

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Jews and Palestinians against the Occupation



40 YEARS OF WAR WHAT CHANCE PEACE?

**What's behind Clause 28?
Yiddish in a state?**

**Glasnost and Jews
Identity and liberation**

EDITORIAL

As the events in the West Bank and Gaza go into their third month it must be a worrying time for both Jewish and Palestinian communities. We can only hope that the Palestinian blood being spilled at the moment is not in vain, and that there can be true peace and security for both the Jewish and Palestinian communities in Israel and Palestine.

Israel's behaviour, from shooting unarmed demonstrators to firing tear gas at the entrance to the El Aksa mosque has led to condemnation in both Jewish and non-Jewish progressive circles all over the world. Among Jews, this is frequently attached to a concern for the welfare and security of Israel.

As socialists, we express our concern for the welfare and security of *both* the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples and not for just one or the other. We feel that they can and ought to live in peace, and that the best way to bring this about is an international peace conference under the auspices of United Nations which will bring together both Israel and the PLO and will lead to the setting up of an independent Palestinian state beside Israel.

extension, as plague carriers. There have been public calls for universal testing for the HIV virus (which causes AIDS) and for the compulsory detention and quarantine of those found to be carrying the virus. On the religious right, the synod of the Church of England has been busy debating which sexual orientations are "normal" and which "sinful" — a debate closely echoed by the Jewish community if the Chief Rabbi's calls for the criminalisation of homosexuality and the rabid homophobia evidenced on the letters page of the *Jewish Chronicle* are anything to go by.

All this should be ringing extremely loud alarm bells for the left and for all concerned with civil liberties. Lesbian and Gay organisations have mobilised, yet much of the left has been less than wholehearted in its support. Why has this outrageous attack on the civil liberties of a minority group not been greeted by universal howls of protest? Why has a significant part of the opposition to Clause 28 focused on the more palatable issue of artistic freedom? Where are those affirming homosexuality and lesbianism as a normal and acceptable part of the wide spectrum of human sexuality? If to say this is to "promote" homosexuality, then we should be promoting it for all we are worth. As socialists, we should be actively combating an ideology which itself promotes an increasingly narrow view of what is "normal" and acceptable.

The analogy has been drawn and argued over between the position of gays and lesbians in Thatcher's '80s and Jews in Hitler's Germany in the '30s. Whether this is an exact parallel or not, as Jewish socialists we should be making links with other oppressed minorities. As Jews we should be only too aware of the dangers of silence on the grounds that "it has nothing to do with us".

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Cover photo: Palestinian youth defy Israeli army at Balata camp (*Palestine Post*)

Israel does not speak for us

Jewish organisations and individuals in many different countries have been actively protesting against Israeli repression in the occupied territories since the uprising by Palestinian youth began on 9 December. In Israel itself, the Peace Now movement, for long dormant and stifled by dependence on the Labour Party bureaucracy, has revived itself, freed from the "backing" of the Labour Party, and recently held a major rally in Tel Aviv attended by 50,000 people. There have also been a series of protests by smaller ad-hoc groups. The first picket of the Defence Ministry was held on 11 December, and a student protest at Prime Minister Shamir's residence on 14 December was dispersed by tear gas. Three days later 20 peace activists visited Balata camp in Gaza and joined camp residents in a demon-

stration. On 30 December, 160 army reservists and new draftees signed a petition stating their refusal to serve in the occupied territories. Their courageous stand, however, has not won support from Peace Now or the Left Zionist party *Mapam* which is now very prominent in Peace Now.

In the USA there have been signs of widespread unease within the Jewish community. Rabbi Shindler (President of the Union of Hebrew Congregations) strongly criticised Israeli policies and urged an end to the occupation. "Israel cannot simply sit in the territories and wait for peace", he said, "the status quo sows the seed of endless conflict." An Ad-Hoc Committee of Jews Against the Occupation, based in Seattle, stated: "We are appalled that Israel's treatment of the



Photo: Marian Shapiro

Palestinians more and more resembles South African treatment of the majority of its population". Meanwhile the American-Israel Council for Israel-Palestinian Peace confirmed: "peace for Israel and freedom for the Palestinians are indivisible".

In France 211 prominent Jewish personalities sponsored an advert in *Le Monde* against the occupation and the denial of rights to the Palestinians, and on 20 January 150 Jews demonstrated outside the Israeli Embassy in Paris where they were met by a counter-demonstration of Jewish right-wingers.

A strong anti-occupation statement condemning Israel's "bloodthirsty repression" in Gaza was issued in Belgium by the Union Progressives Juifs Belgique, who recalled in their statement how their own organisation had been founded by Jews resisting military occupation. They further called for Israel and the PLO to be brought together in the context of a UN sponsored international peace conference.

Here in Britain, the Jewish

Socialists' Group took part in vigils outside the Israeli Embassy and marched in a 5,000 strong demonstration in support of Palestinian rights. Denouncing Israel's claim to speak and act on behalf of world Jewry, JSG speaker Michael Heiser told the rally, "Israel does not speak for us when it uses live ammunition against unarmed demonstrators". On 26 January, 160 people crammed into Friends House, London, to hear a joint Jewish-Palestinian platform denounce the occupation. The meeting, organised by the JSG, heard Faisal Aweidha, the PLO representative in Britain, Israeli journalist Elfi Pallis, and veteran human rights activist Richard Hauser call for Jewish people here to speak out against what the Israeli army and government are doing. The meeting was publicly condemned in advance by the Board of Deputies and the Israeli Embassy — which no doubt boosted the attendance! *We have printed extracts from the speeches at this meeting on pages 16-18.* □



Photo: Marian Shapiro

Lies, damned lies and Action Briefing

Once upon a time there was a very useful and informative publication called *Action Briefing*, produced by the Association of Jewish Servicemen and Women (AJEX). It monitored the activities of the "enemies of the Jewish people" and focused almost exclusively on the far Right.

But times change. They've started to look leftwards and

have discovered new "enemies" such as ... the Jewish Socialists Group. Now that wasn't the only change, they also apparently decided that it was no longer necessary to tell the truth. Their smear (or Shamir?) campaign against our group started in 1983 and reached a pinnacle — or was it a trough — in 1985 with a 700-word "exposé" of the JSG which

contained no less than 24 factual errors (is this a record?), and a nice photo of our banner beside that of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. We can reveal it was on a CND demo. Shock! Horror! Jews and Palestinians don't want to be wiped out in a nuclear war!

