October 7, 1992
To: Ernest Mandel
From: Lenni Brenner

I have before me your letter of August 20, 1992, to the editorial board of the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism. It critiques my article, "Today's Jews in Today's America." I also have your letter of September 23rd to your comrade, Steve Bloom. It deals with an article, "The New Sociology of American Jewry and the Fight for Revolutionary Change," which I co-authored with him.

You denounced my first article, "with its clear antisemitic innuendo. Your second letter does not claim that our co-authored piece is anti-Semitic. But it faults our shared opinion "that the Jews are well integrated in the American ruling class (it would be more correct to say 'some Jews')." You say that weimar Jews were even more integrated, "And you know what happened afterwards."

Comrade Bloom suggested that I write you, answering your accusation, and proposing that we meet on your American visit. Apparently that is impossible. Nevertheless we can still discuss these matters via the mails.

If you knew me, you would think it hilarious that anyone accused me of stooping to an innuendo. My dictionary defines an innuendo as a "hint insinuation, a veiled reflection." Everyone who knows me, friend or foe, knows that I'm blunt and outspoken. "Lenni Brenner cannot be accused of mixing themes or mincing words." That's the Jerusalem Post on my 1986 book, Jews In America Today. Everything I said in the art you denounced for its "innuendo" was first spelled out in that
Yet even my Zionist reviewer hailed the book: "You don't have to agree with Brenner to enjoy reading *Jews In America Today*.

The *London Review Of Books* called it "a raucus over-and-underview of where American Jews have got to over the past forty years." They also liked it. The American Library Association *Booklist* said of *The Lesser Evil: The Democratic Party* that "Muckracking is alive, kicking, red-faced with indignation, and unputdownably readable....A brilliant polemic." *Zeta*, an important left liberal magazine, said the book was "written in the style of a streetwise fighter" and that it was "a kick to read." No innuendos anywhere in sight.

To demonstrate that I never bother with hints, clear or veiled, let me be categoric about your August 20 epistle: It is a political libel. And you write like a know-it-all. As proof, I quote your "A Biographical Sketch of Abram Leon," prefacing his *The Jewish Question*:

The vitality of the ideas of the Fourth International, which are nothing else but the conscious expression of historical reality, seeks only the occasion and the men in order to become reaffirmed at every turn.

No false modesty here! Bloom says that you no longer talk in this omniscient way. I have read little of your works, so I don't know. But the tone of your letter shouts out loud that you are a humble man who will readily admit that he has a whole lot to be modest about. If you do not now claim to know it all, you certainly feel you know more about my country and my specialty, American Jewry, than I do.

This is why I've told Bloom that I am far less sanguine than he is that I can convince you that you are wrong regarding my article or our joint piece. At any rate, we have a saying here: Put up or shut up! If, after reading this response to your attack, you do not retract accusation that my article was, in any way, anti-Semitic, then
insist that you repeat your charge in public. The accusation is already semi-public. Comrade Bloom has requested that I send a copy of this letter to the USec Bureau, as apparently they have seen your letter, and are interested in the question. However, you should be certain that if you do publicly denounce me, that I will convoke a socialist movement court of honor to hear your charges and my rebuttal.

I submitted my article to BIDOM about 11 months ago. Since then my fanatic enemies have refused to even meet with me, so that I could be apprised of their objections, or make any clarifications that might satisfy them. Now those fanatics have made an international affair out of my piece. I have notified BIDOM that I have a right to be angry at having been excluded from a debate over my alleged anti-Semitism, and that I will not tolerate any further such discussion, behind my back. If anyone wishes to attack me, they must understand that I will make the debate public.

Recall what Trotsky said, in his *In Defense of Marxism*, when he was likewise accused of anti-Semitism:

If anti-Semitism or other race prejudice exists in our party, it is necessary to wage a ruthless struggle against them through open blows and not thru vague insinuations. But the question of the Jewish intellectuals and half-intellectuals of New York is a social not a national question.

To be sure, I'm not a member of your International. But I have spoken on several occasions for Fourth International Tendency forums. They and other affiliates, especially in Britain, have sold my books. Now a BIDOM editor has co-authored an article with me, who you accuse of "clear antisemitic innuendo." Politically, if I'm an anti-Semite, Trotsky's statement demands that you and your American colleagues
publicly repudiate me, and not merely quietly reject my articles.

