

## **Ideas are not responsible for the people who believe them**

### *Farming, Fascism and Ecology: A Life of Jorian Jenks*

Philip M. Coupland

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#### **David Sivier**

**T**his is a sympathetic study of Jorian Jenks, one of the great pioneers of the modern Green movement and advocate of organic agriculture.<sup>1</sup> He was also a member of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists and an anti-Semite, who believed that the country's Jews should be deported to found a new homeland elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Coupland notes in his prologue how Jenks' Fascism has been used by climate change deniers as well as mainstream commentators like Jenny Diski and Jonathan Meades on the left, and Ross Clark and Geoffrey Hollis on the right, to attack the Green movement. Jonathan Dimbleby is the present head of the Soil Association and he made his feelings about Jenks very clear in his foreword to Philip Conford's history of the organic movement,<sup>3</sup> where he described the beliefs that Jenks had as 'foolish and foetid' and Jenks himself as one of a number of 'fatuous romantics'. Coupland states that the negative connotations of the term 'Fascist' are now so strong that, to attach it to anyone, is to put them beyond the pale of human sympathy. He therefore hopes that the book will provide some scope for better understanding the links between Fascism and the Green Movement, 'that many still find unexpected and are poorly equipped to understand'.

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<sup>1</sup> This available for preview. Press the preview button at <<https://tinyurl.com/y9cr7n45>> or <<https://www.routledge.com/Farming-Fascism-and-Ecology-A-life-of-Jorian-Jenks/Coupland/p/book/9781138688629>>.

<sup>2</sup> The book is published as part of Routledge's series of books on Fascism and the Far Right, which also includes Richard Griffiths' *What Did You Do During The War? The last throes of the British Pro-Nazi Right, 1940-45*, reviewed elsewhere this issue.

<sup>3</sup> *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (2001). This is apparently out of print but copies are available at <<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Origins-Organic-Movement-Philip-Conford/dp/0863153364>>. Conford is at <<https://philipconford.wordpress.com/publications/>>.

Jorian Jenks (1899-1963) was the asthmatic son of the liberal lawyer and academic, Edward Jenks. Educated at Haileybury, one of Britain's leading public schools, from his early childhood he wanted to be a farmer and in May 1916 enrolled at Harper Adams Agricultural College in Shropshire. The following year he tried to do his bit for the war effort, and join an Officer Cadet Battalion, only to be rejected. Eventually he became a member of an artillery regiment based in Colchester. After leaving Harper Adams in 1920, he took up a career as farm bailiff in Yattenden but lost the job in the agricultural slump which followed the end of the War. Despairing of finding work in England, he moved to New Zealand and became a government farming instructor. A legacy of £3,100 from his grandfather, Sir William Forwood, gave him enough money to return home to England, where he took up a post as District Agricultural Lecturer for East Devon, as well as starting his own farm. He also began a career in journalism and married Sophie Chester, a young Australian woman. Under the influence of Major C. H. Douglas' Social Credit movement, Jenks became a supporter of currency reform before joining the British Union of Fascists c. 1934.

Jenks was so impressed with Mosley that he hailed him as 'another Cobbett' and stood in 1936 as the BUF candidate for Horsham and Worthing in West Sussex. From 1937 onwards Jenks published a series of articles, 'The Land and Countryside', in the BUF magazine, *Action*. He was appointed the BUF's agricultural adviser, and produced a revised version of their agricultural policy, which was published as *The Land and the People* in 1937. This endorsed the Fascist concept of the corporate state: trade unions and employers' organisations in each industry were united in a single organisation, known as 'the corporation', which also included representatives of the consumers, appointed by the government. Jenks believed that agriculture should become a single corporation in this Fascist utopia, whose members would be guided by national planning. He believed that farmer and farm worker would be united and guided by a common 'spirit of service to Mother Earth'. He also thought that this corporation would be autonomous, following Mosley's pronouncement that he wished to empower farmers, not give orders to them.