Anyway, their latest fantasy about the JSG graces the December '87 issue of *Fiction Briefing*. It states that in the "controversy surrounding Jim Allen's play 'Perdition' ... the anti-Zionist Jewish Social-

ists' Group equated Israel with Nazi Germany". No evidence, of course, was offered to substantiate this claim; it was probably taxing enough to invent that sentence! Now, anyone who read our saturation coverage of *Perdition* in issues 9 and 11 of *Jewish Socialist* would have to be either plain stupid, ignorant, mischievous and perhaps dangerous to draw this conclusion. Ignorance has always been one of the main enemies of the Jewish people. Be careful, it's spreading! □

Reflecting reality

LIKE SOUTH AFRICA

Yediot Aharonot,
25 December 1987
Invited to address the Law Faculty of Tel Aviv university as a guest speaker, MK Rafael (Rafal) Eytan talked, among other things, about the recent events in the territories, and the distortion of Israel's image in the international media.

"I don't understand the comparison between us and South Africa", he said. "What we have in common is that we both have to take measures to ensure that we are not overpowered. Those who say that Blacks in South Africa are persecuted are lying. The Blacks there want to overpower the white minority,

just like the Arabs here want to overpower us. And we, just like the white South African minority, must act to make sure we are not over-powered. I went to see a diamond mine there and saw what superb conditions Black workers are enjoying. So what if there is a separate lift for Blacks and Whites? That's the way they want it", he added.

Regarding the riots in the territories, he said he firmly believed that it was wrong to send a handful of soldiers on patrol there. Instead, armoured cars should be sent in. After all, he said, in Dayan's days we sent tanks into Nablus.

"We must enter some of

the family houses there and ship them off to Lebanon when a riot starts. Let's put the heads of families on highway duty and tell them:

"If one stone is thrown while you're on duty, you go straight to Lebanon, you and your mother and grandmother". Commenting on the transfer idea, Rafal said, "Kahane talks about expelling Arabs, but he hasn't expelled a single one. Those who did expel Arabs are precisely the Labourites. They kicked out hundreds of thousands without any hesitation, including during the Six Day War from the Golan Heights. Then nobody commented on it".



AMERICAN SETTLERS

Ha'aretz, 2 December 1987

Some 20% of all Jews living in the settlements beyond the Green Line have immigrated to Israel in recent years. Out of the 70,000 immigrants who arrived in the last five years alone, 12,000, or about 17%, chose to live beyond the Green Line. These figures were revealed during a tour of several Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria organised by the immigration department of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) yesterday.

According to the immigra-

tion department, the proportion of new immigrants among the Jewish population of Judea and Samaria is now about 20% and has grown four times faster than their proportion within the borders of Israel, which is currently about 5%.

The director of the WZO's immigration department also revealed that over half of all immigrants from the United States have been absorbed into settlements beyond the Green Line. Some 80% of all new immigrants who have settled in Judea and Samaria are religious.

SAVED BY ANTI-SEMITISM

Yediot Aharonot,
29 January 1988

When the director of the Ministry of Absorption met a hundred new immigrants from Argentina recently at Lod airport, his face shone with excitement. Visibly moved, he told our reporter: "This is a great day. A hundred immigrants have arrived at once". He then added, in a tone of untrammelled satisfaction: "There is anti-semitism in that country".

Thank God, I murmured

to myself and raised my glass. So there is light at the end of the tunnel. There is anti-semitism. In the oppressive atmosphere surrounding us, in the face of the demographic threat, it was pleasant to hear the optimistic, hope-giving voice of the absorption director.

For antisemitism is the future of Zionism and of absorption. Thanks to it we are here. It brings immigrants to our shore, it gives taste to our life and gives us the right to exist.

Having grasped this, the shutters fell from my eyes

and I understood that there was no reason to despair. Zionism was not bankrupt. All our misdeeds, our rule over the territories, the shootings, the beatings, the gas, our refusal to negotiate and our intransigent political line were truly Zionist acts. We were merely carrying out our supreme Zionist duty to increase antisemitism.

Fortunately, we still have a Zionist job to do. We must persevere in our endeavour towards increasing antisemitism and ensure that its torch shall not be extinguished. Let's drink to that!

DRAWING THE LINE

Ha'aretz, 5 January 1988

Reserve Sergeant Ofer Cassif, who was sent on reserve duty to the Gaza Strip, has been jailed for 28 days for his refusal to serve beyond the Green Line. Cassif, a 23-year-old student who belongs to a paratroopers' unit, is the first person to be prosecuted out of the 160 reservists who signed a public statement saying that they would "refuse to take part in the repression of the uprising and rebellion in the occupied territories."

Faces of racism

On 6 December 1987 a long, comprehensive and at times well attended seminar organised by the Yakar Educational Foundation took place at their Hendon, North London premises on the theme of "Anglo Jewry and the Black Community".

Five hourly sessions were held from 3.00 till 8.00 pm followed by a two and a half hour symposium. Attendance rose from about 35 at the first session on broadcasting to over 140 at the closing symposium; this despite some of the earlier participants having left for the *Jewish Quarterly's* discussion on the Jewish community and the Left at Hillel House on the same evening.

BROADCASTING

At the first session Ian Swieger of the Jewish group belonging to the Spectrum community radio consortium and Ricky McCarthy of Brixton's Radio Pyramid talked of the importance of community radio to ethnic communities and of the problems faced in setting up stations, particularly from government prevarication. Ricky McCarthy stressed that

community radio served a specific need in the Caribbean community and that Radio Pyramid therefore required independence and maximum air time. It was suggested that as Jewish interests were already well served in the media (!) a few hours per day of Jewish broadcasting in a joint station with other groups such as envisaged by Spectrum, would be adequate. The Jewish group in Spectrum are setting up a training scheme to enable interested groups to make their own radio programmes.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND EDUCATION

Edie Friedman of the Jewish Community Relations Council talked on the nature of prejudice and drew comparisons between antisemitism and anti-Black racism. She issued a welcome call for Jews to participate in the struggle for Black rights. Anne Krisman, a teacher and recent contributor to *Jewish Socialist* magazine, spoke about racism in schools and illustrated her theme with many examples of behaviour of both pupils

and teachers and a taped interview with some of her own pupils.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AFRO-CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

Trevor Hall, adviser to the Home Office on race relations, attacked the idea that changes in procedures for bottom-rung recruitment in themselves offer equal opportunity in employment. He also stated that race relations legislation tried to change behaviour not attitudes. He pointed to some encouraging projects within the Caribbean community such as the North West London Stonebridge Project, Birmingham's Acafest and Sheffield's Tsedaka.

Lee Samuels of the Caribbean Housing Association spoke of the composition of the UK Afro-Caribbean community, stating that 60% were UK born. She suggested that separate schools could impart a sense of identity and communal pride. The 98% literacy rate and high educational standards in Barbados were compared with low expectations here. She called for better, rather than more, teachers.

