

Yanky Fachler | The Interlocking History of Zionism and Irish Republicanism

- Good afternoon, good evening everybody, and welcome back. So today it's my great pleasure to introduce a new presenter, Yanky Fachler. Yanky has an MA and is a second-generation Holocaust survivor who was raised and educated in the UK and lived in Israel for over 25 years before moving to Ireland. He is a copywriter, ghostwriter, published author, and broadcaster, and is the founder and chair of the Jewish Historical Society of Ireland. Since the start of the Covid pandemic, Yanky has delivered over 150 Zoom talks. So today it is my great pleasure to hand it over to Yanky, who will be talking about the interlocking history of Zionism and Irish republicanism. Great, great pleasure to have you with us. And now I am going to hand over to you. Thank you, Yanky.

- Thank you and hello everybody. Many contemporary observers might be excused for supposing that Irish republicanism has always opposed the Zionist enterprise. And whether we're talking about the extreme IRA and its political wing Sinn Fein and their view of Israel as an artificial colonialist construct, with regular calls for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Ireland, or we're talking about successive Irish governments that have earned Ireland the title of the most anti-Israel country in Europe, a more appropriate title for my talk might be "The Unrelenting History of Irish Republican Antagonism to Zionism".

Yet it has not always been so. For a period in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries, several Irish and Jewish leaders saw parallels between and derived mutual support from their respective national struggles. When Theodor Herzl started the Zionist movement, his declared aim was to be the Parnell of the Jews. Charles Stewart Parnell was the Irish nationalist parliamentarian and a founder of the Irish National Land League that agitated for land reform. Irish nationalist leader Michael Davitt, a co-founder with Parnell of the Land League, declared himself a convinced Zionist. There are several obvious similarities and parallels between Irish nationalism and Zionism: their tortuous relationship with Britain to obtain independence, the centrality of their diasporas and in particular the political weight of the Irish and Jewish communities in America, the role of their major traumas, the 19th century famine for the Irish and the 20th century Holocaust for the Jews, the active interest that many leading figures in both movements showed in the successes and failures of the other.

Yet while most Zionists always retained a positive view of Irish independence, Irish republicans' attitude to Zionism has grown progressively worse. I want to begin with two Irish train journeys. In 1921, at the height of the War of Independence in Ireland, a group of Black and Tans, thus the disreputable temporary constables recruited by the Royal Irish Constabulary, could not believe their luck. Bold as brass, in broad daylight, sitting on a train travelling to the Dublin suburb of Greystones, was the most wanted man in Ireland, Eamon de Valera. The Black and Tans pounced on him and dragged him off for interrogation. Of course, it wasn't de Valera that they arrested. The leader of Ireland's fight for independence would hardly have taken the risk of travelling so openly. No, the victim of mistaken identity was de Valera's doppelganger Jacob Elyan, a prominent member of Dublin's Jewish community and someone who was sympathetic

to the Irish republican cause. In September 1908, together with businessman and writer Joseph Edelstein, Elyan had founded the Judaeo-Irish Home Rule Association. Edelstein told the audience of 60 in Dublin's Mansion House that "the purpose of this great meeting of Jews was to resolve to support such measures as will tend to secure for the people of Ireland a full grant of self-government."

For the association's founders, the experience of Jews as an oppressed people seeking liberation dovetailed with the Irish struggle for self-determination. Another member of the Judaeo-Irish Home Rule Association was Councillor Mendal Altman, who frequently cooperated with Sinn Fein on Dublin Corporation. Mendal's salt merchant brother Albert, also known as Altman the Saltman, and a possible model for James Joyce's Leopold Bloom, was known as the Jewish Fenian. At the Mansion House meeting, the names of Daniel O'Connell and Michael Davitt were evoked as great friends of the Jewish people. O'Connell, the Irish political leader who successfully shed anti-Catholic discriminatory measures, enthusiastically took up the cause of Jewish emancipation.

His support of the 1846 repeal of the obsolete De Judaismo law facilitated Lionel Rothschild in taking his seat as the first Jewish member of Parliament. O'Connell's help may well have influenced Rothschild's magnanimous response to the Irish famine. Despite the short shelf life of the Judaeo-Irish Home Rule Association, it was symptomatic of growing Jewish support for the Irish republican cause. In Easter 1903, a vicious four-day pogrom gripped Kishinev in modern day Moldova, leaving 49 Jews dead. While not the worst pogrom in Jewish history, the Kishinev pogrom came just six years after the first Zionist Congress and converted many Jews to the Zionist cause. Irish radical and journalist Michael Davitt was dispatched to Russia by an American newspaper to investigate the massacres of the Jews. Davitt saw both the Irish and Jewish nations as facing a shared oppression and a shared lack of political sovereignty. In his book on the Kishinev Pogrom, "Within the Pale: The True Story of Anti-Semitic Persecutions in Russia", Davitt declared himself to be a "convinced believer in the remedy of Zionism."

The second train journey was 24 years later, 1945, when literary critic David Marcus found himself trapped in an Irish train in the company of a "ranting pro-IRA, antisemitic witch." Marcus derived great pleasure in telling her that he was one of her hated Jews. He mused on the irony that his mother, Fannie Marcus, nee Goldberg, together with her sister Molly, had been active members of the Irish republican women's paramilitary organisation at the time of the 1916 Easter rising. David's Uncle, Fanny's younger brother, was Gerald Yael Goldberg, solicitor, politician, historian, and writer. Gerald retained vivid childhood memories of the burning of central Cork by the Black and Tans, when his family had to temporarily leave home.