Jenks was intensely interested in reforming and improving agriculture and farming conditions, writing a series of books to promote his views, and corresponded with the American Modernist poet, Ezra Pound. Interned during the War, Jenks returned to agricultural journalism as an early advocate for the then embryonic ecological movement. His first publication on it was an article under the pseudonym, J. J. Zeal in A. R. Orage's *New English Weekly*. This was strongly influenced by G. V. Jacks and R. O. Whyte's *The Rape of the Earth: A*

*World Survey of Soil Erosion*, published in 1939. Released from internment, in 1942 he joined the Rural Reconstruction Association, founded in 1925 by the Labour Party activist Montague Fordham, remaining a member until his death. From 1942 onwards he was also active in the agricultural section of the Economic Reform Club, founded in 1936 by Edward Holloway. In March 1943 he attended a conference on farming organised by Church Social Action, associated with the Christendom Group, an Anglican organisation dedicated to social reform. This led to the foundation of 'Church and Countryside' as an official, Anglican national organisation under the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, and the Archbishop of York, Dr. Cyril Garbett. Jenks was selected as one of the new group's executive council. In 1944, at the request of T. S. Eliot, he edited *Ill Fares the Land* by the left-wing American lawyer, Carey McWilliams, the factual counterpart to John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. This was a powerful attack on liberal capitalism for its agricultural exploitation and destruction of the environment.

From 1943 onwards Jenks had been an advocate of 'the organic movement', and in 1945 he was recruited to the Soil Association, which campaigned for the use of natural manure and compost and against the use of artificial fertilisers. The Association was founded that year by Lady Eve Balfour, the niece of the former Tory prime minister, Arthur Balfour. She had become convinced of the necessity for organic farming through reading *Famine in England*, and made her farm in Haughley a continuing experiment in organic farming.

## **Writer and broadcaster**

**I**n 1945 the BUF's leader, Oswald Mosley, was considering setting himself up as a farmer. In August that year Jenks met the Fascist leader and spent a day inspecting his Wiltshire estate. In November that year, he founded the Soil Association's newsletter, *Mother Earth* and became its editor. By this time he was also writing and editing the Economic Reform Club's *Agricultural Bulletin*, and contributed articles to the *Weekly Review*, the Distributists' journal. The following year, 1946, he founded the journal, *Rural Economy*, for the Rural Reconstruction Association. This limped on, in one form or another, before being absorbed by the *Economic Digest*, which itself eventually ceased publication at the end of 1959.

Shocked by the imposition of bread rationing, in 1947 Jenks authored the pamphlet, *The Full Development of Agriculture*. This replaced the Rural Reconstruction Association's 1936 manifesto, *The Revival of Agriculture*. In

June the next year Jenks also became one of Church and Countryside's vice-presidents. That year also saw the publication of Jenks' most important book, *From the Ground Up: An Outline of Real Economy*. This presented his criticisms of 'the Mechanical Age' of industrialism, finance capitalism and liberalism. He argued instead for an organic society based on traditional agriculture, which was to replace 'agri-business'.

He was also active fostering links between the Soil Association and similar groups abroad, including the organic movement in Germany, which seems largely to have been founded and composed of former Nazis.<sup>4</sup> Jenks also put Rolf Gardiner, another leading figure in the organic movement, in touch with Hermann Reischle, another former Nazi.<sup>5</sup> Jenks also published in *Mother Earth* articles written by Elisabeth von Barsewisch.<sup>6</sup> The January 1959 edition of *Mother Earth* reported on the conference of the *Internationale Gesellschaft für Nahrungs- und Vitalstoff-Forschung* (IVG) in Essen, which had been attended by two of the Association's members. This was led by Dr. Hans Schweigert, yet another former Nazi, who had been a nutritionist during the Third Reich. Schweigert became a member of the Soil Association, which they reciprocated with several of their members joining the IVG. In the same month the conference was held, the German government banned the use of chemical additives in food. One of those involved in the campaign against chemical additives had been Jenks' contact in Germany, Elisabeth von Barsewisch. As a leader in the organic movement, Jenks shared this distrust of artificial additives. He wrote in the Easter 1959 edition of *Mother Earth* that modern food was widely distrusted because of the use of chemicals as fertilizers, sprays and additives.