Before refuting your libel now, I give you background information about myself, so you will better appreciate why no one on the American left will accept that I'm an anti-Semite. I was arrested five times during the Black civil rights struggle. I spent the years from 1968 through 1973 organizing for the movement for civil rights for Catholics in Northern Ireland. And now I have an international reputation for my books against Zionism. But no one can seriously say that my support for the Palestinians has, in any way, an anti-Semitic content. To the contrary. Here is a statement of mine, from Principles of the Palestinian Revolution, a pamphlet I wrote with Edwin Krales, another anti-Zionist Jew, in 1982:

We see that old-line Arab nationalism has led to the weakening of the struggle, to the deemphasis of the slogan of a democratic secular state. Paradoxically, admitting Jews into the PLO would work in the opposite direction, it would be an open declaration that the PLO stands for the full right of the Palestinian people to all of their homeland....To break out of their impasse the PLO must take the road of mass revolution, of Leninist internationalism. And that means - and can only mean - the obligatory recruitment of Jews....(I)sn't it past time for the PLO to invite those Jews, like (Israel) Shahak, who have stood by their side, and will stand by their side, in their hour of peril, while the Arab states betrayed them, to join the PLO? 400,000 Jews who demonstrated against the massacre can be looked upon as a pool of potential recruits. To be sure, many of these still see themselves as 'peace Zionists,' but whose fault is that, given the fact that the PLO has made no effort to recruit them, and doesn't even publish in Hebrew? There is exactly one way to get a democratic secular Palestine and that
is through a democratic secular movement. We know of no better way, or, more profoundly, no other way, of proving to the sceptical Israeli masses that the PLO doesn't plan to someday 'drive the Jews into the sea.'

The left public will not believe that anyone faulting the PLO for not recruiting Jews was an anti-Semite or has become one. Now I go further. In 1981, the Neturei Karta, the most important Orthodox Jewish anti-Zionist movement, sent me to Beirut as their envoy, so that I could apprise them as to whether the PLO would ever recognize Israel. (They sent me, a Trotskyist, because they saw that the PLO always told them what they wanted to hear) In 1983, their chief rabbi's widow had me edit her memoirs. I lived for 3 months with the sect, in the ultra-Orthodox quarter in Jerusalem.

No one will believe that I somehow fooled these intense Jews, but that you, half a world away from me, instantly saw my anti-Semitism.

There is more. In 1985, the New Republic, a fanatic Zionist publication, 'exposed' the fact that the Institute for Historical Review, a group which denies that the Holocaust happened, praised my book, Zionism in the Age of the Dictators. I contacted the IHR to get their review. They told me that they had praised it twice, but that one of the reviews was destroyed in an arson fire. I took that as my excuse to make a public statement regarding them:

I share not one iota of your mad ideology. I am your implacable opponent. I do not believe you have any right to exist...and I support any and all attempts, by any and all, Zionist or anti-Zionist, to bust up your institute and your meetings.

I then had my statement publicized in The Nation, a leading magazine, and reported the episode in Jews in America Today.
Do you doubt that people will find it far-fetched that the author who hailed the burning of an anti-Semitic office is now to be thought an anti-Semite on your say so?

And, finally, my girlfriend is a Jew. I work for two Israelis here. It is amazing, is it not, that none of these Jews noticed my anti-Semitism, so apparent to you, from afar? Let's role this all together: Not only will people not believe that the above Lenni Brenner is anti-Semitic, but, if you dare publicly repeat your charge, you will only convince them that you are a gross libeler.

Indeed, you would do well to carefully consider this letter, and reread my article in light of it. And then consult with Bloom. He will tell you that I welcome any criticism of my sociological interpretation of American Jewry and/or its status here. But that I will most certainly react with fire and sword to any accusation of anti-Semitism regarding that same sociology. And that I am quite capable of generating publicity for my response to any such libel. He will surely tell you that such a scandal, created by you, not me, will devastate BIDOM's work, particularly among left Blacks, who know me well for my work exposing Israel's South African alliance, and for my work in exposing the Jewish establishment's opposition to affirmative action.