In secondary school, Gerald got into trouble for demanding to be excused from Armistice Day on the grounds that Britain was responsible for the deaths of two Cork Lord Mayors, Tomas Mac Curtain and Terence MacSwiney. And when Gerald became the first Jew to be elected Lord Mayor of Cork in 1977, he showed solidarity with these two Irish republican martyrs by commissioning portraits of them for the city hall. Yet just five years later, the Cork synagogue

was firebombed when Israel invaded South Lebanon in 1982 to evict Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation. And after receiving death threats, Gerald, a lifelong Zionist, was so unnerved that a devoted public servant could be targeted in his own city that he seriously contemplated moving to Israel. As we saw, Irish Jews were perfectly capable of reconciling their Jewish nationalism, the Zionist cause, with their support for Irish nationalism, the cause of Irish independence.

The 1916 Easter Rising fell on Pesach, Passover, the Jewish festival that celebrates the Exodus from Egypt 3500 years ago. As the predominantly Zionist Jewish community in Ireland recited "L'shanah haba'ah b'Yerushalaim," "Next year in Jerusalem," at the Seder table, they would've seen a strong parallel between the Jewish fight for freedom from the Egyptians and the Irish fight for political freedom from the British. A notable Jewish sympathiser with the republican cause was Rabbi Isaac Herzog. Soon after he accepted the post of Dublin communal rabbi in 1919, the provisional Irish government appointed him as chief rabbi even before formal independence from Britain.

IRA leaders on the run hid in the Herzog family home in Dublin, earning Rabbi Herzog the title, the Shin Fein Rabbi. Rabbi Herzog's son Haim, a future president of the state of Israel, wrote, "My father was an open partisan of the Irish cause. In many circles in Ireland, our family name is still associated with those who fought for liberty." Rabbi Herzog's mastery of the Irish language further endeared him to republican circles. He established a close working and personal relationship with Eamon de Valera, who sent Rabbi Herzog an early draught of the new Irish constitution with its explicit guarantee of religious freedom and equal rights for Jews. If Rabbi Herzog was the Sinn Fein Rabbi, the man known as the father of Sinn Fein, Arthur Griffith, came with serious antisemitic baggage.

At the time of the Dreyfus affair, he wrote, "I have in former years often declared that the three evil influences of the century were the pirate, the Freemason, and the Jew." Griffith described the 1904 Limerick boycott as simply a boycott against the usurers, even though he knew full well that most of the Jewish victims of the boycott were tradesmen, not moneylenders. Yet, the same Griffith also tipped his hat to "those honest and patriotic Jews who desire the reestablishment of the Hebrew nation in Palestine." Griffith seems to have diluted his strident antisemitic rhetoric after 1910, when he met and befriended Michael Noyk, later the honorary solicitor of the Dublin Hebrew congregation.

Noyk remained Griffith's personal solicitor until Griffith died in 1922. Noyk defended Irish republican men and women in court and provided access to several safehouses. He was at the quayside when de Valera and other nationalists returned home from British jails and worked for de Valera's election campaign in 1917. In the 1918 general election, Noyk was the election agent for Constance Markievicz. Noyk defended Sean MacEoin in an open-and-shut murder trial, which ended with MacEoin being sentenced to death. One of the escape plans concocted by Irish revolutionary leader Michael Collins was to get Noyk to smuggle a revolver into MacEoin's cell. In an exquisite irony, MacEoin would later become Irish Minister of Justice.

Noyk became a high-level official with the First Dail's department of finance, headed by Collins. And when Noyk died in 1966, his funeral was attended by then-Irish prime minister Taoiseach Sean Lemass, and he received full military honours from the men of the Dublin Brigade of the IRA at his Dublin graveside. If Griffith displayed an ambivalence to Jews, the Dail Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count George Noble Plunkett, displayed a similar reticence. Clearly influenced by religious antisemitism and conspiracy theories, Plunkett wrote to de Valera in 1921, warning that "republicans should be wary of two close a relationship with the debased Jews" because their codes of honour and morals were not Christian.

Plunkett claimed that the antagonism of the British press to Ireland was because the press was "largely owned and controlled by Jews." Yet, Plunkett also claimed to have Jewish friends: "Their best men show great distinction in music, are fine linguists, cosmopolitan, sensitive, enthusiastic about art, genial, charitable, and clean living." Sinn Fein parliamentarian George Gavan Duffy complained to the Dail in 1921 that the main difficulty in getting facts known abroad was that big Jewish firms in London had complete control of the first newswires in respect to Irish affairs. Anti-Zionist and antisemitic rhetoric also found expression in the Irish American press. In March 1919, the "Gaelic American" complained that, "Now that the ancient home of the Jews, occupied by them after their flight out of Egypt and their wandering in the desert, has been regained for them, they steadfastly refuse to avail themselves of it and are demanding community autonomy and special privilege in every country in which they are found." But the picture was by no means uniform.

At the 1919 Irish Race Convention in Philadelphia, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf explicitly pointed out the parallel between the Irish and Zionist struggles for independence: "Never in the history of both the Irish and the Jew was there a time when they have been nearer the realisation of their dreams than now. Ireland will be free and will be ruled by the Irish, even as Palestine will be free and be ruled by the Jewish people." In post-independence Ireland in 1922, the "Jewish Chronicle" described the Jews of Ireland as being "in hearty sympathy with young Ireland in its struggle for political and national emancipation. Their hearts were ever with those who aspired to revive and resurrect Irish nationhood." The "Irish World", published in New York, optimistically asserted that nearly all of the 10,000 Jews in Ireland, in fact there were only 5,000, are Sinn Feiners, which means Irish republicans. "American Zionists," said the paper, "found in Irish history and Irish nationalist aspirations, a tale of statelessness, exile, and liberation that resonated deeply with their own conceptions of the past and hopes for the future."