Despite his anti-Semitism, Jenks worked alongside a number of people of Jewish descent to promote Green, organic farming. He hosted J. I. Rodale, the founder of the American Soil Association, who was Jewish, when he visited

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<sup>4</sup> By 1948 the Association had established friendly relations with Dr. Wolfgang von Schuh's *Arbeitskreis fuer Landwirtschaft* and the next year the Association was also linked to Wolfgang von Haller's *Gesellschaft Boden und Gesundheit*. Von Haller had served as an agricultural official for the occupied territories in the Nazi regime during the War, and was close to Walther Darre, the Nazi's Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture and Reich Peasant Leader. Darre was one of those sentenced to imprisonment at Nuremberg, but released in 1951.

<sup>5</sup> Reischle and Darre had both been members of the SS, holding senior posts in the *SS Rasse und Siedlungsampt* before the War, and then working in the *Reichsnahrstand*.

<sup>6</sup> A member of *Gesellschaft Boden und Gesundheit*, von Barsewisch was the daughter of a Luftwaffe general. She had been a member of the conservative *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* in the 1920s, before joining various Nazi organisations during the Third Reich, and writing a number of articles on race.

England in September 1953. He was also in contact with Dove-Myer Robinson, the president of the Soil and Health Association of New Zealand, who was also Jewish. He also worked with the Jewish Socialist, Edward Hyams, to finish the manuscript of the book Hyams had been writing with Jenks' colleague, H. J. Massingham, the *Prophecy of Famine*, after Massingham's death in August 1952.

In 1947 he helped to set up the Rural Reconstruction Association's Research Committee, and was active in the Agricultural Group formed by Saunders and Robert Rowe in Oswald Mosley's new party, the Union Movement, founded in 1948. He was, however, not a member of the Movement and had stopped speaking at Fascist rallies and conferences. The draft policy met with Mosley's approval, and it was published in October 1950. Jenks, Saunders and Row were then asked to produce a more detailed work, slanted towards the farmer. This was published as the pamphlet *None Need Starve* in August 1952. He arranged farm visits for the Rural Reconstruction Association (RRA) through the Provincial Agricultural Economics Service, which was composed of the agricultural economics departments of a number of universities in England and Wales. He was the main author behind the RRA's report, published in 1955 as *Feeding the Fifty Million*, after which the RRA's Research Department was disbanded. Jenks stopped having contact with the Union Movement in 1955. By this time, all his former Fascist comrades had either died, emigrated, or simply left Fascism. The last Union Movement meeting he attended in February, 1955, was called to discuss revisions to *None Need Starve*. That year he also began work on the book that was eventually to be published four years later in 1959 as *The Stuff Man's Made Of: The Positive Approach to Health through Nutrition*

In addition to his writing, he also made many appearances on the radio. In 1951 he made two appearances on the programme, Land and Livestock, of the BBC's General Overseas Service, and was commissioned to write scripts on agriculture for them and the Corporation's Latin American service. He, along with his colleagues Stuckey and Holloway, were called to give evidence to the Royal Commission on Common Land in April 1956.

## **Personal life**

**I**n 1947 his marriage to the Australian Sophie Chester collapsed. Sophie had been supported in her new life in England by a relative, Mary Fullerton, but she died in 1946. Sophie also suffered a nervous breakdown, which her Australian relatives attributed to the stress of bombing during the War. However Mabel

Singleton, with whom Fullerton lived, believed was due instead to her husband's internment. Jenks then moved out his family house, and after several changes of address ended up lodging with Catherine and Esther Browning, the daughters of a clergyman, in Pangbourne, where he would remain until 1959.