POLICE POWER

Dr Richard Stone (who often examines those under arrest in Notting Hill at the request of their defence or family), Jeff Johnson of the Mangrove Association and Nigel Leskin, a solicitor, gave graphic descriptions of blatant abuse of police power directed mainly against Afro-Caribbeans. Particular reference was made to the frequent use of the Mental Health Act under which people may be held indefinitely without trial.

ISRAEL, PALESTINIANS AND THE THIRD WORLD

The audience increased considerably as Paul Boateng MP took the platform along with local Black councillor Agnes Slocombe and Rabbi Jeremy Rosen. The subject for this current session had been proposed by Paul Boateng and in his opening remarks

he claimed that the subject was an obstacle to Black-Jewish relations. The issues that required an open airing were the right to a Palestinian state and the relationship between Israel and South Africa.

He affirmed his support for the existence of a non-expansionist Israel alongside a Palestinian state. The close affinity between South African leaders in the 1930s and the German Nazis was also referred to. Rabbi Jeremy Rosen said that support for Israel and for Palestinian rights were not contradictory; Israeli-Palestinian relations were a political not a racial issue.

SYMPOSIUM

This session opened to a packed hall under the firm guidance of Judge Israel Feinstein. Diane Abbot MP opened, referring to the prejudice, discrimination and terror with which racists threatened Blacks and Jews alike. She unequivocally attacked Louis Farrakhan as a dangerous antisemite and also slammed "paternalistic racists" who would do anything for Blacks but didn't want Blacks to do anything for themselves. She stressed the need for all to oppose racism in their workplaces.

Diane Abbot had to leave early but Paul Boateng, Rabbi Jeremy Rosen and Richard Stone responded to a wide range of points and questions from the floor which touched on affirmative action, the role of Black MPs, Christian antisemitism, joint Jewish-Black projects, and the nature of the Anglo-Jewish leadership.

Yakar's initiative in organising this event is laudable. It is regrettable though that, as is often the case, two notable events appealing to much the same constituency were arranged on the same day. This demonstrates the need for some sort of liaison between communal organisations, particularly those operating outside the establishment.

FRANK FISHER

Helpline

Britain's first ever Jewish Lesbian and Gay Helpline started on Monday 8 February on 01-833 8126. It is open every Monday and Thursday from 7pm to 10pm. The helpline has been set up to provide information, advice, support and counselling to Jewish lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and those unsure about their sexuality. It also aims to be of help to family and friends, and to other agencies in both the Jewish and lesbian/gay communities.

The helpline recognises a need for this service as Jewish lesbians and gay men experience a whole range of issues, best dealt with by people from a similar background.

These issues include: identifying as lesbian/gay whilst maintaining a Jewish identity; family and religious pressures; relationships; isolation and loneliness; and medical concerns especially AIDS and HIV.

The service is completely confidential. The line is staffed by Jewish lesbians and gay men — all trained volunteers, and provides a nationwide service.

This helpline urgently needs donations to cover essential publicity and operating costs. It also needs to hear from people interested in becoming volunteers, especially women. You can write to the helpline at: BM Jewish Helpline, London WC1N 3XX. □

— snippets from *Israeli Mirror*

DYBBUK'S DIARY

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

The uprising of the "shabib" — the youth, in the West Bank and Gaza, has re-awakened some sparks of revolt among Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Here in Britain, besides the activity of notorious subversives like the Jewish Socialists' Group, there was some forthright moral condemnation of the "Iron Fist" from Rabbi Micky Rosen of Yakar, and a lone stand by June Jacobs on the Board of Deputies, voicing concern at Israeli repressive actions.

When Ms Jacobs went for an "interview" with the Board's Dr. Kipelowitz, Dybbuk took advantage of his relationship with Baal-Zebub to attend as a fly-on-the wall.

Apparently, admonished by the good doctor for having departed from "Board policy" in her criticism of Israel, Ms Jacobs — the Deputies Foreign

Affairs chairperson — inquired what the Board's policy was on Israel.

Simple. Our policy is not to criticise Israel, replied Dr Kipelowitz.

However, I see he has denied that the Board is acting like an appendage of the Israeli embassy (Jewish Chronicle, 29 January). Ambassador Yehuda Avner seems satisfied with them, though.

As for June Jacobs, I've never met her, and I'm told we might not agree on many things. But unlike some of her more conformist colleagues on the Board, she dares to face the facts of what's happening in the West Bank and Gaza. Where they are "horrified" by how it is presented on TV, or what commentators say about it, June expresses the horror felt by large number of ordinary Jewish women and men for the reality itself.

BLUE HUMOUR

It is well known that for certain Jewish functions (not those normally attended by Jewish Socialists), if you can't get hold of a Royal, a hereditary peer (no mere parvenus from the United Synagogue will do) or a right-wing press baron, the next best thing is a Tory MP.

Jeffrey Archer, being a former leading light of Maggie's farm, and a successful author who's got a few bob, and, so a judge has ruled, a "fragrant" wife, is also known for his charity, having given large sums to complete strangers to help with their train fares. So he was a natural choice for Ravenswood, the Jewish mental health charity.

Unfortunately his choice of humour wasn't so bright. It concerned a lad running home to ask his Dad "Am I Black or Jewish?" both, was the reply. Good said the boy,

reassured, explaining that someone had offered him a bike for thirty quid, and he hadn't known whether to offer fifteen quid or nick it. Squirms all round.

Jeffrey takes his place in the runnings for Dybbuk's Award, given each year to the Prominent Upper-class Tory Zero-rated for acceptability by our readers. (P.U.T.Z.) Competition could be hot, with entries already from Norman Tebbit, telling the Jewish Welfare Board his policy was "a bargain, something you people should appreciate", and taking time off his various directorships to talk about nurses "moon-lighting".

With the prospect of getting it all on telly (late night I hope), Dybbuk will be prepared to offer a suitable prize, providing not barred by new legislation of offensive items sent in the post. Readers are invited to recommend suitable candidates.

Jews Against Apartheid — a programme of action

The second Annual General Meeting of Jews Against Apartheid, was held on 20 December, during the festival of *Hanukah* which celebrates the victory of those fighting against tyranny and oppression at the time of the Second Temple and links were made with the struggle in Southern Africa today.

The number of people at the AGM was not as high as expected but there was a strong feeling that the need for organisation and activity is as urgent as ever.

The new executive committee is already acting on a motion, proposed by two JSG members, which outlined a programme of activities and urgent priorities, such as making contact with grass-roots Jewish organisations and forming speaker's panels.