Among American Zionist leaders who associated themselves with Irish relief activities was Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, later president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Many British authorities viewed any cooperation between Irish republicans and Jews with suspicion. One British official described the "mean, dishonest, insufferably conceited Irishman as an inferior race, only sufferable when they are whipped like the Jews." Some British conservative diehards believed that the Irish could not have conceived of the idea of rebellion themselves. It had to be the Jews who were behind it. British intelligence chief Basil Thompson claimed that trouble in

Ireland was the result of a "Yiddo-Sinn Fein alliance" and that the IRA was "merely the Irish section of Lenin's Jew government."

The Irish Jew who sat most prominently, if sometimes uncomfortably, at the intersection of Irish and Jewish nationalism, is Robert Briscoe, son of a Lithuanian immigrant and later the Lord Mayor of Dublin. With the possible exception of Joyce's fictional hero Leopold Bloom, Briscoe is probably Ireland's most famous Jew. After the 1916 Easter Rising, Briscoe's gun running activities on behalf of the Irish Nationalists brought him to the attention of Michael Collins, who affectionately referred to him as, "My blessed Jew man." Briscoe switched his allegiance to de Valera, whose rejection of the partition treaty with Britain caused the Irish Civil War. Briscoe entered the Dail, the Irish Parliament, as a member of de Valera's Fianna Fail party in 1927, and remained until 1965. Barney Mellows recalled that when Briscoe joined the party, "He was the first Jew we had." Briscoe spoke for the republican cause at public meetings, insisting that his being a Hebrew did not lessen his Irishness.

The rising tide of Nazism and the sympathetic attitude of the Catholic Church towards the anti-Communism of international fascism made Briscoe increasingly aware of his Jewishness. He was also drawn to the magnetic charisma of Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky, who founded the Revisionist Zionist Organisation. Kevin McCarthy neatly summed up Briscoe's career in the subtitle of his biography of Briscoe: "Sinn Fein revolutionary, Fianna Fáil nationalist, and revisionist Zionist". Briscoe facilitated Jabotinsky's visit to Dublin in early 1938, and in Briscoe's 1958 autobiography, he provides an account of Jabotinsky's meeting with de Valera: "De Valera expressed scepticism of the justness of the Zionist project. 'Mr. De Valera' said Jabotinsky, 'I've been reading Irish history. As a result of the great famine of 1847 and 1848, I believe the population fell from 8 million to 4 million.

Now, supposing it had been reduced to 50,000, and the country had been resettled by the Welsh, the Scots, and the English, would you then have given up the claim of Ireland for the Irish?' When de Valera replied that the Irish would never relinquish Ireland, Jabotinsky said, 'neither can the Jews ever give up their claim to Palestine.'" The Zionist underground militias allied to Jabotinsky, that confronted British forces in Palestine, clearly drew inspiration from the Irish republican struggle. Avraham Stern, leader of the Stern Gang, translated P.S. O'Hegarty's "The Victory of Sinn Fein" into Hebrew. When Etzel member Avshalom Haviv was on trial, he accused the British of "drowning the Irish uprising in rivers of blood, yet Ireland rose free in spite of you." Excuse me. Abba Ahimeir published an article in the daily "Doar Hayom" entitled "Sinn Fein". The head of the operations for Lehi, future Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, studied Irish republican literature during his time in the underground, and adopted the name of Micha'el as his nom de guerre in homage to Irish revolutionary Michael Collins.

Although Briscoe remained a faithful Fianna Fail-er all his life, his friendship with de Valera did not help him secure Irish visas for the German Jews seeking refuge in Ireland before World War II. It only emerged much later from newly released state papers that government ministers and Department of Justice officials repeatedly lied to Briscoe about their supposed efforts to grant

visas. Briscoe's son Joe often told me that he was glad his father died before he learned of the extent of the betrayal by party colleagues. In 2003, Irish justice minister Michael McDowell publicly apologised for Ireland's "sins of omission and sins of commission during World War II. Wartime policy," he said, "was inspired by a culture of muted antisemitism in Ireland. At an official level, the Irish state was at best coldly polite, but behind closed doors, the Irish state was antipathetic, hostile, and unfeeling towards the Jews."

Briscoe's friendship with de Valera also failed to prevent de Valera's notorious condolence visit to the German Legation in Dublin after Hitler's suicide in 1945. No one exemplifies the schizophrenic attitude of the Irish government to the Nazis more than Charles Bewley, a Nazi sympathiser and a rampant antisemite. Bewley was originally sent to Germany in 1921 as Irish trade representative. Following a barroom brawl in Berlin with Briscoe, during which Bewley harangued Briscoe about his Jewish faith, Bewley's antisemitism came to the attention of the Dublin government. This did not prevent Bewley from being posted to Berlin again in 1933, seven months after the Nazis took office, this time as Ireland's top diplomat.