Jenks was in some kind of relationship with Esther Browning, and the two went away together in 1950 and 51. He was also in love with Sally Stuckey. His relationship with Esther broke down in 1956, and in November of that year he moved to a guest house, Slaters, in Henley-on-Thames. The following year Jenks suffered particularly badly from asthma, and placed himself under the care of Dr. Latto, a campaigner against vivisection and prominent member of the London Vegetarian Society. He spent several weeks at a private clinic, living on a strict vegetarian diet which demanded that he also abstained from alcohol, tobacco and tea.

In the summer of 1959 he moved into Boynes Wood Farm with his mother, Dorothy, and daughter, Patsy, who would later become one of Britain's first Anglican women priests. He also became engaged to Elizabeth Howard, the ex-wife of a former stockbroker, whom he married the following year. The Rural Reconstruction Association was failing by this time, with an ageing, dwindling membership. Shortly before Jenks' wedding it was decided to merge it with the Economic Reform Club. Jenks' second marriage also did not last, and in October 1961 it finally collapsed while Jenks was on holiday at Lake Windermere.

## **Silent Spring**

**T**he Soil Association benefited considerably from the publicity surrounding the publication of Rachel Carson's classic environmentalist text, *Silent Spring*. Jenks had been writing articles against the use of pesticides like DDT since 1950 and, after the publication of a parliamentary report into the use of toxic chemicals in agriculture, the Soil Association lobbied parliament for a public enquiry. Carson's British publisher, Hamish Hamilton, planned to bring her to Britain, where it was hoped that she would address a meeting of the Soil Association. This fell through, as Carson feared the US Food and Drug Administration had embarked on a McCarthyite reign of terror against doctors and other critics of US policy.

By this time, Jenks' health was failing, and on the 20 August 1963 he died from heart failure during an asthma attack. He was buried on the 24 August at

a funeral in St. Andrew's church, Medstead, which was attended not just by members of his family, but also by members of the Soil Association.

## **Jenks and Fascism**

Jenks support for Fascism was closely linked with his environmentalism and concern for rural reconstruction. Coupland argues that, based on the writing style, an anonymous article, 'Why I, A Farmer, Have Turned Fascist', published in *Blackshirt*, the BUF's magazine, was probably written by Jenks. The article described how the writer turned to Fascism through disillusionment with the National Government and its failure to support domestic agriculture. Furthermore, Mosley offered plans for the complete reconstruction of British society and economy, not just hatred of the Jews. This included agriculture, as laid out in Mosley's manifesto *The Greater Britain*. And in September 1933 the BUF began actively campaigning to gain the support of the farmers. This involved Mosley speaking at significant market towns, beginning with Ashford in Kent. In 1933 and 34 the BUF was also involved in the Tithe War, a campaign to stop farmers having to pay a tithe of their earnings to the established church.

Jenks' own proposed solution to the 'Jewish problem' was not extermination, but their forcible removal from Britain. They were to be given a new homeland elsewhere, in one of the underpopulated but fertile areas of the world, in Africa, South America or Asiatic Russia. He argued that by regaining contact with the soil, the Jewish character would be given a broader basis. They would regain racial dignity and, in doing so, triumphantly fulfil their racial destiny. By withdrawing their influence from other nations, they would also be rewarded with peace and good will from them.

Regarding Jenks' antisemitism and support for eugenics, Coupland puts this in context by noting how many other leading writers and politicians outside Fascism held similar views. He notes that William Cobbett was also an anti-Semite, and that in the 1890s both the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation had believed that Jewish interests were responsible for the Anglo-South African War. He also observes that pronouncements about the concept of race or eugenics were almost entirely absent in the BUF and British Union movements. The book quotes Mosley himself, who said that because the British Empire was made up of a number of different races, it would be 'bad [. . .] to stigmatise by law any races within it as inferior or outcast'. The book also notes that while there were anti-Semites in the BUF from the very beginning, antisemitism was absent from Mosley's

