



Do we have a dragon to slay?

An unlikely combination of scorching British National Party wins in the early-May local elections, led by the silver-tongued Nick Griffin, coupled with football-related flag fever has me currently quaking in my Converse high tops.

Silly, I know, but one more sight of the Cross of St George waving from a car window and I'll be barricading myself in my house convinced that the Nazis are coming. Some might say that Baddiel, Skinner and the Lightning Seeds with their 'Three Lions' lyrics in 1996, or Blair's Cool Britannia campaign the following year, or the now dead-in-the-water Britpop phenomenon, have already collectively re-appropriated the Union Jack. But to me *flags = nationalism* and *nationalism = scary* and *scary = Holocaust*. QED.

While the Pythons might maintain that *nobody* expects the Spanish Inquisition, I live daily with my fourth-generation immigrant genes, subtly fearing the worst at any moment. So I could play the joker on my therapist-hours with the news that the BNP doubled its seats to 46 (11 of them in East London), and that its election manifesto contains such gems as:

We will carry out a full audit into inequalities in spending . . . and where this uncovers . . . bias against the majority community we will change spending patterns.

Where bias has existed, every fair-minded person will agree that it should be put right . . . the majority population will be reassured . . .

The BNP wants to institute council-funded St George's Day festivals (to balance years of 'official promotion of "ethnic" identities and cultures'), and officially recognize the Saints Days of the patron saints of 'the other indigenous nations/cultures of the British family of nations: St Andrew, St David and St Patrick'. Oh, and it is reviewing mini-cab licensing policies to ensure that 'ethnic' drivers are only going to get licences in proportion to their minority group's percentage of the local population.

What's interesting about this resurgence of nationalism is that, while 70 or 100 years ago it might have been about Jews, now it's about the most recent wave of

immigrants, and we Jews have had our feet under the table just long enough that we feel safe.

Sure, we have our own *tsores* – who doesn't? – and any minority is potentially the victim of hate politics. I suspect that the collective divide-and-rule approach to race crime – they hate us, they hate them, we're not sure about them, either – is unhelpful. As Jews, we need to take a risk and stick our necks out by supporting other minority groups. Remember Pastor Niemoller – then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me? There's a lot of *talk* about Black-Jewish relations, Jewish-Muslim relations – but where's the reality?

Of course not everyone's a liberal-lefty. There are Jews who are far from rejecting the race rhetoric of the right – Michael Howard, despite being *landsleit*, falls into this category. I can't help wondering if these people understand anything at all about Jewish history.

The best – and only – riposte to racism and the dark side of nationalism is to unite. Unite in our humanity, our understanding of the human condition and our desire for equality. There's a lengthy Jewish tradition of liberal politics and respect for human life, and now is the time to stand up and be counted.

It behoves Jews to remember who they are, and where they came from. The time has passed for maintaining the respected Anglo-Jewish tradition of treading carefully in the middle of the road. Let's remember our liberal background, our true Jewish values and that there's more to life than intellectual debate, living in a nice house and making sure your children get into a good school.

St George may have slain the dragon, converted all those pesky heathens to Christianity and become the saviour of the British race, but now it's our turn to take on the Griffin and his ilk – to demonstrate that Jews speak up when they come for someone else.

As the good book says, 'If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?' 