A JSG motion on Israel and S. Africa was passed. This noted the links but did not prioritise them over South Africa's links with other countries; and urged public pressure in Israel and among Jewish communities worldwide for Israel to implement her decision to sever links with South Africa. Further resolutions were adopted

confirming JAA's position on the use of armed resistance, detainees, Namibia, and sanctions.

For further information please write to Jews Against Apartheid, BM JAA, London WC1N 3XX.

Acting on apartheid

Theatre has always been an important medium for anti-apartheid politics and a new play in this tradition, by Yana Stajno and directed by Julia Pascal, has developed out of the experiences of black and white South African women exiled in London. *Salt River* portrays apartheid through a white household and the relationship between a white, Jewish employer and her three maids.

Salt River is at The Oval House, 54 Kennington Oval, London SE11. Tel 01-582-7680. From 24 February to 6 March. Then at Offstage Theatre, 37 Chalk Farm Road, London NW1. Tel 01-267-9649. From 8 to 27 March.

We hope to have a review in the next issue of *Jewish Socialist*. □

BOYS WILL BE BOYS

Having had the pleasure of meeting those nice young men from Herut occasionally, and accompanied a friend down casualty after one such encounter, Dybbuk felt an instinctive sympathy for Dr Stephen Roth on hearing that the head of the Institute for Jewish Affairs had suffered a cut ear during a heated session of the World Zionist Congress.

Dr Roth has been a good, longstanding servant of the

Zionist cause, and is chair of the Zionist Federation, but notwithstanding the Biblical injunction, I was relieved to hear his ear was not nailed to the doorpost.

He just happened to be sitting too near the aisle when some of the Herut boys got up to raise a point of order in their own inimical way. There was a fracas — there usually is. Their idea of "through the chair" is breaking it over your head. □

Since the Tories' re-election, they have launched a major offensive against lesbians and gay men, in the form of Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill. James Baaden investigates.

At the end of last year, parliament introduced a tiny item of legislation which, if it becomes law, will impair the rights and liberties of everyone in Britain. Clause 27 (now Clause 28) was added to the Local Government Bill in early December. If passed, it will prohibit local authorities from doing anything which would "promote homosexuality" and ban them from supporting organisations or individuals involved in the "promotion of homosexuality". The clause also extends this prohibition to any "teaching" which might favour "the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship".

The original author of the clause was Conservative MP Dame Jill Knight, but it was moved by another Tory, David Wilshire. Labour's response was confused. Dr John Cunningham, shadow spokesperson on the environment, applauded the body of the clause. Labour MPs "do not want to change that in any way, shape or form", he stated, but he indicated reservations about the "pretended family relationship" section. Bernie Grant was more robust, however, criticising the entire clause as "a disgraceful attack".

SINISTER IMPLICATIONS

Outside parliament, lesbians and gay men recognised Clause 28's grave implications from the outset: "promotion is a vague word, after all — and the promotion of homosexuality could be interpreted as any action or utterance which benefits homosexual human beings. Local authorities are responsible for a wide range of functions, including education, public libraries, social services, public transport, the supervision of planning permission, and the licensing of restaurants, theatres and pubs. Thus, any book in a school or public library which depicted homosexual people or relationships in a favourable light could be held to "promote homosexuality", and would have to be removed. In the Commons, David Wilshire made plain that "positive images" of homosexual persons were one of the clause's main targets.

Clause 28 could be used to stop council funding for all sorts of voluntary organisations, including counselling projects and legal aid centres. Equal opportunities policies with a positive commitment to the employment of gay and lesbian staff would also be suspect. Public buildings would no longer be available to lesbian and gay groups and their supporters. Through the machinery of planning permission, this could have a bearing on every building in Britain. Restaurants, clubs, shops and pubs known to cater to homosexual customers could be closed down, since their very existence obviously benefits the welfare of homosexual people and thus promotes homosexuality. In effect, lesbians and gay men would lose their right of assembly altogether. Theoretically, even public transport systems could be forced to refuse admission to homosexual passengers. After all, enabling a gay or lesbian person to get from A to B certainly advances his or her well-being, and may even help to further a homosexual relationship!

Some of these possible implications may look downright bizarre — and yet they are there. Through countless protests from a variety of sources, Clause 28's sponsors were made fully aware of its potential uses. In the Commons debate on 15 December, they conspicuously failed to argue that the clause's alarming possible consequences were *not* their intention. In the week before the debate, the offices of one of the main voices of opposition to the clause, the gay men's community weekly *Capital Gay*, were fire-bombed. When Chris Smith, a Labour MP and a gay man himself, referred to this act of arson, a Conservative member Elaine Kellett-Bowman (since made a Dame) loudly intervened to express her enthusiastic approval for the attack. Mr Wilshire, on the other hand, has indicated some misgivings about the conduct of Clause 28's supporters. All the same, during the debate itself, he was at pains to reject Chris Smith's emphasis on minority rights. Democracy, he replied, is about majority rule — and nothing else.

FEAR AND MISERY IN THE THIRD TERM

TAKING ACTION

Since December, action against Clause 28 has concentrated on heightening public awareness of the issues and on mobilising members of the House of Lords to amend the clause. The Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA) co-ordinated a public march of some 12,000 people at the start of January. More recently, actors, especially Ian McKellen, have taken a lead in efforts to make the public more aware of Clause 28's implications for the arts. They have had some success insofar as certain peers have agreed to sponsor arts-related amendments to the clause. In essence, however, these changes would chiefly affect the works of long-dead luminaries, and would not touch the various implications outlined above. That the novels of E M Forster will not be removed from our public libraries is small consolation, and there is a danger during the present damage-limitation scramble that the unalloyed nastiness of the clause will be forgotten.

Clause 28 was not a bolt from the blue. Attacks on homosexual people's rights and liberties had become fairly commonplace during 1987. At the end of 1986, the Conservative leader of South Staffordshire council demanded the extermination of 90% of gay men in gas chambers as the most effective way of dealing with the AIDS crisis. Not long afterwards, James Anderton, the Manchester police chief and self-styled divine prophet, began to inveigh against gay men and prostitutes, declaring that AIDS was a "cesspit" of their own making. Labour Party stalwart Patricia Hewitt (ironically, a former National Council for Civil Liberties functionary) warned that support for lesbian and gay rights was a sure vote-loser.

RELIGIOUS REACTION

The Church of England's general synod hastened into the limelight towards the end of the year to define just how "sinful" homosexuality is. Although the synod rejected a demand for a purge of all gay clergymen, the Archbishop of Canterbury, following the Bishop of

Ripon's lead, committed himself to carrying out just such a witchhunt in his own diocese. Other bishops have since added their voices to this bloodthirsty chorus.