*The Greater Britain*, and only became official policy later in the 1930s. He argues that Jenks' own hatred of Jews was simply a radicalisation of common, mainstream prejudices against Jews as rapacious capitalists, criminals or Communist subversives. Jenks himself had little interest in the issue, and discussed the matter in depth on only one occasion, in his book *Spring Comes Again* of 1939. He maintained that for Fascists, nationalism was a vital factor in human progress and the natural form of society was the nation. Thus, Fascism viewed with anxiety the existence within the nation of an exotic, race-conscious community with strong international affiliations. Like the other Fascists, he believed the Jews were behind the Communist threat and the Russian Revolution. He was opposed to farmers taking on Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany because, as townsmen and Jews, they were unpromising stock for working the soil. On the occasions when he referred to the Jews at all in his other articles, it was merely as an addition to his original position.

But Stephen Dorril's biography of Mosley, *Blackshirt*, shows that Mosley had been an anti-Semite from the very beginning. Richard Thurlow, in his *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, describes how Mosley attempted to merge the BUF with Arnold Leese's viciously antisemitic Imperial Fascist League in the early 1930s. In 1932, before his turn to Fascism, Mosley chaired a meeting of the New Party, at which Leese and Henry Hamilton Beamish spoke on 'The Blindness of British Politics under the Jew Power'. Thurlow also notes that, while antisemitism was initially banned at the level of the official leadership, there were double standards and the BUF's magazines and rhetoric were using antisemitic stereotypes and attacking the 'alien menace' long before Mosley officially took up antisemitism. Thurlow also discusses how Mosley was influenced by Oswald Spengler's belief that different cultures could not mix, with Mosley concluding that the 'oriental' Jew was far more alien to the British than the members of other European nations. He therefore recommended that in the new Fascist state there would be Special Commissions, which would judge whether individual Jews were more Jewish or British in their attitudes. Those who were judged to be more Jewish would be expelled from Britain. Coupland also states that Jenks' proposal for the Jews to be expelled and given a new homeland elsewhere was in line with the BUF's own policy, as outlined in Mosley's *Tomorrow We Live*. This also demanded the compulsory resettlement of the Jews to a country or region other than Palestine. Coupland also states that Jenks' advocacy of the voluntary sterilisation of the 'unfit' was also shared by some in the Labour movement, as exemplified by A. G. Church, a Labour MP, who tried to introduce a bill for it in

parliament. The National Conference of Labour Women also supported similar measures.

## **Jenks' vision**

**M**ore generally, the book also suggests that Jenks may have been influenced by Arthur Penty's *Post-Industrialism* of 1922, and the Distributist movement of Penty, G. K. Chesterton, and Hilaire Belloc, which arose after the collapse of Guild Socialism. Jenks was sceptical about the use of machines. He believed that physical labour was a wholesome part of farming, and was prepared to allow only limited mechanisation of agriculture. For example, he consistently argued for the value of horses over tractors. Penty's *Post-Industrialism* similarly argued that society should return to handicraft as the basis of production and that mechanisation should only be secondary. Penty was also an opponent of the state, industrialism and large scale capitalism and, like Jenks, joined the BUF in the late 1930s. Jenks came to his distributist beliefs while he was in New Zealand, and there is no evidence of him becoming a part of the movement after his return to England. Nevertheless, he shared their belief in the widest distribution of landed property, the establishment of a new yeoman class as the basis of the society, and a general scepticism towards modern industrial society. His ecological views were influenced not just by his experiences in New Zealand, but by his reading of G. V. Jacks and R. O. Whyte's *The Rape of the Earth: A World Survey of Soil Erosion*. This linked the massive loss of agricultural land across the globe to the free trade economy, and made it very clear that there was a growing potential for famine.