I looked for what in my article gave you the notion that I was an anti-Semite. I believe it was my background paragraph on the three waves of Jewish immigrants into the US. I wrote:

The Sephardic Jews who came here in colonial times were almost all merchants. But they played almost no role in the industrialization of the country. In the mid-nineteenth century, many German Jews started as walking rural peddlars, and ended up as successful
department store owners. Several of these peddlars, notably the Lehman Brothers, Kuhn Loeb, and Goldman, Sachs, parlayed their wholesale networks into "investment banking" brokerage houses. While some 'Russian' immigrants had been rich in the alte heim, more had been petty traders there. But some of these went into real estate here, and others went into what were marginal industries at the turn of the century, like the new movies, and made fortunes.

This set you off. In nothing flat you were ready to denounce me.

My poor little paragraph was

a straight echo of the 19th century accusation that Jewish capitalists are 'unproductive' speculators and 'usurers' (the Nazis spoke about 'Wucherkapital,' usury capitalists which harks back to the traditional Catholic antisemitic assertions from the 12th century on) as opposed to the 'productive' if not 'creative' non-Jewish capitalists.

This is libelous. First off, do you challenge a single one of my facts? Of course not. Because every statement is true. Secondly, far from being any kind of echo of anti-semitic propaganda, all of this is a rehash of standard Jewish scholarship, in the Encyclopedia Judaica and elsewhere. I can say with absolute certainty that not one American Jewish scholar would find anything improper in that paragraph.

I am well aware of the anti-Semitic crap about "unproductive" Jewish speculators, etc. But you show me one word in my article, or in any of my writings, that implies that merchant capitalists are in any way worse than industrial capitalists. I was merely trying to give BIDOM's readers, mostly of gentile background unfamiliar with Jewish history, a capsule backgrounder on the part Jewish capitalists played in America at various times before the present. As I was writing a short article, I could only devote a paragraph to this. Certainly
more could have been said. But I do not retract a single comma of it.

I must candidly say that I'm amazed that you, an economist, could be so illiterate about the economic role of early American Jewry. I recommend my book, Jews In America Today, where I devoted a chapter to the topic. There I clearly stated that many of the 18th century Sephardim were artisans, candlemakers, distillers, tailors; more commonly they were shopkeepers, sellers of dry goods, hardware and liquor. The most successful became "merchant shippers" in the international trade, which frequently meant West Indian rum and sometimes slaves. I added that "Harmon Hendricks, the developer of the first copper rolling mill in the 1840s, was the only Sephardic representative in the front ranks of capital."

Why did these Sephardim play such an unimportant part in the industrial development of the country? First off, they were a miniscule group. There were only 4,000 Jews here in 1820, and they had ceased to be the majority of Jews by 1720. Few came here after 1760. Even in colonial times 30% had converted to Christianity. Additionally, most of them lived in Savannah, Georgia, Charleston, South Carolina and Richmond, Virginia. These were off the path of industrial development, which was mostly northern. And they were prosperous as merchants. They had no particular incentive to go into industry. As I dealt with these sufficient reasons to explain their lack of industrial involvement in my book, tell me why I would also echo 19th century anti-Semitic bullshit in my article? And do so by "innuendo" no less?

Bluntly, you saw the words "merchants. But they played almost no role in the industrialization of the country," and you put two and
two together and you got five. As we American guys say, you "freaked out."

Let's go to the German Jews next. Everything I said about them is true and undisputed by anyone knowledgeable in American Jewish history. Now that I'm looking at this paragraph again, I notice that I did not mention their role in the garment industry. But certainly I wasn't hiding it. I had dealt with this in my book:

The last people these Jewish Teutons wanted to identify with were the Ostjuden, the Orthodox Yidden of the Russian empire, whose sudden migration started in 1882. Their appearance, many wearing earlocks and outlandish garb, created anti-Semitism. But it was German Jews, not gentiles, who put "kike" and "sheeny" into English. Class antagonism added to their hostility. Some of them had started as second-hand dealers, and as tailors had established themselves turning out Civil War uniforms. The mechanical cutting knife of the 1870s completed the shift to the modern world of ready-to-wear clothes. Approximately half of the new arrivals had garment trade experience in the alte heim, and the first of these were put to work in the "uptowners'" shops. Conflict increased as the capitalists encountered graduates of Russian revolutionary movements agitating their labor force.