And over the next six years, he thwarted the attempts of Jewish refugees from Germany to gain visas to Ireland. On November the ninth, 2013, I accompanied my then 90 year-old father to Berlin where he was guest speaker at the rededication of his synagogue that he watched being smashed up on Kristallnacht, 75 years earlier. I used the opportunity of being in Berlin to attend an exhibition at the Centrum Judaicum. The museum had written to all the countries that had diplomats stationed in Berlin at the time of Kristallnacht, asking them for the reports that their diplomats sent back in the wake of the murderous pogrom. All the diplomats, even those from Italy and Japan, future Axis allies of Nazi Germany, expressed their dismay at what they witnessed. There was one lamentable exception, Bewley.

The curators of the exhibition were shocked that any diplomat could have sent back such a "disgraceful and unfathomable 13-page report. The antisemitic virulence in Bewley's report is unique among the diplomatic dispatches," the director of the museum, Dr. Hermann Simon, told me. "Of all the diplomatic reports, Bewley's is unusually demagogic and nasty." When the Irish government finally twigged that Bewley had gone native in Nazi Germany, he was recalled to Dublin in August, 1939 as war loomed. He refused to return and spent the rest of his life in Berlin as a Nazi propagandist. Links between the IRA and the Nazis were formalised in 1937 when IRA chief of staff Tom Barry travelled to Germany. Senior IRA figures Sean Russell and Frank Ryan came to Berlin for talks with top members of the Nazi regime, including future SS war criminals, in an effort to secure support for the IRA's plan to overthrow the Free State and reunite Ireland's north and south.

In August 1940, Russell and Ryan boarded a German U-boat bound for Ireland, but the mission was called off when Russell died aboard the vessel. And despite controversy, a statue of Russell has been prominently on display in a Dublin park since 1951. During World War II, the IRA's main publication "War News" became increasingly pro-Nazi in tone and began aping antisemitic arguments. The paper expressed satisfaction that the "cleansing fire of the German

armies" was driving the Jews from Europe. In 1943, by which time about 4 million Jews had already been liquidated, a newly elected Oliver Flanagan from the so-called moderate Fine Gael party stood up in the Dail and announced, "There is one thing that Germany did and that was to rout the Jews out of their country. Until we rout the Jews out of this country, it doesn't matter a hair's breadth what orders you make. Where the bees are, there is the honey, and where the Jews are, there is the money." No one stood up to object. Once the Zionist struggle culminated in Israeli independence some 26 years after Irish independence, there was a glimmer of hope that the Irish government would grasp the parallels between Irish republicanism and Zionism.

In early 1949, Ireland's Minister for External Affairs, Sean McBride, announced in the Dail, "Our common suffering from persecution and certain similarities in the histories of the two races create a special bond of sympathy and understanding between the Irish and Jewish peoples." Shortly afterwards, at the installation ceremony in Dublin for the new chief rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, the Taoiseach John Costello announced that in the chief rabbi's honour, the Irish government was extending de facto recognition to the new Israeli state. Even some voices in Sinn Fein praised the parallel. An article in the journal "Sinn Fein" said that, "The Jews have given us the finest nationalist literature in the world. They've also set the finest nationalist example. Israel represents the triumph of Sinn Fein."

But this was nothing more than lip service. It took another almost 30 years before full diplomatic relations were established between Ireland and Israel. And it was only in 1996, a full century since Herzl had declared his ambition to be the Parnell of the Jews, that an Israeli embassy opened in Dublin. In contemporary Ireland, very few prominent politicians or journalists are prepared to challenge the cosy anti-Zionist and anti-Israel consensus. Irish government ministers are usually the first among their EU colleagues to condemn Israeli policies, and much of the Irish print and electronic media is highly critical of the state of Israel. And these are the so-called moderates in Irish politics. In the meantime, the standard-bearer of Irish republicanism, Sinn Fein, has continued to display a visceral hatred of the Zionist enterprise and the Jewish state. Far from acknowledging any shared history between Irish republicanism and Zionism, longtime Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams accused Israel of "repressive actions akin to the worst years of British oppression in Ireland." Under Adams's leadership, Sinn Fein followed an anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian policy that allowed parliamentarian Aengus O Snodaigh to compare openly the Israeli ambassador to Goebbels.

On another occasion, O Snodaigh said, "Israel is without doubt one of the most abhorrent and despicable regimes on the planet." In exploring the interlocking history of the Zionist and Irish republican movements, we've identified considerable drift in terms of the Irish view of Zionism. When it comes to the extent of Zionist and Irish Jewish support for Irish republicanism, there is still no unanimity among historians. Historian Dermot Keogh suggests that "individual Jews may have opted for the cause of radical Irish nationalism to a greater extent than is realised." The recent centenary commemorations in Ireland, which totally ignored any Jewish role in the struggle for Irish independence, would seem to vindicate Keogh. In contrast, historian Natalie Wynn criticises what she calls a "feel-good factor" in popular historiography, which overstates

Jewish involvement in Irish republicanism while it underplays Irish antisemitism. We began with two train journeys. We're going to close with one bus journey, one schoolyard conversation, and an encounter in Dublin's National Gallery.

All three antisemitic incidents were related to me firsthand by those involved. In the middle of World War II, A Jewish schoolgirl was on the bus on her way home from her Dublin school, when another passenger, a well-dressed woman, calmly addressed her in a frightening, sneering tone, "Just you wait till Hitler comes." 70 years later, just eight years ago, an American-born Jewish schoolgirl was shocked and very confused when another girl said to her in their Limerick schoolyard, "You killed Jesus." And just five years ago, a young diplomat working in the Israeli embassy in Dublin was showing her mother, who was visiting from Israel, around the National Gallery. They wanted to record their visit for posterity so they asked a well-heeled, middle-aged Irish woman if she wouldn't mind taking their photo on their phone. The woman had heard them talking a language she couldn't identify, so she asked, "Where are you from?" "Israel," they replied.