And then there was the Chief Rabbi. In an interview with *The Independent* at the time of the synod debate, Sir Immanuel Jakobovits (since given a life peerage) called for the reinstatement of homosexuality as a crime. Moreover, although earlier legislation had prohibited male homosexual acts, Sir Immanuel's remarks focused on the notion of homosexuality as an *orientation*. Indeed, he suggested that it characterised a "tiny minority". Tiny or not, it is a minority which includes Jews; I am one of them and I consider myself observant. I know for instance that saying unpleasant things about other Jews is discouraged by Judaism. I am therefore surprised at the adjectives which Sir Immanuel uses to describe lesbian and gay people; "debased", "perverse", "evil", and "objectionable". I would never speak of him in such terms, so how he is able to use this sort of language when discussing a section of the population to which I and many other Jews belong? In another context, it occurs to me that the case which certain "Orthodox" spokespersons try to make against homosexuality is derived from only one of Judaism's 613 *mitzvot* (good deeds) (Leviticus 18; 22) and their particular interpretation of this *mitzvah* is one which I simply cannot accept. Accordingly, I am dismayed that they nevertheless feel entitled to demand my imprisonment. Do they demand the same for Jews who destroy fruit trees, which is forbidden by a far less ambiguous *mitzvah*? I doubt it.

The Chief Rabbi's remarks were made within an exceptionally christianised context. First of all, his starting-point was not a debate within Judaism but a ferocious crusade within a Christian church, and his comments were duly exploited with zeal by the anti-gay campaigners. Thus Judaism was forced into the role of

handmaid to the very fundamentalist circles whose historical antipathy towards non-Christians is, to say the least, well-documented. Secondly, Sir Immanuel was widely represented as a spiritual authority, a quasi-papal figure in some way empowered to define Jewish beliefs. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of Judaism will recognise the gravity of this inaccuracy. We are not a church but a people; without clergy, without bishops, without ecclesiastical superiors. We are equals and none of us possesses any spiritual authority over others. Finally, there was the startlingly Christian character of his observations, in particular the recurrent emphasis on the sinfulness of human sexuality and the need for some sort of moral rebirth.

LAWS AGAINST LESBIANS

Sir Immanuel's call for the criminalisation of homosexuality did not distinguish between men and women. This broader brush also characterises Clause 28. For the first time, lesbians could be specifically affected by the law in Britain. The old statute reformed in 1967 only banned male homosexuality, and in its amended post-1967 version it sets the age of consent for gay male sex at 21. There has never been any legal restriction at all on consensual lesbian sex. Existing laws regarding "gross indecency" and "importuning" are similarly only enforced against gay men. Until now, the law in Britain entirely ignored the existence of lesbians.

Clearly, the AIDS crisis has much to do with the homophobic climate which has produced Clause 28. Gay men remain the foremost "high-risk group" in Britain, lesbians are arguably one of the lowest-risk groups. Yet both gay men and lesbians are equally at risk from the ravages of Clause 28. In 1986 the lesbian feminist journal *Gossip* published an article exhorting women to dissociate themselves from AIDS-related work and gay men but events in the meantime have shown that

the AIDS issue as a whole is deployed to attack the rights of women and men alike.

Janet Green is a Jewish lesbian who has been working for the Terrence Higgins Trust, Britain's principal AIDS foundation, for more than two years. She was moved to apply for a job at the Trust, after the first major outburst of AIDS hysteria in Britain, in early 1985. She was "appalled and angry" and recognised "the vital need for accurate information". Moreover, she foresaw that the issue would touch both gay men and lesbians, even though their situations with regard to AIDS differed strikingly. She wondered how her women friends would respond to her decision to work for an organisation dealing with what was seen very much as a gay men's problem. In fact, all but one stood by her and encouraged her and nowadays she finds ever more lesbians approaching her to find out what they can do in the fight against AIDS. Today Janet Green is not the only Jewish lesbian working for the Trust.

PARALLELS WITH THE 1930s

For Jews, parallels with events in Germany 50 years ago seem obvious. Present-day anti-gay manifestations in Britain remind one of the spirit, and increasingly the letter, of the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures. Lesbian and gay people are characterised as an "evil" minority, a threat to the nation's welfare, a scapegoat on whom everything imaginable can be blamed. Many of the specific measures demanded, especially in the context of AIDS, sound an alarmingly familiar chord; isolation, registration, internment, extermination. Clause 28, if its implications are fully realised, will impose on Britain's homosexual citizens many of the same restrictions that were visited on the Jews of Germany from 1933 onwards.

The role of the churches points up particularly intriguing similarities. In the Germany of the 1930s they assiduously furthered Nazi policy by giving prominence to theological representations of the Jew as a "sinful" and "wayward" community steeped in "error" and "immorality". That the churches found Judaism itself incompatible with their own teachings is hardly surprising; this remains the case today. But instead of putting these differences to one side and defending the basic human rights of Jews in a spirit of tolerance and democratic good will, the German churches promoted images which set the Jews apart as a despised pariah community. In this way they paved the way to Auschwitz. Today it is gay men and lesbians who are the "sinful minority". The churches' current excuse that they "hate the sin and love the sinner" is fatuous. By continually emphasising the allegedly "sinful" nature

1938

"First they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the communists
And I did not speak out—
Because I was not a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist

Then they came for me—
And there was no one left
To speak out for me."

Pastor Niemöller
(murdered by the Nazis)

1988

SPEAK OUT NOW FOR LESBIANS AND GAYS

STOP CLAUSE 28

Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill
is an attack on everyone's freedom

of the lifestyle of one community, they foment hatred and violence against the members of that group. The campaign against gay clergyman spearheaded by the Bishop of Ripon and Dr Runcie is particularly reminiscent of German churches' efforts during the Third Reich to expunge, "non-Aryan elements" from Christianity.

The Nazis' anti-homosexual policy must also be remembered, though it has less in common with present-day developments than some might think. For one, it was solely directed against men, because Nazism saw male homosexuality as an immediate threat to the militarisation of Germany and an obstacle in their campaign to promote rapid population growth. When the Third Reich imposed legislation in 1935 which went beyond a ban on male homosexual acts and criminalised any sign of gay male desire, it was specifically decided not to extend this to lesbianism. The Nazi jurist responsible for studying this point argued that lesbianism was extremely rare, did not pose a threat to the state, and usually ceased altogether when the woman in question was able to find a suitable male partner! Nor does it make sense to see the phenomenon of Clause 28 as part of an exclusively "right-wing" trend. Homophobia, like antisemitism, is exploited by parties and governments of every persuasion. By launching this present attack on its lesbian and gay citizens, Britain joins a disparate club whose members include Romania, Iran, Cuba and Queensland. The disarray in Labour

attitudes has long been evident (the South Staffordshire call for gas chambers received local Labour backing), and Clause 28's sponsors hardly constitute a cohesive force. Dame Jill Knight, for instance, supports David Alton's current bill to limit late abortions. However, Teresa Gorman, another Clause 28 sponsor and a right-wing Conservative MP like Dame Jill, has been an outspoken opponent of the Alton bill. That the Government today chooses to act against homosexual people points not to peculiarly reactionary motives but to ruthless opportunism. Homophobia, like antisemitism, bubbles forth everywhere.