There was more of course, statistics on the garment industry that would be tedious to recount here. I then had the following to say about the economics of American Jewry. I quote this to further demonstrate that of course I have a rounded view of the sundry Jewish roles in the economy:

For several decades, the emerging capitalist and white collar strata were a minority within the Jewish population, but by the early 1930s manual workers were only approximately 1/3 of the work force. They were still approximately 30 percent in New
York as late as the early 1960s. Most blue collar workers never rose out of their class. However, they wanted their children to "make something of themselves" and these soon poured into the civil service. Eventually they became a majority of New York's elementary and high school teachers.

At any rate, would the gifted Marxist soothsayer/economist wish me to put the above in? Hey! Glad to oblige. But how and why could I be echoing ant-Semitic propaganda if I had already written perfectly conventional Marxist material on different economic strataums of Jews in my book?

Yet, for all you wrote, the Jewish role in the 19th century growth of American industry was very small, unlike in the European countries you cited where Jews played a profound role in industry. However every American Jewish historian knows some of the answer. Industry frequently evolved out of crafts. But many of the German Jews who came here with artisan skills actually abandoned them for peddling in rural areas where there were no stores until successful peddlers set them up. Nevertheless that was hardly sinful, and I didn't accuse them of anything in this regard in my article or my book.

The Yidden, including my forebearers, didn't begin to arrive here until 1882. Most came in the 20th century. But even by 1882 it was too late for them to get too involved in industrialization. Most of heavy industry was already organized by American Christians. I do not even begin to see how you can complain about my saying that many small Eastern European Jewish capitalists went into marginal industries like the movies. Every movie history says this. You needed little capital to set up a studio in those technologically primitive days, and only a large hall and some chairs and a projector to open a "movie house."

But here again, how dare you accuse me of echoing anti-Semitic
propaganda! I am not in need of you to tell me that Jews, including capitalists, were involved in "productive" industry. My grandfather was a metal worker in the Ukraine. He set up a factory here, manufacturing restaurant equipment. Both my parents worked there. Much of my childhood was spent in that factory. Another grandfather was a fur worker. Later, my step-father was a cabinet-maker. One of my brothers drove a truck for 10 years before becoming a psychologist. Another is a beautician, another is an engineer, yet another is a chemist. I myself am a physical worker, on the streets of New York. Given all this, it is nothing short of brazen of you to say that I propagate anti-Semitic crap about Jews being non-productive!

High on your list of "Brenner's antisemitic assumptions" is your claim that my citing that 20 of our 67 billionaires and 98 of the 400 richest Americans are Jewish:

(R)eflects a serious misconception of the power structure of US monopoly capitalism....Those who "rule America"...do not do so on the basis of personal fortunes only....That rule is based upon the control of the largest industrial and financial corporations...

First off, who are you quoting with your "rule America"? That is not in either of my articles. You decided that my factual statement really meant, by "innuendo," that these Jews "rule America." In plain words, you projected your fantasy interpretation of my article onto me, in quotes no less! But everything I meant to say was right on the surface. Having given some Jewish capitalist history, I summed up where they stand today within their class. Yes, I know it is a favorite 'Marxist' indoor sport to pontificate on who 'really' "rule America." But I don't play that esoteric game. You do, and you decided to make me a fellow player. Thank you, but no thank you.
After reading your screed, I did a little quick research on which Jews owned what in the "50 or 100 largest of these corporations." (Which is it now? 50? Or 100? Or is it only 25? Or is it 150? You don't know - and can't know - because that isn't how things really break down.) I soon found, in *Forbes* 1991 "400 richest people in America" issue, that Walter Annenberg and his sisters own lots of GM stock. He is worth $1.6 billion. They make do with $825 million. But how much of this is in GM isn't said. I quickly realized that doing the kind of research to prove or disprove your estimate that Jews only own only "a couple" of the 50 or 100 largest firms would be an immense task. And it would be to no good point, since I wasn't trying to make any statement about Jewish influence within any inner circle of American power.

But let's stay with Annenberg for a minute because his case shows how useless your notion of the real power lying exclusively with domination of the 50 or 100 largest public corporations really is.

The bulk of his money doesn't lie in GM stock. He owned the *Daily Racing Form* and *TV Guide*, neither exactly central to capitalist economics. Nevertheless Ronald Reagan flew to his home in California, every year for the eight years he was President, to celebrate New Year's Eve. Tell me, if you dare, that he was not part of the inner circle.

Does the name Walter Shorenstein mean anything to you? He is only worth $300 million. And San Francisco realty is hardly the belly-button of capitalism. But would you like to know how powerful he is within the Democratic Party? Note well that the party runs Congress and, if the polls prove right, will soon take over the presidency.

