

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR:

Having read Kevin MacDonald's review of Joseph Bendersky's brief against the interwar American military ["Enemies of My Enemy," *TOQ*, Winter 2001, pp. 63-77], I would like to register my reactions. Like everything else that I've been privileged to see of Professor MacDonald's work, this particular review makes useful points. Even more importantly, it takes on issues that most non-Jewish intellectuals are too terrified (or self-terrified) to raise. MacDonald is correct to stress that at least some of the complaints about the disproportionately large Jewish representation in radical leftist politics put out by Military Intelligence in the thirties just happened to be true. Bendersky assumes quite naively that any comment uttered about Jewish participation in subversive organizations betrayed vicious bigotry—and should be dismissed out of hand. Bendersky also draws inflated comparisons between off-color remarks about Jews made by or attributed to American officers or politicians and the kind of anti-Semitism then being practiced in Nazi Germany.

Where MacDonald and I would disagree with regard to Bendersky (whom I first met in the late sixties when he was my graduate assistant at Michigan State) is in the importance that MacDonald assigns to his book in the context of the struggle between the rising Jewish race and a by then threatened WASP elite. Is Bendersky's work "an extraordinary record of an important arena in the conflict between Jews and Northern Europeans," "a triumphalist history written by a member of a group that won the intellectual and political wars of the twentieth century"? Bendersky (who, by the way, is not Jewish but a Ukrainian Catholic) demonstrates nothing as grandiose as what MacDonald suggests. He presents with ominous commentary all the anti-Jewish scuttlebutt that may or may not have been uttered by those associated with the American military in the twenties and thirties. Indeed similarly abrasive remarks were no doubt showered on other groups, if Bendersky had bothered to notice what every foul-mouthed officer had said about a "mick," "nigger," "dago," or "Southern cracker" promoted beyond his supposed proper place. The significant fact is these politically incorrect officers would soon be fighting against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, on the side of the Soviets and world Communism, and would decimate their far-rightist foe. How could it be that what Bendersky depicts as a Nazi-like officer class would play such a role—and in most cases do so with alacrity? In my considered view,

Bendersky proves nothing about the military in the period he treats, except its failure to exemplify the standards of political correctness of a later generation.

What may be most relevant in looking at this book is its appeal to the prevalent Western victimological culture. A neoconservative press, Basic Books, published it. Moreover, *Commentary*, and other Jewish magazines that obsessively look for the telltale signs of anti-Semitism, on these shores as well as elsewhere, gave thumbs-up to Bendersky's work. Like a recent biography of Henry Ford by Neil Baldwin and the American Jewish histories churned out by Leonard Dinnerstein, Bendersky is riveting on to a growing readership made up of vocally anti-Christian Jews and self-hating WASPs. He is happily pursuing a booming market, which reflects on American society more than it does on the intrinsic value of the writings in question. From various victimologists pretending to be historians, one of my students last semester took away the understandable impression that the U.S. in the 1930s swarmed with virulent anti-Semites and differed in its bigotry from Nazi Germany only in degree.

In the thirties the U.S. was a country moving leftward politically, which would soon be fighting fascism on the side of the Communists. While there was a flare-up of anti-Semitism during the Depression, and with the rise into prominence of the predominantly Eastern European Jews who had come at the turn of the century, Bendersky (and perhaps MacDonald) makes too much about very little.

One of the points to which MacDonald alludes, without expanding on, is the soaring strength of American Communism in the thirties relative to any group on the American far right. Curiously, this rallying to the far left did not produce in the U.S., as happened in Europe at the same time, an appreciable backlash in terms of a far-right mass movement. (Note there were focal points of social discontent in the U.S. that like the followers of Father Coughlin drifted temporarily toward the fascists in the late thirties after having held rather typical social democratic positions. But such groups never showed in the same period the electoral or organizational strength of the far left, particularly the Communists.) The reasons for this, as explained by Philip Jenkins in a provocative study of the anemic far right in Pennsylvania from the thirties into the sixties, are extremely complex, relating to, among other things, the deep religious divisions found on the interwar American right. To me what seems equally relevant, and what MacDonald explores in his trilogy, is the individualistic mindset that comes to predominate in a country founded and inhabited by Protestant sectarians. Such settlers and their descendants have not been much attracted to organicist movements and, with due respect to American Jewish historians, have rarely shown interest in becoming anti-Semites. In any case what Bendersky interprets as a nativist backlash specifically directed against Jews are only the social gripes and reports about Jewish proclivities toward radical politics registered by particular military officers in what until the eve of World War II was a scaled-down national army. Unlike Bendersky and

MacDonald, I am not struck by the fact that “anti-Jewish attitudes were common in the officer corps” during World War II but were held down by the Roosevelt administration. Whether or not such “attitudes” could be found and what exactly constituted such attitudes are less relevant matters than what the American officer corps did in the war itself.