FACING THE FUTURE

The AIDS crisis has intimately acquainted all gay people with the reality of human suffering. Among ourselves, we are discovering hitherto unguessed-at strength, because we see that our sense of community, the practical business of caring for each other, is real. In our dealings with the rest of humanity, we are vulnerable, and there are obviously innumerable people who rush in and attack. Heterosexuals, after all, must have their own worries; the rate of marriage failure, the frequency of rape, violence by husbands against wives, child abuse and the realization that AIDS, once gloatingly heralded as the "gay plague", is just as efficiently transmitted through heterosexual intercourse. In any event, we cannot take comfort in the assurance that the attack is merely hot air. By the time you read this Clause 28 could be the law of the land.



Photo: Marian Shapiro

Above and below left: a massive turnout in support of lesbian and gay rights



Photo: Marian Shapiro

THE OTHER SIDE

We are used to thinking of Soviet politics in terms of internecine struggles within the Party-State apparatus and tiny isolated groups of dissidents. And until recently the vast majority of the population did indeed play no active political role. In the last year or two this has begun to change. A multitude of "informal" clubs and associations have emerged, not clearly legitimised by the authorities but enjoying a greater or lesser degree of toleration.

The informal movements vary enormously: in their activities (cultural self-expression, ecological protest, political debate and agitation), in their attitude to the authorities (cooperative or confrontational); in their scale (local or nationwide); and in their ideological orientation (liberal, socialist, nationalist etc.). They often bring together figures prominent in the official world and ex-dissidents. Many groups rely on the protection and support of factions inside the Party apparatus, which in turn try to use them for their own purposes.

NATIONAL MEMORY

Here I focus on the Russian nationalist groups which so alarm decent Soviet people. "Pamyat" ("Memory") is the best-known nationwide movement of this

The policy of Glasnost has opened up new possibilities for both Left and Right in the USSR. Stephen Shenfield describes the fascist danger from the "Pamyat" movement

kind, though there are other similar local groups. "Pamyat" has its friends and enemies in high places. Among its activists one finds established official propagandists as well as people who spent time in psychiatric prison for membership of the dissident Fetisov group - admirers of Hitler and Stalin.

"Pamyat" and similar groups occupy only one position within a broad spectrum of Russian nationalist tendencies. All these tendencies strive, as they see it, to restore the integrity of the Russian ethnic identity. They all take an interest in the protection and restoration of old buildings, churches and monuments. But it is only fair to note that many Russian nationalists - for example, the "Spasenie" ("Salvation") group in Leningrad - reject the preaching of national hatred.

A MANICHAEAN STRUGGLE

Some Russian nationalists proclaim their allegiance to Marxist-Leninist ideology,

though they interpret it in their own way. The influential "National Bolsheviks", like the writer Prokhanov, glorify the Bolshevik regime as the inheritor of the age-old ideal of Russian Statehood. But the ideologists of "Pamyat" reject Marxism as a "Jewish" creed. Their vision is a religious one of a Manichaean struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. A vast Judeo-Masonic conspiracy in the service of the Devil works to destroy above all the Russian people.

In the choice of a specific religious tradition, however, they are divided among themselves. Those seeking a revival of Orthodox Christianity are opposed by those who, unmasking Christianity as a "Jewish" religion, prefer to return to Russia's pre-Christian nature religion. Churches should certainly be restored, but for use as places of pagan worship.

All social ills, from bureaucracy to alcoholism, are laid at the door of the Jewish and Masonic conspirators. They

OF GLASNOST

plot to bring about food shortages, to destroy "Russian geniuses", to smuggle Jewish and Masonic symbols into the arts. The attack on the nation's architectural heritage is the work of Jews who have infiltrated the town planning agencies. One "Pamyat" orator, updating the Rasputin myth, even claims that Gorbachev is a puppet of Arbatov, director of the USA Institute and a foreign-policy adviser, allegedly a Jew (possibly of partially Jewish ancestry).

POPULAR SUPPORT?

How much popular support do these fantastic ideas command? In the absence of proper sociological research it is hard to judge. Going by reports of meetings addressed by "Pamyat" speakers, the response is enthusiastic at some places, unappreciative at others. At any rate, the appeal is to more than a marginal fringe.

At the level of the power elite, "Pamyat" appears to have the backing of many conservative Party officials, particularly in the Russian provinces, and there are links between some of its "anti-pacifist" theorists and the military. It is opposed by a strong reformist grouping

in the central Party apparatus, which accounts for the campaign against the organisation in the centrally controlled media. The Moscow Party apparatus contains both protectors and enemies of "Pamyat".

Fortunately, "Pamyat" has a penchant for making powerful enemies by exposing important people as tools of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. Its propagandist Kazantsev was expelled from the Party - only not for his custom of reading out passages from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* at public meetings, but for "slandering top Party and State officials and leading scholars".

RACIST RHETORIC

Why does paranoid racist rhetoric have the appeal it does in Russia at the moment? And what purpose does it serve for those officials who, perhaps cynically, allow it expression? These are the most important things to understand, and also the most difficult. Two explanations are regularly offered by Soviet observers: career rivalries in the higher social strata, frustration combined with ignorance in the lower strata.

"Pamyat" activists, it is argued, are drawn typically from Russian engineers, petty bureaucrats and so on, poorly qualified and fearing competition from more competent rivals - competition which is bound to be heightened under conditions of economic reform. They focus their anxieties on potential Jewish rivals in particular, whose advancement has been (but, they fear, may not continue to be) restricted by discriminatory personnel policy. Such fears may be shared by the less adaptable officials at higher levels of the State apparatus as well. The idea of a Jewish conspiracy which must be thwarted provides a cover for more selfish motives for keeping Jews out of one's ministry or department.