Jenks formulated his agricultural ideal when he was working at Ecclesden. He envisaged a Britain of family-owned, small and middle sized farms using traditional mixed farming and making intensive use of animal labour. He recognised that such farms could be inefficient compared to the highly mechanised farms specialising in only one crop, but believed that they could be made competitive through a mixture of superior practice in the farm itself, and state intervention in agriculture as a whole. This meant reforming the marketing system. It would also have the additional advantage of maintaining a rural population, which would supply industry and commerce with workers of good physique, balancing the debilitating effect of urban life. In *Farming and Money*, which Jenks wrote with John Taylor Peddie, published in 1935, Jenks argued that the withdrawal of land from cultivation created hunger and poverty. The solution to this was to stimulate demand by giving consumers higher wages to purchase goods and by increasing economic activity in

agriculture. This would also stimulate the economy as a whole, by providing a market for the industries that supplied the farmer with the equipment they needed, and the industries that used the farmer's products. This would have the benefit of expanding the British diet. He believed that the economic ideal should be autarky – self-sufficiency, and so advocated a tariff system which would favour domestic producers first and those elsewhere in the Empire second over foreign producers. He also wanted to see agricultural banks, and full-time Agricultural Authorities with the task of stimulating the intensification of production, providing agricultural workers with better housing, wages and employment insurance. They would also operate an 'agricultural ladder', which would allow them to acquire their own farms. Jenks also recommended the establishment of a Central Land Commission. This would stabilise land values and rents and ensure that owners occupied their properties. He also expressed similar ideas in *The Land and the People*, in which he identified the causes of Britain's agricultural decline. He believed that this had occurred as Britain passed under the rule of elites, which made their wealth from international trade. Jenks specifically blamed the interest paid on overseas loans made to the debtor nations which supplied Britain with their agricultural produce.

Jenks expanded this view of the origins of agricultural decline into a complete critique of liberal capitalism in his *Spring Comes Again*. This argued that liberalism had indeed once been a progressive force, but that the free trade and 'self-regulating' economy advocated by liberals had allowed power to pass to a wealthy elite. This elite disproportionately benefited from the economic and social system, and dominated political institutions and public discourse to such an extent that democracy and freedom of speech were empty phrases. The public had a vote, but it did not matter what party they elected, as they were all controlled by 'the unseen, non representative power [. . .] Finance'. The final stage of liberalism's decline was the emergence of what Jenks called 'the Plutocratic State'. This was based on the 'Money standard', and made the rich the dominant element in the ruling class. Meanwhile the Treasury held a key position in governments, which bowed to the desires of the City. Industry had increasingly fallen under the control of the financial sector, as power had passed from the masters of machinery and organisers of labour to the masters of finance and big business. This had turned society into a great, impersonal machine. Divorced from the soil, and unable to support themselves through craftsmanship, working people had become slaves of the system. They were a docile proletariat, which at election

time was mustered and driven by the financial oligarchs, the parties and the press.

Jenks elaborated this view in his 1950 *From the Ground Up*, the first two parts of which discuss the transition from an organic, agrarian society to the 'Mechanical Age', whose heyday he dated between 1860 and 1914. The third part of *From the Ground Up* was devoted to the decline of liberalism after the First World War. Here he argued that the Earth's fertility was rapidly declining because all the virgin land had been taken into cultivation and agriculture was increasingly exploitative, replacing traditional husbandry with the use of inorganic methods of industrialism and finance capitalism. This resulted in widespread soil erosion, and across the globe the real foundation of human existence was being lost. The human population was set to grow rapidly, which would result in a Malthusian crisis as the population outpaced the ability of the Earth to feed them.

In the book's fourth chapter, Jenks articulated his alternative to the coming crisis. He refused to legislate for the rest of the world and confined his recommendations to Britain alone, on the grounds that Britain should lead by example. Britain should live self-sufficiently, rather than parasitically. With a return to husbandry instead of agri-industry, a greater proportion of the population would be involved in agriculture. Production would also move out to rural areas and villages would experience a renaissance. The abstract political, social and economic relationships to the state, big business and mass parties in contemporary society would be replaced by the direct, personal connections of organic communities. This would replace the alienation created by liberal modernity with meaningful, creative labour and real, authentic human relationships.