Paul Gottfried, Ph.D.
Professor of Humanities
Elizabethtown College

REPLY TO DR. GOTTFRIED:

I am an admirer of Paul Gottfried’s work and cite him quite often in mine. I agree entirely with his comments that Bendersky’s book is well designed to appeal to the current victimological Zeitgeist. Like many contemporary authors (Jewish and non-Jewish), Bendersky has latched on to a winning strategy for great reviews in prestigious publications and a lucrative career: Write moral condemnations of any aspect of the pre-1965 culture of the white, European-descended majority of the United States, especially any suggestion that they did not fully embrace the seismic shifts in both popular and elite culture that were being wrought by the newly arrived, very energetic Jewish minority.

While generally in agreement with my review of Bendersky, Gottfried complains that I attach too much importance to the subject matter of the book, what Gottfried terms “the struggle between the rising Jewish race and a by then threatened WASP elite.” Gottfried reduces the subject matter of the book to the level of “scuttlebutt”—fairly harmless banter reflecting folk wisdom about the characteristics of other ethnic groups. The corollary to this thesis is that there really wasn’t much of a struggle—that Jews, and especially Jewish immigrant radicalism, were not really a threat to the United States, its value system, or its erstwhile Northern European elite. There are several problems with this point of view.

The officers’ words and actions did not simply reflect folk wisdom about various ethnic groups. Bendersky goes to considerable pains to document that the officers were schooled in Madison Grant, Lothrop Stoddard, Henry Pratt Fairchild, William Ripley, Gustav Le Bon, Charles Davenport, and William McDougall. These theories were taught at the Army War College by people associated with the most prestigious academic institutions in the land. As noted in my review of Bendersky and in my book, *The Culture of Critique*, the decline of this way of thinking was not the result of new data but the result of a relentless,

politically motivated campaign led by academics who were strongly identified as Jews and led by Franz Boas. It is of great importance to chart the decline of the influence of these racial theorists and the concomitant rise of the Boasian school. Bendersky's book shows quite clearly that by the mid-1930s, the transformation was well under way. Moreover, as I try to show in my review, the officers' ideas on the characteristics of Jews and the sources of anti-Semitism were in fact quite accurate. Notably missing from their worldview were the myths and libels that Jews were to be hated because they killed Christ or killed Christian children and drank their blood. Their beliefs about Jews were based on what Jews were actually doing to change the country—particularly their very large involvement in Bolshevism and other forms of political radicalism. These officers were usually quite circumspect in their assessment of Jewish attitudes and behavior. Even the credibility of the *Protocols* hinged not on the document itself but on the entire political context: to the extent that the *Protocols* had any impact at all on the officers, its credibility derived from the fact that it seemed to be a good description of the behavior of significant portions of the Jewish community.

While it is undoubtedly true that the officers had negative folk beliefs about blacks, Italians and the Irish, I see no reason to suppose that they viewed these latter groups as anything like the threat they perceived immigrant Eastern European Jews to be. When Captain John B. Trevor drew up contingency plans to defend New York City in 1919, maps were produced which represented the concentrations of various ethnic groups. Superimposed on the map of ethnic distribution were designations of radical meeting places, and by far the largest concentration of these were in Jewish neighborhoods. From everything we know of the period, the attribution of greater radicalism to Jews is completely justified. Jews had a well-deserved special place in the thoughts of these army officers. The situation is analogous to the present situation in the U.S. following the events of September 11: an official intent on dealing with domestic terrorism would be well-advised to pinpoint immigrant Muslim neighborhoods on the theory that they are more likely than, say, immigrant Haitian neighborhoods to be involved in terrorism. In retrospect, one can agree with Bendersky that a Bolshevik revolution in the U.S. was unlikely, but it surely could not have been obvious that there would be no violence or terrorism resulting from the torrent of radical rhetoric so characteristic of immigrant Jewish neighborhoods during this period. Similarly, the concern of the tsarist government in Russia with Jewish radicalism between 1880 and the Bolshevik revolution was well founded given that Jewish radicals were responsible for a great majority of the political terrorism in Russia during this period. Moreover, the recent success of Bolshevism in the Soviet Union and its almost unbelievable level of bloodshed, the prominent role of Jewish radicals in the Bolshevik revolution and in the Soviet government, and the

strong support for Bolshevism among Jews throughout the Western world surely warranted deep concern about the Jewish immigrant community in the United States.