With not a shred of embarrassment, she told them, "It's a pity the ovens didn't get you." My wife comes from a small Irish town called Carrickmacross. In 2010, Israel's ambassador to Ireland, Zion Evrony, paid a goodwill visit to the town and signed the visitor's book. In a striking example of the pettiness, bloody-mindedness, and intense anti-Zionism of Sinn Fein under Gerry Adams's leadership, a Sinn Fein councilmember persuaded his fellow Carrickmacross counsellors to vote to rip out the page in the visitor's book that contained Evrony's message. Under its new leader, Mary Lou McDonald, Sinn Fein may well become part of an Irish government in the not too distant future. We may well yet see new lows in the decoupling of the Irish republican movement and the Zionist movement. Thank you.

Q&A and Comments:

- Yanky, that was so interesting, it was absolutely a fantastic talk. It brought so many areas that we knew together with areas that we knew absolutely nothing about. Now I'm going to have a look at the questions, which I will repeat for you. Oh yes. This is the first one, from Erroll Hackner.

Q: "You haven't yet mentioned the Catholic Church," he asks, "Will you like to say something about that?"

A: The Catholic Church is obviously a factor here, but not all of the Irish republicans were from Catholics. And some of them, especially those that that were more to the left, would have been quite anti-Church. I think it's a whole separate talk on the influence of the Catholic Church on Irish policy, not just regarding Israel, on a whole manner of things. It has been a very bad influence across the whole political, historical, social fabric of Ireland, not excluding terrible things done in the name of the Church around the question of children. So I think this demands a separate talk.

Q: Okay. Now this is from David Sefton. "Are there positive signs of reconciliation between Ireland and Israel?"

A: In a word, no.

- You don't want to elaborate on that?

- Well, you see, at the moment, Ireland is literally leading the charge in Europe. Ireland has always been the first to jump up and make a noise about any Israeli action in the Middle East, before the much heavier hitters in the EU. That's Ireland's role to show, and you see, another whole subject that needs examination here is Ireland's role of neutrality in the Second World War, the implications of that neutrality, and the very difficult moral arguments and decisions reached by the Irish government in the name of neutrality. And so I have to say that at the moment, neither politically nor any other way, not culturally, I don't see any short-term improvement and I'm worried that if Sinn Fein get into government, and it is quite likely that they will the next election, things could get worse, not better.

Q: May I ask you a personal question? In terms of you living in Ireland, how do you feel on a day-to-day basis? I know there's a community.

A: Yeah, the community does not experience any overt antisemitism. But when Israel is attacked so loudly and prominently in the media, many Irish Jews get nervous. This is something that we know, this is what, the people are telling us this. When we've spoken to the editors of the national newspapers, they have not really, either not understood or not wanted to understand what we were saying.

Q: There's a very interesting quote of Jonathan Sacks when he said, "First they hated our religion, then they hated our race, and now they hate our nation." And I think we all feel that now, don't we? I think it's not, I just wondered with Ireland's history, if it was even worse for you.

A: I don't know if it's worse. I'm going to get into trouble for what I'm going to say now. Most Irish people wouldn't have understood that sentence that you just said.

Okay, I get it. All right, now we've got lots of questions so let's go through some. A lot of them are saying, "Thank you very much, what about Mary Robinson and Israel?"

Isn't that interesting? I'm giving a talk next week in Ireland on, I've called it "Mary Robinson and the Antisemitic Hate Fest of Durban 2001."

That sounds very interesting. Now this is a comment from Bernice Stern: "My husband was brought to Ireland by Rabbi Schonfeld and they set up a home in the Irish castle for the children."

- Yes.

- "Their picture's in the Jewish Museum in Dublin," and she goes on to say, "The Jewish Museum was responsible for the children."

- Okay. No, the Jewish Museum, you mean the Jewish community?

- Yeah, the Jewish community, yes, that's right.

- Rabbi Schonfeld had to fight the Irish government for two and a half years after the war for permission to bring 100 kids to spend one year in Ireland. Immediately after the war, 500 German non-Jewish kids were invited in and when they wanted to stay, if they wanted to stay, they could. The Jews had to leave by the end of the 12 months. Clonyn Castle, Rabbi Schonfeld's son Jonathan has led a couple of missions here to visit Clonyn Castle, and there's a lovely book about it, but it's like, it's a drop. And it was like, de Valera had to intervene personally because none of his officials would allow these kids to come, and these were kids taken out of the camps.

Q: Okay. We've got some other questions for you. This is from Mr. Bocknick: "How many Jews are there in Ireland now?"

A: Okay, it's a fluid situation because there's probably 1000 or more Israelis at any one time working for the high-tech companies.

- Yes, of course.

- We reckon that there's about 750 Jews, what I would call affiliated Jews, who are involved in some Jewish identity in Ireland. Probably another 750 unaffiliated Jews, we know who some of them are and where they are. And so probably at any one time, between 2000 and 2500. At its height, the Jewish community was about 5000. And it really was, until the high-tech Israelis came in, it just went down steadily after that.

- You're getting a lot of compliments, somebody's saying, "It's such an interesting lecture but bleak." Now this is from Veronica Belling in Cape Town.

Q: "Can you comment on the Litvak community in Ireland, as they're sometimes compared to the South African Litvaks? A fair number of Irish Jews came to South Africa."

