in Britain

Date	Event	What Changed?	What Stayed the Same?
1947	Anti-Jewish riots in Britain	Britain no longer has a mass fascist movement	Jewish communities still targeted
1960s-80s	Growth of anti-racist campaigns	Overt antisemitism less socially acceptable	Stereotypes and prejudice remain
1984	CST begins systematic recording of incidents	Better monitoring of hate incidents	Antisemitism still occurs

Television & Film

Throughout the 1950s-1970s, ethnic and religious stereotypes were common in British comedy. Programmes that would be unacceptable today frequently used jokes about minorities, including Jews.

Many British comedians used jokes based on the stereotype that Jews were obsessed with money, miserly, pushy in business, rich.

Fagin in the film *Oliver!* (1968)

Although Charles Dickens wrote the character in the nineteenth century, the hugely popular 1968 film adaptation used an antisemitic caricature, and stereotype of the Jewish moneylender or criminal fixer to portray the character of Fagin. Historians of antisemitism often point to Fagin as an example of a long-standing antisemitic cultural stereotype.

Football

Public hostility could still be directed towards Jews as a group and from the 1960s onwards antisemitic abuse at football became common – as did racism towards black and Asian players.

Examples of antisemitism included chanting, Nazi salutes and references to Hitler and gas chambers.

Tottenham Hotspur supporters were (and still are) targeted because of the club's historic association with London's Jewish community.

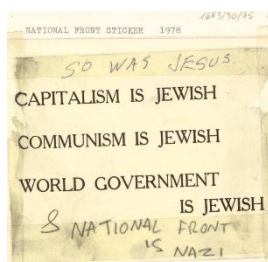
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From the 1970s onwards, some far-right activists began promoting **Holocaust denial**. They claimed the Holocaust never happened or was exaggerated and that the evidence, including the gas chambers, had been fabricated. While these views remained on the lunatic fringe, they became an important feature of post-war antisemitism: rather than praising Nazi Germany directly, many extremists tried to challenge the overwhelming amount of historical evidence.



Colin Jordan and his National Socialist Movement held a week-long camp in the Cotswolds, Gloucestershire, starting on August 5th, 1962. Around 30 members, wearing military uniforms and waving swastikas, attended. On August 12th, around 100 local residents and protestors attacked the camp and wrecked it before police intervened.

Colin Jordan, leader of the National Socialist Movement and his wife Françoise Dior, niece of the French fashion designer Christian Dior, giving the nazi salute outside the registry office in Coventry, where they were married on October 5th, 1963.



National Front sticker, 1978

The National Front (1970s)

The National Front frequently promoted conspiracy theories that a secret Jewish elite controlled finance, the media and politics. These ideas were often derived from older antisemitic texts such as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, **a forged document** claiming that Jews planned to dominate the world. Former BUF activists and ex-League of Empire Loyalists members helped carry these ideas into post-war British far-right politics.

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Britain still occupied Palestine and Jewish guerrillas were at war with the colonial power. After the British hung two Jewish fighters, two British army sergeants were captured and hanged in reprisal. There was a huge outcry in Britain and fascists found a new reason for their antisemitism. Pogroms against Jewish communities took place in Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester.

Blaming Jews

The 1947 anti-Jewish riots: Following the murder of two British sergeants in Palestine by the Zionist group Irgun, mobs attacked Jewish communities in Liverpool, Manchester and other British cities. British Jews had no involvement in the killings, yet Jewish shops, synagogues and homes were attacked. Witnesses reported crowds shouting: "You dirty bastards, you should be in Palestine."

Arab-Israeli conflicts after 1948 cause rises in antisemitic incidents in Britain as British Jews were often associated with events involving Israel rather than anything they had actually done.

Below are extracts from an account of the anti-Jewish pogrom in Manchester in August 1947. It is from the book, *Jerusalem Is Called Liberty*, by Walter Lever. Lever had been a member of the British Communist Party until the Stalin-Hitler pact of August 1939.

"The sergeants had injured no one, either; but they wore the uniforms of a hostile police force. However, the newspapers were not interested in balancing rights and wrongs, and the guests in the lounge would not care to hear my views on the blood-feud morality by which all members of a tribe are held responsible for the guilt of each individual."

"It was August bank holiday weekend when I returned to Manchester Trade was bad, and many workers had been obliged to stay at home. On the Sunday there was nothing to do but walk the streets and stand at the corners discussing the newspaper; and this week all the Sunday papers carried the story of the hanged sergeants in bold letters across the front page..."

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Walter Lever (cont.)

“In the evening the pubs opened, but closed early on account of the beer shortage. At the street corners the crowds grew thicker. Someone here and someone there thought it would be a good idea to show the Jews what real Englishmen thought of them. The idea caught on, and a mob moved towards Cheetham Hill, the old Jewish quarter. They found stones and brickbats, and flung them at shop windows and private houses, at synagogues and club rooms. A Jewish wedding was being celebrated at the Assembly Hall; some thousands surrounded the entrance yelling threats and abuse at those inside and besieging the building until one in the morning.

Next day Cheetham Hill Road looked much as it had looked seven years before, when the German bombers had pounded the city for twelve hours. All premises belonging to Jews for the length of a mile down the street had gaping windows and the pavements were littered with glass. The press reported riots on an even bigger scale in Liverpool, and minor disturbances elsewhere. That night the crowds again advanced on Cheetham Hill; but this time the local police had been instructed to act firmly and the proceedings stopped after a few arrests had been made.”