In June 1987, the party honored him with a dinner. The June 14, 1987 *New York Times* described the affair:

Few events in recent months have more effectively conveyed the dependency of political candidates on major campaign fundraisers
than Mr. Shorenstein's party...."The candidates are all here on bended knee, that's what it's all about"...(ex-Governor Bruce) Babbitt (of Arizona) said...."I don't like to use the word 'force' (said Shorenstein)...But it was in everyone's interest that they appear here."

Over half of the 98 Jewish ultra-rich are realtors. Do they "rule America"? I doubt most concern themselves with Washington's policies if they don't directly touch on realty or Israel. Some Jews, like the two above, are intensely political. Obviously Annenberg has more influence under a GOP administration, and Shorenstein under the Democrats. But be sure of this: If a billionaire, Jewish or otherwise, calls Bush, Bush picks up the phone. He doesn't first consult the Fortune 500 list to see if their companies are on it. Many of them have private companies, so that they don't have to report certain things to the government, or bother with minority stockholders. But when the President of the US of A picks up the phone, because of your wealth, you are part of the ruling class, full stop, period, punto final. Does that displease any Marxist economist/visionary? If so, he will have to live with it.

But in no way did what I say, or what I say now, make me an anti-Semite. My contentions were that Jews are disproportionately represented among the very rich. And that they are no longer "a sort of pariah elite" or "in any way junior partners...(T)hey bear full responsibility for the effects of the system they uphold." Not 50% for sure. Not 100% for sure. 1000% for sure!

Do you have any objection to this? Do you think that those who, in your mind, really "rule America," exclude anyone from the inner circle of policy makers because they are Jewish? Let me remind you of what you surely know: Alan Greenspan, the head of the Federal Reserve,
is a Jew. Even as I was writing this, he was addressing the Business Council, which the *Times* describes as the "chief executives of the nation's largest corporations." (They do not give us a 50 or 100 or any other number, but the Council is certainly the real world equivalent to your vague notion of the real American powers—that-be) So is Kissinger who is still a power behind the throne. Do they "rule America"? Of course not. Do they even represent the Jewish capitalists, much less the Jews as a whole? Of course not. But their presence at the highest levels of influence — alone, without further reference to the obvious economic clout of the Jewish billionaires and multimillionaires — demonstrates my point, that whoever it is that in fact determines major policy, they are not anti-Semites, and that there are Jews at the pinnacle of imperialist power.

Now we come to the most bizarre of your projections onto me of fantasies that you sucked out of your thumb: "Worst of all," you say, I draw the political conclusion that somehow, in the USA, anti-Semitism is passé, a conclusion which on the basis of his reasoning should be extended to all Western countries — as a result of the growing integration of "the Jews" into the upper class and their growing assimilation.

None of this is true. I emphatically do not believe that what is true in America is necessarily true for other countries. In fact it is you who are extending what may or may not be true in other countries to the US.

Whether or not anti-Semitism is a serious factor now, or a potential danger in the future, in any given country, is determined by various factors. The degree of Jewish integration into the capitalist class, economically, socially and politically, is obviously important. But more crucial is the extent of anti-Semitism among
middle class elements. I'm no expert on France. But it seems to me that Le Pen rests on a long tradition of middle class anti-Semitism. The National Front in Britain is small. But it is far more important than all the anti-Semitic groups in the US. It has real links to the skinhead layer of working class youth. It must be fought every time it involves itself in 'Paki-bashing,' etc. Certainly the neo-Nazis in Germany must be fought to the end. Of course I don't believe that, because anti-Semitism is minimal here, it is minimal everywhere else!

When 'Marxist' prophets like yourself talk about future US anti-Semitism, you are indulging in left-wing eschatology: 'Yea, verily, the 4th International is tiny in the US now. But there shall come a "big bang," not at the beginning of time, but at the end of capitalism's days. A great Depression shall lay low ye rich. The middle class shall gravitate towards the two extremes. There shall be a final battle between the forces of good, i.e., "the 4th International," poised for "the occasion," and an American equivalent of the Nazis. Then the Hebrews, who have forgotten the One True G-d, the revolution, shall be attacked, as of old, and, of a surety, return to the fold.'