There was a variety of very important policy differences between the military officers and the Jewish community—differences that spanned the spectrum of foreign and domestic policy. These included policy toward Poland and other Eastern European countries after World War I, the levels of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, domestic political radicalism, policy toward the Soviet Union and Germany during the 1930s, treatment of German POWs and German and Jewish civilians after World War II, policy toward Jews in the Arab world during World War II, and policy toward the creation of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Whatever the negative stereotypes of other ethnic groups that the officers might have had, Jews were far more important players in the domestic or international political scene than these other ethnic groups. There were real conflicts of interest between the officers and the Jewish community, and the Jewish community managed to exert considerable and sometimes decisive influence in all of these areas in opposition to the prevailing views of the officers.

Gottfried makes much of the fact that “these politically incorrect officers would soon be fighting against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, on the side of the Soviets and world Communism, and would decimate their far-rightist foe.” They did indeed, but Bendersky shows that the officers did so reluctantly because they did not view a war with Germany as in the U.S. national interest and even though they sympathized with Nazis in their attitudes toward Jews. As noted in my review, during World War II, anti-Jewish attitudes were common in the officer corps, but, as Bendersky notes, “the political climate created by the Roosevelt administration had forced them into silence, particularly concerning Jews and Communists” (p. 301). And after World War II, “Feeling inhibited from speaking publicly by alleged Jewish power, a number of officers, as well as some government officials, complained incessantly in private that Jewish ‘refugees in American uniforms,’ together with Jews in the U.S. government, unduly affected American policy toward Germany in a variety of detrimental ways” (p. 364). One wonders why Bendersky writes of “alleged Jewish power” given the experience of officers such as General William van Horn Moseley and Colonel Truman Smith in the late 1930s and General George S. Patton after the World War II. These officers were subjected to enormous pressure from the media and the Roosevelt and Truman administrations because their actions and statements conflicted with policies advocated by Jewish organizations. It must have been obvious to military officers that they could either carry out the policy of the administration or they could leave the military, but they could not publicly express anti-Jewish attitudes, support for racialist theories or eugenics, or disagreement with the anti-German and pro-Israel thrust of U.S. foreign policy.

In the end, these officers were soldiers first and foremost and they had deeply internalized the democratic values of traditional America, undoubtedly as a result of their strong identification with the culture in which they grew up.

former non-interventionists like Charles Lindbergh, whose associations with high-ranking officers during the 1930s became a focus of media complaints, embraced the war effort after the attack on Pearl Harbor without ever disavowing their attitudes on the causes and consequences of the war. Lindbergh himself volunteered to serve in the army air corps during World War II despite his belief that the war would lead to the suicide of European civilization and the white race. Also indicative is that the attitudes of professional respect and the network of personal friendships between Moseley and the other officers, including Eisenhower and George C. Marshall, remained intact. After Moseley's retirement in 1938, Marshall wrote to him: "I know you will leave behind a host of younger men who have a loyal devotion to you for what you have stood for. I am one of the company, and it makes me very sad to think that I cannot serve with you and under you again" (p. 309). Support for Moseley's views was widespread among the officers, with the only criticisms being not that Moseley was wrong but that criticizing the administration would have negative repercussions for the army. There was a great deal of complaining in private about the policies of the administration, but in the end the officers did their duty, including carrying out the severe anti-German policies of the post war era advocated by Jewish organizations and the media.

I also agree with Gottfried that the individualistic strains of American civilization strongly militated against a mass anti-Jewish movement taking hold in the U.S. during the 1930s. As I discuss elsewhere (*TOQ*, Summer 2002, Vol. 2, #2), Western individualism derives ultimately from a prolonged evolutionary history during which the main pressures were adverse environmental conditions rather than competition with other groups. The response of these military officers was not to advocate the creation of a collectivist, organicist anti-Jewish movement similar to German National Socialism as a defensive movement against their perceived enemies. Theirs was a struggle aimed at the preservation of European ethnic homogeneity and the individualistic heritage of European-American cultural forms in the face of what they quite rightly viewed as a Jewish onslaught. They never questioned the representative form of government, the separation of powers, or the subordination of the military to civilian authority even as these cultural forms increasingly meant their own marginalization and ultimate defeat. These tendencies continue today among the vast majority of European-derived people in the U.S. even as we approach what Pat Buchanan has aptly termed *The Death of the West*.

Kevin MacDonald, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
California State University-Long Beach