Jenks believed very strongly that the current system, in which Britain imported the majority of its foodstuffs, was unfair to and parasitical on the nations that supplied it. He argued that across the world the pressure of low prices and finance capitalism had 'created millions of acres of new desert'. He claimed that Britain was living at the expense of other nations, as the foodstuffs we imported were subsidised by those providing countries. This came at a large cost to those nations' peoples in taxes and subsidies, not counting the intangible costs represented by sweated labour and reduced soil fertility. If Britain moved to self-sufficiency, the country would increase the possibility of improving the standard of living in poor nations beset by famine and privation. It would also be a forceful contribution to solving the problem of soil erosion.

This concern for the wellbeing of the less developed nations in the British Empire brought him into dispute with his comrades in the Fascist movement. He was accused of 'Little Englanderism', and of wanting to turn Britain into another Denmark. Furthermore, the type of rural, organic society Jenks championed would value stability rather than the dynamic expansionism extolled and desired by Fascists. Jenks replied by stating that no country should live in isolation, but it must have its roots firmly in its own soil. If it did not, its external contacts would be parasitic rather than constructive. Thus, the European development of Africa should not solely be for European interests, as this would create exploitation and racial friction. Both continents should be developed side by side so that they benefited each other. He also argued against the use of the word 'Negro' to describe Black Africans, on the grounds that many of them weren't Negroes, and the word had 'slightly disparaging' overtones.

The book is also interesting for its discussion of the religious dimension to these ecological concerns. From the 1960s onwards, the Green movement has been taken up by neo-Pagan groups, to the point where its right-wing Christian opponents level the accusation that it is inherently pagan, and that no Christian should be involved in it. But many of these early ecologists were deeply Christian. The Christendom group of Anglo-Catholic social activists had already formulated a Green theology, based in the Roman Catholic Natural Law tradition. This argued that there was an architecture of nature, which imposed certain duties upon humans, who were natural creatures and could not disregard certain natural laws. Part of humanity's duty as Christians was to live in harmony with nature. God's redemption of humanity required humans to repair their broken relationship with the natural world. The Christendom group was not hostile to commerce and industry, but considered them of secondary importance to the preservation and restoration of nature.

Jenks himself had strong religious beliefs, although he admitted he rarely attended church. He wrote that the purpose of life at the heart of the Organic movement was exemplified through Christ's life on Earth, His crucifixion and resurrection. The Christian emphasis on love was manifested in the strong sense of community which the faithful felt for God and their fellows on Earth, and which the farmer felt for the soil. Elsewhere in his writing Jenks argued for the existence of the supernatural and the existence of God as part of the Organic worldview, and contrasted it with the mechanistic, atheistic worldview of industrialism.

The book's Epilogue notes that Jenks' death left the Soil Association in a depression, and that it has been suggested by the movement's historian, Philip Conford, that the Soil Association moved leftward under his successor Robert Waller and his editorial assistant, Michael Allaby. Waller was the producer of radio programmes on agricultural issues for the BBC's western region and was politically a Liberal, while Allaby was a CND supporter who joined the Labour Party. Coupland states that, although they had very different political views from Jenks, the matter of whether the Association itself moved Left is 'not amenable to easy conclusion'. He makes it very clear that Jenks was vital to the creation and survival of the Soil Association as an integral part of the ecological movement. He also argues that Jenks' intellectual contribution to the Green Movement has never properly been appreciated, with the exception of Ulrich Loening (the former director of the Centre for Human Ecology at the University of Edinburgh) who recommended *From the Ground Up* to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Subcommittee. He states that, while Jenks was not an innovator, he 'was among the first to synthesise an economic and social critique of liberal modernity that incorporated the ecological dimension as fundamental and central. In this respect, his work still has the power to enlighten.'