Proof of any of this? 'Look ye Lenni Brenner, ye miscreant, at David Duke, and repent of thy multitudinous sins! I repeat what Bloom and I said in our joint effort:

(While) David Duke's vote for governor of Louisiana should not be trivialized, his presidential campaign barely rose above the horizon....Duke said virtually nothing about either Jews or Israel, focusing (his) venom on "welfare mothers" and similar targets designed to appeal to anti-Black sentiment.

I clip every article on anti-Semitism out of the NY Times. Ditto the most important 'Jewish' paper, the Forward. Likewise BIDON.
Socialist Action and many other left journals. I write for the Amsterdam News, the largest Black weekly. It has been months since any of these devoted even an inch of space to the doings of this obvious has-been. They are all, the bourgeois press, the Jewish press, the left press, the Black press, no doubt - Oh, no doubt at all! - blind to "ominous signs which only people bent on political and physical suicide can ignore."

Here is another challenge: Since you are so certain that we are all in grave danger of physical annihilation at Duke's hands, especially since we ignore him, why don't you write an article saying this? Send it to BIDOM. Do you know what will happen? If you do not, I will tell you: The next time you walk on water across the Atlantic, they will greet you, as they always do, and carry you on their shoulders on a throne on poles, as they always do. But this time they will deposit you at the door of the home for Elderly Veterans of One Too Many Class wars.

''But just wait, ye scoffers,'' cries out our Bolshevik seer, ''comest ye Depression, and

Exactly like the shopkeepers in Europe met more and more hostility and hatred from their non-Jewish competitors during the depression of the thirties, these Jewish university graduates will meet more and more hatred from their competitors during the present depression if it lasts long enough.

Your apocalyptical auguries will appear to all Americans who think it through as little more than ravings of a foreigner who doesn't have the tiniest understanding of our history, or the remotest knowledge of our present day sociological realities. First off, there was a terrible Depression here in the 30s. There was a rise of anti-Semitism. But it was nowhere near the magnitude of European anti-Semitism. And it was
obviously inspired by the success of Nazism in 1933. You seem to think that our gentile professionals will, at some point in the future, choose to emulate Hitler, who every one knows was utterly defeated and ended up a suicide.

Not one in a thousand gentiles see themselves as competing with any Jews. Jewish shopkeepers are a dying breed. Their children go into professions instead. Jewish shopkeepers are being replaced by Arabs, especially Palestinians, Koreans, Indians and Pakistanis, etc. And, as I wrote,

(At least 10% of all professors are Jews, and the number is increasing. Whereas many schools once had Jewish quotas, today over 20% of the Nation's doctors and lawyers are Jews. Half the law faculty at Harvard is Jewish.

You don't begin to understand the on-the-ground implications of this. When academically gifted American high school students consider which universities to apply to, they all know that the best ones are those with the most Jewish and Chinese students and the most Jewish professors. 'Competition' between Jews and gentiles in academia is ancient history.

Today, educated gentiles here want their kids to be like the Jewish and Chinese kids. As I wrote in Jews in America Today,

Modern America's culture is simply unthinkable without the massive and disproportionate contribution of its Jews. It is almost as if the Jews assimilated America rather than the other way around.

In describing the importance of the right wing magazine Commentary, published by the American Jewish Committee, I even said

That Commentary is a Jewish magazine legitimatizes it with many intellectuals of Christian background, particularly of the older generation. One ex-Catholic explained to me, "My first Jewish
girl friend put my cap on right. Until then I thought Voltaire
was the head devil." For these the Jews are not only the secular
educated chosen people, they are the secularist political chosen
people.

I dare say that the majority of American Jews, especially of the
older generation, have asked themselves 'could it happen here?,' 'it'
being another holocaust. All the sane and intelligent ones are of one
mind. An American Holocaust is IMPOSSIBLE. If there were a serious
fascist threat here, it may or may not be anti-Semitic. But it would
certainly be anti-Black. But Blacks here are not 0.9% of the population,
as the Jews were in Weimar Germany. Nor are they middle class. They
are 12%, and working class. And, as everyone knows, poor Black
neighborhoods are extremely violent places. Every American knows
exactly what would happen if the Black masses thought that they were
in any danger of being returned to even the slightest form of segregation,
much less in danger of being annihilated. Every city in America would
go up like Los Angeles recently did. Here in New York, a miniscule
left-wing march, in support of LA's Blacks, panicked the capitalists, who
thought a Black riot might grow out of it. Within a couple of hours,
most bosses sent their workers home early. No whites wanted to be on
the streets if the Black masses rioted.

