

ANTI-DEFAMATION WORK  
IN ENGLAND

THE Jews of England have always recognized the need for concerted and organized action, first, to obtain civil and political rights, and secondly to defend and maintain them when won. When the Board of Deputies of British Jews,<sup>1</sup> formed of representatives of the various synagogues in Great Britain, first drew up a constitution for itself in 1836, it stated in the preamble that 'it was of essential advantage to the interests of the Jews of Britain that in all matters attaching to their political welfare they should be represented by one body'; and among the functions of the Board as laid down in the constitution are to see that no infraction of the religious rights, customs and privileges of the Jewish community is allowed, and generally to watch over the interests of the Jews in the British Empire and to take such action as is conducive to their welfare and calculated to improve their general condition.

In 1919 the Board for the first time included in the sphere of its activities the refutation of calumnies against the Jews, a task which it entrusted to a special Press Committee. Truth to say, this Committee had till lately very

<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1760. Its first public act was to present an address of loyalty to George III on his accession. Since then it has had the status of a privileged body.

little to do, not because the allegations and slanders were few, but because they were generally spread abroad by obscure publications and organizations, and to have devoted attention to them would have been to advertise their activities, which would have done more harm than good. On major questions, however, affecting Jewry as a whole, such as the stir caused by the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, it took most energetic action; similarly it combated vigorously the allegation that Bolshevism is inherent in or identical in object with Judaism.

The last five years, as explained in the preceding chapter, have seen a determined effort made by a certain party to foster anti-Semitism in this country by means of anti-Jewish propaganda conducted with a technique learnt abroad. The Board has recognized the dangerous character of this movement, and has set out to fight it with all its power. In fact, this, along with the problem of assisting German Jewry, may be said to have been the chief occupation of the Board since I became its President. The work of the Board in counteracting anti-Semitic development has been conducted quietly, without advertisement or publicity. The disadvantages which advertisement and publicity would have entailed are obvious; nevertheless, the absence of them has exposed the Board to criticism on the part of some who have no idea how effective its work has really been in spite of its unobtrusiveness. It may therefore be well to set forth the principles which have been followed by the Board in fighting anti-Semitism, and in the light of them to discuss