A: Okay, it's compared for very... Okay, it is compared for very good reason. Because the great wave of Jewish immigration after 1880, they were Litvaks from a tiny little area, which is why so many of the Irish Jews are related to one another. It was always well known that the two Jewish communities with the highest proportion of Zionists in them were the two Litvak communities,

South Africa and Ireland. And that's, you know, this is historical fact.

Q: That's very interesting. Now, this is a fascinating question from Rochelle. "During the 1970s," and she's commenting on the IRA training camps in Libya, when of course all those protest movements worked together under Qaddafi. And she says, "Would Arab funding have influenced antisemitism? Is there still a connection?"

A: Look, it was no secret that IRA were being trained in Qaddafi's camps. And I would say that many people in Ireland who would never, ever have voted for Sinn Fein, still retain some sort of romantic affiliation with what the IRA was trying to do, even though they didn't approve of the IRA's tactics. So I don't think it affected, in the South, it didn't affect the Jews. In Northern Ireland, many prominent Northern Ireland Jews left Northern Ireland at the height of the Troubles because the IRA were demanding protection or bombing their business premises.

- Right. Now, this is an interesting comment. "The Zionism of Bob Briscoe should not be understated. He made fruitless journeys to America, Poland, and South Africa on behalf of the revisionist Jabotinsky. Briscoe had introduced Jabotinsky to de Valera and was aware of Briscoe's efforts to help European Jewry get to Palestine." Okay. Any comment on that? Just speaks for itself?

- Well, absolutely so. And I think that earlier histories ignored his Zionism. It's only in more recent years that historians have discovered just what a Zionist he was. And in particular, he was a real groupie of Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky, he got permission to go on several overseas missions on behalf of Jabotinsky. So, oh yeah. A definite Zionist.

Q: Okay. Now this is from Richard Kanan, very interesting. "The message of condolence upon the death of Hitler by de Valera was reported in the 'Daily Mail'. How widely known was it and was there much reaction at the time?" That's from Richard Kanan.

A: So again, another talk that I have delivered, on a few occasions, is about the international reaction to de Valera's condolence visit. Here in Ireland, no one knows of it. I'll just tell a very little, a very short story. About 30 years ago, a new member of the European parliament, from Ireland, was at her very first meeting and her friend said, "You've got to come along to this reception this evening. We've got this guy called Elie Wiesel." And so, you know, she looked at her blankly, she'd never heard of Elie Wiesel. And so she goes along and her friend schleps her along to Elie Wiesel, says, "Elie Wiesel, this is the new MEP from Ireland." Elie Wiesel pauses, he looks at her, and he says, "Ah, Ireland! The country that expressed condolence when Hitler committed suicide." Now, of course, the woman had absolutely no idea, had never heard of the incident, and, you know, also knew nothing about the Holocaust. So it didn't get any, it got two inches in the Irish press. But oh boy, in America and elsewhere, Canada, they went to town over that condolence visit.

Q: Wow. Okay, this is fascinating. "How would you explain Unionists in Ireland generally being

very pro-Israel and Judaism? Israeli flags can be seen flying in strong Unionist areas."

A: I find it very embarrassing to see Israeli flags.

- Taking opposite sides.

- Yeah, I mean, it's not love of Israel, it's hatred of the IRA, and if the IRA hates Israel, we will support it. Now that's not the whole story because there are, of course, a lot of genuine Christian Zionists, and 99% of the Christian Zionists in Ireland would be Protestant and not Catholic.

Q: Mhm, okay. All right, Danny wants you to elaborate on the fusing of the worldwide terrorist organisations, he calls them "useful idiots", through the '60s. How long have you got on that one?

- Sorry, what was the question?

- Fusing of the worldwide terrorist organisations. You remember the Baader-Meinhof and the Japanese Red Army?

- Yeah.

- And the IRA.

A: I just, yeah, I think it's inevitable. That sort of thing happens. They all shared a sort of anti-American, which often is an excuse to be antisemitic, and vice versa. They say they're anti-Israel, they mean they're anti-American, or they say they're anti-American, they mean they're anti-Israel. So I think that's, in terms of geopolitics, probably inevitable that these sort of organisations would seek out one another and the IRA wasn't found wanting.

Okay, this is from Susan Lieberman: "I read Colum McCann and found an explaining of the background of the dual claims to Israel. He seemed to imply that the Holocaust was the reason for the Jews being there. Bias? Comment, please." Do you know that work, Colum McCann?

- I know who he is. I would choose another name in my bad books. And that's Obama. When Obama went to Cairo straight after he was elected and told the whole Muslim world that Israel was the result of the Holocaust, I heard that and I said, "Oh boy, this is such a lie!" It's such an untruth. And so, you know, I think that he did a bigger disservice to Zionism and to Israel than anybody else, any other author combined, when he said those stupid words. And of course in his latest book, he goes much worse.

- Yeah, a lot of people are commenting on that, aren't they?

- Oh my god.

-Q: That is a huge topic that you're obviously welcome to address much more. Now this is from Tom O'Higgins, "Can you comment on Ireland's role in the UN Security Council?"

A: Uh, hello Tom. I think that in practical terms, I'm not sure whether this is going to be significant or not, 'cause Ireland can say what it likes in any forum where it doesn't have the veto. It'll give it an additional platform to speak out against Israel when it wants to. I mean, funnily enough, this last few days is the first time in living memory that Israel is getting good press, only because Ireland is doing such a terrible job with vaccinations. And headlines in the local newspapers are saying, you know, "Israel has done a million and we've done 2000," and it gets headlines on the news.