I have written at length about Black-Jewish strife in today's
America. But everyone knows that any Nazi threat towards annihilating
the Jews would be seen by every Black as a threat aimed equally at them.
Any danger that either group would lose their civil rights, much less
their lives, would create an instant Black-Jewish united front and rioting
in the streets. The capitalists and the politicians know this as well
as anybody. Even if the economy broke down entirely, and revolution
were on the order of the day, it would be the capitalists who would be
committing suicide if they tried playing around with genocide.

Yet, in spite of all this, with which I think even your American throne-bearers would agree, and in spite of the clear assimilation of the Jewish rich into the highest levels of capitalism, you still say that the rest of the capitalists will turn on them. You admonished Bloom in your September 23 letter:

You share Brenner's opinion that Jews are well integrated in the American ruling class (it would be more correct to say "some Jews"). I can assure you that in the Weimar Republic, German Jews were much better and much larger integrated into the German ruling class than are American Jews today. And you know what happened to them.

First, stop projecting notions onto me (and Bloom)! Who says all Jews are integrated into our ruling class? Secondly, your description of Weimar is potted history. Under the Kaiser, Bismark had allowed the Jews to enter every part of the economy. Thus Jews were more important in heavy industries, like shipping, than they were here. But Jews were totally excluded from the diplomatic corps, from the officer corps (except for doctors). There were anti-Semitic parties in the Reichstag. There was severe discrimination against Jewish professors. Student life was dominated by blut und boden (blood and soil) anti-Semitic dueling fraternities.

Under Weimar the formal restrictions ended. But social anti-Semitism continued. The Nazis were only one anti-Semitic party in the Reichstag. Aside from the Catholic Centre Party, (which was nominally opposed to religious discrimination, while actually having prominent anti-Semites in their ranks), the only burgerlich party that wasn't anti-Semitic was the very small Deutsche Demokratische Partei, which most Jews voted for. Exclusionary fraternities were the
norm. The Nazis took over the most important student organization in 1926. 100 German scientists denounced Einstein's theory of relativity. These were anti-Semites 'defending' their academic preserve from Jews. Many small shopkeepers hated department stores and the Jews that owned them. Many peasants were in debt to banks and blamed the 'Christkillers' for their problems.

In short, it is grotesque to compare today's America and Weimar Germany and to say that, hey, Germany's Jews actually had it better than American Jewry does, and look what happened to German Jewry. What you've done - again - is projected onto me a notion I don't hold. You are implying that, for me, the extent of future anti-Semitism here boils down to whether or not Jew can be found in a wide range of industries. But again I say that integration into capitalist economics is only one factor in deciding whether anti-Semitism will be politically important in America's future. Anti-Semitism is miniscule here, whereas it was considerable within the ranks of big capital and the middle class in Weimar Germany. Nazism didn't come out of the blue. German culture was heavily dappled with anti-Semitism, whereas it is near universally seen here as a flat earth theory.

Let's go further. Not only do I predict that, if a form of fascism arises in American capitalism's end of days, it will not be anti-Semitic, but I say that historically anti-Semitism played no role in Fascism's coming to power in its country of origin, Italy. After he abandoned the left, Mussolini began to occasionally echo the anti-Semitic ideas of the northern European right, which he had been reading. But he was not so anti-Semitic that he excluded Jews from his party. Five Jews were among the "fascists of the first hour." And his followers convinced him to drop the topic entirely.

Anti-Semitism had always been identified in
the public mind with Catholic obscurantism. It was the Church which had forced the Jews into ghettos and Italian nationalists always supported the Jews against the Popes, who they saw as enemies of a united Italy.

In 1848 the walls of the Roman ghetto were destroyed by the revolutionary Roman Republic. With their defeat the ghetto was restored, but the final victory of the nationalist Kingdom of Italy in 1870 brought an end to discrimination against Jews. In fact, to make the point, the King made a Jew the General in charge of the army that put an end to the Papal states.

The Jesuits continued to denounce the "conspiracies with the Jews (that) were formed by Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour." But clerical ranting against the nationalist heroes discredited anti-Semitism, particularly among anti-clerical youth of the nationalist petty-bourgeoisie. Since the essence of Fascism was the mobilization of the middle class against Marxism, Mussolini listened carefully to his followers' objections: what was the point of denouncing Communism as a Jewish conspiracy, if the Jews themselves were not unpopular?