Coupland also argues that his contribution to the British Fascist movement has also been barely recognised. On his death, Jenks was given only a brief obituary in *Action*. This was because ecological politics were (and still are) marginal to Fascism. The BUF was overwhelmingly urban, and the British agricultural sector was too weak socially and economically to allow British Fascists to exploit them for electoral success, as Hitler and Mussolini had done in Germany and Italy. Some of the more modern followers of Mosley have attempted to present Jenks as the first Green, and have republished some of his books, most notably *Spring Comes Again*. The Mosleyites, however, have little influence in the wider Fascist milieu. Coupland states that the only faction within British Fascism that comes closest to Jenks' own views were the 'Third Position', who were also influenced by Distributivism. Their heroes, however, are not Jenks, but Chesterton and Belloc. In any case, the Third Position was itself never very influential, although Nick Griffin was an important member. Ecology was not a very important issue to the British National Party, whose current policies amount to a denial of climate change regardless of its rhetoric. And the BNP's own political influence has been wiped out, with their place on the extreme right taken by UKIP.

Coupland also considers that the neglect of Jenks by mainstream historians and Green activists is due to Jenks' Fascism. He argues that there is a double standard here, as others on the left have served murderously genocidal regimes. He specifically contrasts Jenks with the career of John Strachey, who was also initially attracted to Fascism, but drew back, and instead became a Communist during the 1930s. This was the period of Stalinist terror, characterised by artificial famine, deportations and the imprisonment of millions in the gulags. Despite this, Strachey's rehabilitation was so successful that he was able to serve as the Minister for Food in the Atlee government. For Coupland, Jenks would have been personally more successful if he had been like Montague Fordham, and tried to reform the system from within.

The book ends by speculating on the possible emergence of a form of Green Fascism in the future. British Fascism in its present form may be dying out, but the coming crises brought about by climate change, mass migration and competition over resources will have great potential to disrupt existing political and social structures. The re-emergence of Fascism will also depend on whether the nation survives as a motivating force in an increasingly globalised world. The only certainty is that the agricultural Britain that Jenks and his colleagues felt was eternal, actually vanished in the course of a single lifetime. The book concludes that, while the heart of Jenks' work, on ecology and his thoughts on the good life are evergreen, any attempt to go beyond today's anti-natural system and create a sustainable and wholesome way of life would be an unprecedented challenge in negotiating a course between the Scylla of ecological catastrophe and the Charybdis of authoritarianism.

Jenks comes across as a rather sympathetic figure: personally affable, hard-working, with a deep and genuine sympathy for the land and the people that worked on it. While he was anti-Socialist, he seems to have been genuinely sympathetic to the farm workers' union, and his Fascist political views did not stop him working with liberals and socialists in defending and promoting the embryonic ecological movement. And it clearly demonstrates that the Green movement in Britain certainly long predates Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

How is Jenks to be regarded? His party political views and his advocacy of the expulsion of British Jews are abhorrent. But the book argues, very persuasively, that Jenks has been unfairly neglected in the immense contribution he made to the Organic movement and the establishment and survival of the Soil Association. It should be possible to recognise this, while at the same time deploring and rejecting his Fascism, without incurring in return

accusations of Fascist sympathies. There are dangers that this would give ammunition to the Far Right in their attempts to claim Green politics as their own through Jenks. But if done carefully, the danger can be minimised. After all, Jenks acquired his ecological views partly from politically respectable sources, like the *Rape of the Earth*. Similarly, Jenks analysis of the decline of liberalism and the emergence of plutocracy and sham democracy under the influence of finance capitalism is true, regardless of its origins in Jenks' personal view of Fascism. The Left should be able to use it without accepting Jenks' antisemitism regardless of the dangers of contamination – i.e. that they themselves will be smeared with allegations of Fascism through guilt by association. As Coupland himself has pointed out, some the great heroes of British democracy, like William Cobbett, were also deeply anti-Semitic. And there is wisdom in the old saying 'Ideas are not responsible for the people who hold them'.

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