- It won't last. You know that.

- No, it won't last. And like I said, I don't think that being on this, and Ireland fought for this as if it was, I don't know, getting into the finals of the World Cup.

- I know.

- I don't know if the prize was worth it, Ireland getting onto the Security Council. I mean, yeah, okay, they're there. How much?

Q: This is Melvin Lipschitz: "Is Conor Cruise O'Brien's thoughts on Israel taught in Irish schools?"

-A: Absolutely not. He doesn't get a look in. He doesn't, he just doesn't. First of all, they would be very suspicious of him because although he was Catholic, he joined the Unionist party and he spoke on their behalf. So no, no, no, no. Irish history as taught here, I think would be quite narrow and nothing deep, nothing serious, and certainly no mention of the part that Jews have played in Irish history.

Q: From Michael Burke, "The Irish Jewish relationship with Israel?"

A: Look, there are ambassadors. Sorry, you mean between the countries?

- I think no, I think he's talking about the Irish Jewish community itself in it.

- Oh, excellent. Oh no, very, very good relations. The present of our community is a very gregarious guy and he has made certain to maintain a very high level of dialogue with the president and with political leaders in those parties that will talk to him. And in that respect, in the last five, six years, I would say that the Jewish voice has been a bit more prominent than it used to be. The national TV and radio give a quarter of an hour slot each Pesach and Rosh

Hashanah for something that we do, I've done that a couple of times. So yeah, at an official level, it's quite healthy.

- This is a fascinating comment from Myra. And she says, "What I'm hearing of current-day Sinn Fein blows my mind. My cousin, professor George Schwab, a Jew, was directly involved in the peace process. He was a facilitator. I called him to confirm and he tells me he never once was aware of this." And George is a survivor. So that's a very interesting comment for you.

- Not aware of what?

- Obviously, of what you've been talking about. I think that's what she means.

- Ah, it's a long, tortuous history and, you know, you won't read about it because, again, I might get into trouble for this. The media here is so left-wing and is so much a follow-the-herd mentality that I can name maybe three people in Ireland who dare get into print and say things against Sinn Fein and in favour of Zionism.

Q: This is an interesting comment: "Who do you give your lectures to? Do you think you can teach people about the antisemitic feelings in Ireland?"

A: Look, I give my lectures wherever they're asked for. The 130, 40-odd that I've delivered in Covid is through a community chat in Dublin. So that goes out to people in Ireland and a few people around the world. I've also done guest talks like tonight for a few Anglo communities in Israel. I'll talk to anybody.

- I think the problem is that both you and I, with the work we are doing, and I think it's wonderful work, but we are in the main teaching to the converted.

- Yes.

- Or people who know. And I think one of the problems, obviously they don't know enough about Ireland, that's one of the reasons we asked you in. But on the whole, they have a general sensitive and interesting outlook on the world. And I think one of the problems we all face is that there isn't, those who are so anti, it's very difficult to actually get through to them through education.

Q: Now there's a question from Myrna: "Is there an exodus to Israel as in France?"

A: From Ireland?

- [Trudy] Yes. Are you getting out?

- Uh, no. In fact, as I've said, there's a, there's an exodus from Israel to Ireland because of the

high-tech. And some families have put down roots here. They don't all just come and then leave.

- Right, now there's--

- But no, it's an older community and I would say there might be one or two families a year that make Aliyah.

- I've got a personal message for you from Myrna Kulber: "Yanky, when we lived in Cambridge, your dad supplied us with meat."

- He did, he did. And it's my claim to fame around the world. You'd be amazed how many people remember Mr. Fachler, who supplied kosher meat in Cambridge, in Gibraltar, in London, in Bournemouth. Yeah.

- There's a couple of sort of comments. "My grandfather was a Litvak who lived in Ireland between 1880 and 1905, studied at Trinity, never mentioned antisemitism." And this is from Michael Britten: "Our granddaughter qualified for the Irish Dance World Championships in Dublin. Unusual for a Jewish girl. We hope she'll be able to participate this year." So that's nice news. Oh, this is--

- That's very nice. I've got to say that in early 1900s, quite a few of the first-generation Jews, sorry, second-generation Jews whose parents came from Lithuania, they were bright lads and they got into Trinity. So a lot of Trinity students, and don't forget, Trinity of course, was a Protestant university. You needed the Archbishop's permission, if you were Catholic, to go to Trinity. So that was more, it was quite liberal. I've not heard of many Jews who felt either antisemitism or felt that their careers were held back at that period.

Q: This is a very interesting question: "Is there any view by the Irish regarding circumcision or ?"

A: Oy!

- That would be annoying, I thought, yeah.

- We've got the usual suspects who raise it and as we all know, it is just another antisemitic attack on us. Yeah, there are one or two loud voices and let's just hope that it doesn't happen, but it could.

- And there's a couple of comments about wanting to hear your Mary Robinson lecture, so perhaps we can discuss that later. And this is more and more, "Thank you, thank you very much". This is from Steven: "Thank you for an interesting talk. My grandfather went from Lithuania to Dublin in the 1800s, lived there for 15 years, decided to move to South Africa, as cheap ship fares were offered. Do you know if this was a common occurrence?"