Mussolini in power had Jews in his cabinet, he became pro-Zionist, and he even became a patron of refugee Jewish scholars who suffered from discrimination in eastern Europe. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Mussolini made a point of ridiculing his anti-Semitism. He did not become an anti-Semite until the Spanish civil war. He realized that a loyalist victory would trigger off increased opposition to his own regime from among his own workers. But he knew that he wasn't strong enough to sufficiently aid Franco on his own. He realized that he had to form an alliance with Hitler. And he understood that Hitler would never see him as a genuine ally as long as he had Jews in his party. So he invented an ad hoc 'Italian Fascist' version of anti-Semitism. But it didn't play well with the Italian people, including the capitalists. Anti-Semitism was so foreign to Italian culture that
even they understood the implications of it for Italy. It meant that
Italy was going to become Germany's junior partner, and was going to be
dragged into adventures that would not be in Italian capital's interest.

I go into this at length because I see no signs that you are aware
of this part of fascist history, still less that you are aware of its
contemporary implications. Today's US is infinitely closer to pre-
Mussolini Italy regarding the status of its Jews in its culture, than
it is to Weimar Germany. My argument is simplicity itself. An
American fascist demagogue could not count on a positive response to any anti-Semitic attacks. Indeed it would seem
crazy precisely to those gentile intellectuals who you fantasize as
turning on the Jews. (I would even go further to point out that
Kluxer-style anti-Black racism by any fascist would not only create
riots among the Black masses, it would enrage Blacks in the army.
And I point out that it is hardly an accident that the Chief-of-Staff
is Black. Bush understood that Blacks are now so important within
the military that without the loyalty of his Black troops, any
imperialist adventures would always be risky. But this is a separate
matter. It obviously impacts on the question of the nature of of a
potential American fascism. But you need not accept this to
grasp my first contention, namely that anti-Semitism is the lead
balloon of American politics, now and forever.)

I'll close by summarizing my arguments: Every aspect of your
letter is ass-backwards. It has no redeeming features. I'm no anti-
Semitic. There were no innuendos. You read things into my article.
Your understanding of the Jewish capitalist role in America, historically
and contemporaneously, is screwed up. Indeed your concept of our power
elite is oversimplified, a sort of Marxist fundamentalism. Your
notions of potential Jewish annihilation here at the hands of neo-Nazis
like Duke would make a laughing-stock out of you if they ever
become public. Your belief that America will certainly produce a mass
anti-Semitic movement tells us nothing except that you think that history
"exactly" repeats itself. You have surprisingly limited knowledge
of the history of fascism. And finally, all your visits here have
taught you nothing about the ordinary people of this country.

Your comrade, Steve Bloom, agrees with me that your letter was not
responsive to the real issues. I go further and say it was nonsense.
But he still has respect for you: "Someone can be completely wrong about
the thing and still be very intelligent on other things. In that case,
he can still learn from an honest exchange of views." Logically,
he is correct. But there is another, equally logical, way
of looking at your letter that is less hopeful about you. If
someone is so egregiously wrong about one thing, doesn't prudence
demand that we be very cautious about what he says about other things?
I think so. At any rate, my approach is to present my case as clearly
and emphatically as I can, not as a defense of myself, since I'm not
in need of defense, but as an attack on you as just another Trotskyist
Pope. Gerry Healy once publically denounced me as a police agent;
your attack on me as an anti-Semite is no better grounded, and comes
out of that know-it-all mentality that produced Healy.

You make up your mind: Either you remain convinced that I'm an
anti-Semite, and you so declare publically, or you retract your charge.
That is all I want of you. Given the massive folly of your letter,
I'm not in the least bit interested in any future political cooperation
with you or your movement. I want BIDOM to run the article I co-authored
with your comrade. Then I want nothing further to do with the magazine.
I intend to go on working with Bloom in our present venture, the
Committee to Stop Israel's Arms Traffic with South Africa and, if other
BIDON partisans help our committee, I'll work loyally with them. But be certain that under no circumstances will I have anything further to do with BIDON unless and until it disassociates itself from each and every person who irresponsibly considers even one comma of my writings to be anti-Semitic.