The other reason for facilitating racist propaganda is a very familiar one - offering up scapegoats to popular rage at the imperceptible pace of the promised improvement in living conditions. As the writer of one letter to a Soviet magazine pointed out, local officials who encourage "Pamyat" orators to blame food shortages in the shops on "alien" (Georgian, Jewish etc.) "black-market" speculators are channelling discontent in a direction

For the rights of Jews in the USSR

Statement of the Co-ordinating Committee of the Bund on recent changes in the Soviet Union and their impact on Soviet Jews

The recent changes in the Soviet Union with regard to freedom of expression, civil rights and a more open society are welcomed by democrats, socialists and people of goodwill all over the world. As democratic socialists, we hope these new developments under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev are not merely temporary, but that they are real steps towards a more free and democratic society.

Glasnost is encountering difficulties and opposition from some of the Soviet bureaucracy who don't want to lose their privileges and positions of power. Significant numbers of reactionaries in the capitalist countries would also prefer to see this experiment fail. They believe that the worse the situation in the Soviet Union, the better for the western world - a malicious and dangerous approach!

We believe that a democratic Russia offers new possibilities for detente, co-existence and peace in the world.

Although there have been positive changes with regard to the interior and foreign policies of the Soviet Union, no concrete changes can be seen with regard to the Jewish people. On the question of emigration, some improvement has taken place: hundreds of political prisoners, so-called refuseniks among them, have now been released from prisons and gulags and many of them have been granted emigration visas. But there has been not a murmur about reviving the institutions of Jewish culture which were once so massively developed and so ruthlessly destroyed.

The Jewish people expect not mere statements, but an official change of attitude towards the Jews as a nation.

A historical manifestation of glasnost for the Jews would be the reinstatement of secular Jewish culture in Soviet Russia.

The slogan of official Jewish circles in Israel is "Let my people go!" - a call to evacuate all Soviet Jews to Israel. This absurd idea is not only in complete opposition to the interests of the two million Soviet Jews, but it also undermines the foundations on which Jewish life is built in all free countries.

We say: free emigration for the Jews who wish to leave the Soviet Union and settle in Israel or in other countries - yes! Emigrationism or evacuation of our people - no!

We Bundists still cherish the ideals of the pioneers of the Bund who helped the freedom-loving Russian workers' movement to topple Tsarism. We are, therefore, most interested in the future of freedom

and democracy in the Soviet Union.

Many years after the forcible liquidation of the Bund in the Soviet Union, the ideas of Bundism were still deeply entrenched in the hearts of the Jewish masses there.

It is high time now, in the days of glasnost, to give some sign that a new era of development in Jewish life is beginning. In the spirit of glasnost, the World Co-ordinating Committee of the Bund demands from the present leaders of the Soviet Union:

1. Free emigration for those Jews who wish to leave the Soviet Union, in conformity with the Helsinki Agreements.
2. The rehabilitation of Jewish culture which was liquidated at the time of Stalin.
3. In conformity with the Soviet constitution, the restoration of full national rights for the Jews - the same rights as for all the other peoples of Russia.
4. The creation of proper conditions for the re-establishment of Yiddish schools, Yiddish theatre and Yiddish literature through the free activity of the Jewish masses.



that will not threaten their position. They do not, in the critical atmosphere of *perestroika*, want attention drawn to their own responsibility for shortages!

OPEN TO MANIPULATION

Ordinary people in the USSR are susceptible to such crude manipulation as a result of their long-cultivated ignorance of socio-economic problems. Even half-open discussion of the real systemic causes of poor conditions has only recently started to penetrate into the mass media. People have ample cause for frustration, and feel a need to blame someone. Add to this the crisis of ethnic identity generated by the continuing breakdown of traditional ways of life, and the paranoia bred by the unpredictability and secrecy of Soviet officialdom. It becomes less surprising that conspiracy theories can seem compelling.

A specific example of the way ignorance leaves myth-making free scope, given by a number of Soviet commentators, concerns the history of the early Soviet period. So long as Trotsky's role in the formation of the Soviet State remains a



taboo topic, it is impossible to counteract those who spin an antisemitic demonology around his name.

How great then is the potential threat posed by fascist movements like "Pamyat" in the USSR? From the point of view of a "rational" policy-maker, it is hard to take the danger all that seriously, so patently irrelevant are these regressive ideologies to the practical problems faced by the USSR. But history has repeatedly taught us how the irrational can win out, and with what devastating consequences. Even if the risk is small, no-one can regard it as tolerable in the nuclear age.

ESTABLISHED INTERESTS THREATENED

Much depends on the fate of the Gorbachev reforms. Fascism is (among other things) a desperate means of stopping a reform process that threatens established bureaucratic interest. A real danger of its ascendancy will come if the reforms run into the sands, or are seen by people to have failed. So the efforts of the liberal and socialist informal movements to promote greater openness and to speed up the democratic renewal of society also serve to ward off the fascist threat.

All the same, certainly if the experience of anti-fascist campaigns in Western Europe is anything to go by, it would be worth devoting greater energies to directly counteracting fascist organisations. The Club of Social Initiatives has taken a step in this direction by creating an anti-fascist information centre, which "Pamyat" has done the honour of burgling. There would also be much advantage in building up international contact among those concerned to resist the danger. □

Jewish feminists answer back

Francesca Klug takes a critical look at Jenny Bourne's article on Jewish feminism and identity politics

Homelands of the mind: Jewish feminism and identity politics, by Jenny Bourne, Race and Class Pamphlet, £1

The first time I read Jenny Bourne's article on Jewish feminism and identity politics I was filled with an inarticulate jumble of emotions ranging from excitement to anger. The second time I read it I knew why. On the one hand she had raised issues that I knew we needed to look at — issues that had been prodded and poked at but rarely if ever, unearthed in my experience of radical Jewish politics. On the other hand, the tone of the pamphlet

had a depressingly familiar ring to those of us acquainted with a particular Left tradition which is at best suspicious, and at worst hostile, to all Jewish liberation politics.

Despite this, I could not leave it there. The pamphlet had touched on nerves which ought to be exposed for our own clarity and purpose as radical Jews. If we could respond clearly and boldly to this latest attack upon us, we would come out of it all the stronger.¹ In my view the pamphlet exposes two important issues which many of us probably stand so close to that we risk having our view of them blurred. The first concerns our awareness

as Jewish feminists of antisemitism in a society characterised by anti-Black racism.

For many of us, Jewish feminist politics was the route through which we explored the role of antisemitism in our lives. Whether we were rediscovering a culture our parents had retreated from as their defence against antisemitism or whether we were daring to wear the *magen davids* we reserved for family Friday nights or Reclaim the Night demos, Jewish feminism provided us with the courage and knowledge to "come out".