- No, I don't know anything about that. There's a well-known, probably untrue story. Why did Jews settle in Ireland in the first place, or especially in Cork? It's because when the ships arrived with the Jews in Cork and the Jews didn't speak any English, and the captain said, "Cork! Cork!" And the Jews say, "Is this New York?" He said, "Yup!" And off they got. And that's how they landed up in Cork.

- We have the same about Hull, we have the same about the English Jews who got there by accident. This is from Marilyn: "James Joyce was the only modern writer not antisemitic. Why?" Well, you might want to argue with that. But that's from Marilyn.

- No, I wouldn't argue with that. He had so many Jewish friends and again, a talk that I gave, I mentioned James Joyce and I mentioned this guy called Altman the Saltman. Now until quite recently, Joycean experts around the world were convinced that all of Joyce's role models for Leopold Bloom came from Trieste. Okay? And there's evidence to support that. But there's a family here called Altman, they're still around, and they have been gathering a lot of evidence and there's a book coming out soon, which claims that it was Altman the Saltman who was the real role model for Leopold Bloom. No, there's no doubt that he was very friendly with Jews. One of the people, his secretary at one point, who had been, his name was Con Leventhal, and Con Leventhal had been in Weizmann's Zionist Commission for a couple of years. And he then went to work for James Joyce. And every time he would come into work, James Joyce would sing "Hatikvah".

Q: Okay, now, "Has the antisemitism crossed the Atlantic to the Irish community there?" That's from Barry Kester.

A: Like I say, there's been no upsurge of antisemitism, per se, in Ireland. It's the anti-Israel-ism that is very obvious and causes disquiet certainly among many of the community who were born here. And for the first time in their lives, they're not feeling as welcome as they thought they would be.

Q: I think it's that line of Rabbi Sacks. It is so difficult to draw that line, isn't it, between antisemitism and hatred of Israel? It's a very fine line. Now this is from Lila Levine: "Did Briscoe's daughter become a nun and how did he react to that?"

A: I heard something, I don't know enough about it. I know his two sons. Joe is no longer with us. Joe was the longest-serving, he was a dentist and was the longest-serving soldier in the Irish army, ever. And the other son was also later a Lord Mayor of Dublin. So, you know, a very political family, very connected with Fianna Fail. But as I mentioned, a lot of misgivings today about how the family was lied to before and during World War II, when none of the requests that Bob Briscoe made to try and help Jews, and he sent letters and affidavits and everything, and he was just lied to. So that's really, I think, left a bitter taste.

Q: And this is Jonathan: "Was it true that the Black and Tans served in Palestine?" And of

course they did. But that's something we'll be dealing with as well. There's a lot of people want to hear your talk on Mary Robinson, by the way. So we have to talk about this. "Any comments on Irish soldiers in the UN peacekeeping force on the Israel-Lebanon border?" That's from Teddy Herman.

A: Okay, it has not always been peaches and cream, especially when soldiers were killed through crossfire. It's a small country with a tiny army. And so when a few hundred, couple of hundred Irish soldiers go to the Sinai or to the Golan Heights, they make a huge deal of it here. So long as there's not too much hot fire going on, it's not really an issue. And what's interesting of course, is that the Irish soldiers live on this side of the border, obviously, you know. So it only rears its head when there's a problem.

Q: Okay, "Based on Yanky's comment on Obama, does he see a repeat when Biden takes over?"

A: I want to say this. Biden, if he tried, could not be worse than Obama. And Obama's book, by the way, Obama has done an about-turn when it comes to publicly berating Israel almost on the scale of Jimmy Carter. And the ridiculous historical inaccuracies in Obama's book, in a schoolboy essay, you wouldn't get away with what he did.

Q: There's a lot of problems on propaganda, et cetera, isn't there? Now this is, again, a big question for you. You've got lots of compliments, by the way, I'm not reading all of them. "Would you agree that the power of the Catholic Church in Ireland has finally been broken?"

A: Almost. We're almost there. Certainly it is no longer able to hold sway over the political side of things. That, it's true, has gone. There is still some residual problems because on paper, the Catholic Church still owns many schools and hospitals. But I must say that the Archbishops in recent years have been very enlightened, very different from some of the ogres that held the positions in the past. So yeah, the back of their power has been broken and they are slowly learning to adapt to modern society. The problem today is that almost every month, a new historical tragedy emerges, which brings the church into massive disrepute. We're talking about babies being stolen, babies being maybe murdered, women being forced to work as slaves. So there is a lot in the history that will take a long time to get past it.

Q: A question from Vera Freudmann: "Are there any cultural or religious connections between the Jewish community and the churches?"

A: Yes. Hello, Vera. Yes, a friend of mine is the chairman at the moment of a large interfaith organisation in Dublin with about 10 different faiths connected. I've addressed dozens of groups of pro-Israel Christians, but they are 99% Protestant. But no, there is no, it's quite neutral. There's certainly no trouble. There's certainly no problems. And the Rabbi, he's not called the chief rabbi, but he's the head rabbi, Rabbi Lent here in Ireland, is invited to every single official government occasion, even though, you know, we are the smallest. But I think that's a historical

thing because Jews always were, and because we had chief rabbis of the calibre of Jakobovits and David Rosen. Because of that this is almost historical, but it means that we're not totally forgotten.

- Anyway, we've had so many questions, Yanky, and I think we have to close now, but what can I say except to thank you? It's been an absolutely superb talk. You had nearly 100 questions and I think you've answered an awful lot of them for us. So again, all our thanks for illuminating a subject that I don't think many people knew about and it's important that we do. So thank you very much and we'll see you again. So take care.

- Thank you! Bye, everybody.