But sometimes our hurt and anger at the hostility our open Jewishness could

provoke would absorb us so thoroughly that perhaps we did, as Jenny suggests, develop a sense of our own oppression which obscured, as much as revealed, the racism other people experienced. Whilst we clung fiercely to the notion that there can be no hierarchy of oppression, and so deeply felt our own, maybe some of us did begin to believe that our common experiences were on a par with those of Black women facing deportation threats or employment barriers as a part of everyday life. Or if we did not actually believe this, we failed to understand how Black women could presume this was what we were saying. How, as Jenny says, "we might be seen as competing" with them.

But in digging up this painful area, Jenny is not only asking us to look more honestly at the parallels and differences between modern antisemitism and anti-Black racism. She is clearly attempting to expose what is for her the bankrupt nature of a Jewish feminist movement.²

A LEGITIMATE IDENTITY

For Jenny, the quest for political expression as Jews is no more than an act of self indulgence. Jewish feminism stands as the quintessential example of a new cultural politics which has betrayed the class struggle. The metaphysical has replaced the material, "oppression" has supplanted "exploitation", the personal has edged out the political. For Jenny the good old days were when the Ruths and Miriams who formed a significant proportion of post-1960 radicals just silently "sensed" their collective history of oppression (which, she acknowledges, probably propelled them into the struggle) and got on with the real task of transforming the world. Now we are all into transforming ourselves.

The only legitimate act of self-expression for Jews, it seems, is as activists in the struggle against "the exclusionist basis of Zionism and the racist practices of Israel". On this Jenny has no doubt that we have a duty to speak out as Jews. Israel "takes a position for us and, in failing to disown it, we tacitly agree to its politics."

In this statement lies, I believe, the second major challenge to radical Jews in the article. How many times have we in Jewish Feminist or Jewish Socialist Groups³ denied any responsibility for the actions of the Israeli government but found ourselves *kveching* over every action it took with an emotional intensity we rarely applied to events nearer home? We had never really resolved this contradiction.

I had been born and bred on the notion of "a duty to speak out". If only the



Jenny Bourne, opponent of identity politics

ordinary Germans had spoken out, the Nazis could never have wielded the power they did; if only ordinary white people spoke out, Apartheid could be crushed overnight etc etc. But with Israel I had always protested that this did not apply to me. Nationalist Zionists argued that all Jews belong to Israel and Israel belongs only to Jews. Now the Left were effectively telling me the same thing. And yet I had to admit that I had long held a fantasy about a mass Jewish protest against the way our persecution had led to the oppression of the Palestinians. Like the early settlers I once met on kibbutz, we would argue that Israel has to be a land first and foremost for all those who live in it. That if it is to provide a sanctuary against antisemitism then surely it must also provide a homeland for Palestinian exiles. How could I be so caught up with this notion whilst protesting that Israel was of no automatic concern for Jews living thousands of miles away?

Jenny's pamphlet has helped me to resolve this contradiction. It surely is reasonable to ask any group of people in whose name an oppression is conducted to stand up and be counted amongst its opponents, however innocent they are. But this is altogether different from saying we are in any way responsible for this oppression. It is this unjust allegation of culpability that we have been resisting when pronouncing our detachment.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The strength of Jenny's argument that we have a duty to speak out is all but lost in the accusing finger she points. She rejects Jewish criticism of the notion that Israel is "our burden". She even expresses sympathy with the view that "to be a Jew and an anti-racist appears contradictory

until anyone who identifies themselves as Jewish" opposes Israel's policies at home and abroad. If we all claim the Holocaust as part of our collective history the same should go for Israel, she argues. But in making this connection she provides evidence of what it is difficult not to suspect — that in contrast to her analysis of anti-Black racism, her understanding of antisemitism is scanty and superficial. The Holocaust was a real threat to every living Jew. All Jews born subsequently know they owe their lives to the defeat of Nazism. Because Israel's existence is tied up with the history of antisemitism this does not make all victims of antisemitism responsible for its actions. Responsibility carries an element of choice. Being a victim does not.

To have cancelled the Jewish film festival in protest over the Israeli invasion of Lebanon as Jenny suggests would have provided a dangerous concession to the notion of collective Jewish guilt. It would have given credence to the age-old antisemitic stereotype of a world body of Jews acting in mysterious concert with each other, so that the actions of some are the responsibility of all.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ANTISEMITISM

But Jenny demonstrates no understanding of the ideological underpinning of anti-Jewish racism. For her antisemitism has to be understood in "historical materialist" terms.⁴ The preoccupation of groups like the JFG or JSG is with a "somewhat ethereal" antisemitism, derived from "turning history into superstition and fear". She completely fails to comprehend that any serious attempt to weigh the current threat from antisemitism must include an understanding of the non-material forces — values, religion, psychology, culture — which, along with specific material forces, have unleashed recurrent waves of antisemitism in Europe.⁵ Political and economic circumstances may have changed, but the ideology which only 50 years ago encouraged the active complicity of masses of people all over Europe in the deportation and extermination of millions of Jews did not whither away with D-day. It is as old as Christendom itself.

Without this understanding it is not only impossible to provide an adequate defence against antisemitism, but it is difficult not to fall into the trap of contributing to it. It is this task of understanding, and through knowledge resisting, that we, who meet in groups like the JFG and JSG, set ourselves.

Yes, there may be those Jewish feminists who explore their identity as

Jews for its own sake. We have a rich and vibrant heritage. Why shouldn't radical Jews who reject what they find oppressive in Jewish culture or religion also celebrate what they find joyous or fun?

But in my experience, the exploration of identity amongst radical Jews is generally an integral part of the process of understanding the ideological roots of antisemitism. It is surely not this which

retards the wider struggle against racism and imperialism, as Jenny suggests. Where is the evidence that we are all engaged in a sterile exercise of navel gazing? The Ruths and the Miriams are still out there campaigning and organising, but now their history of oppression which propelled them into the struggle is revealed, not hidden. If there is any barrier between progressive Jews and progressive politics it is precisely this denial of the right to be heard as Jews.

In particular, if more Jews are to take their anguish and protest against Israeli oppression outside their own silent community, then it will have to be from a position of safety and pride. It will have to be from a knowledge that they are not selling out those Jews who died because, ultimately, no one really knew how to provide an adequate defence against antisemitism. It is this knowledge which politics like Jewish feminism seeks to provide. □

¹ I was clearly not alone in this response. Jewish socialists and Jewish feminists have come together at well attended meetings purely to debate the pamphlet. Within both groups, these have brought out the old differences between us but, I believe, in a way which has clarified and strengthened, rather than confused and weakened. Many of the thoughts in this review are not mine alone, therefore, but are drawn from what has so far emerged in the collective response to the pamphlet.

² Given Jenny's total non-involvement in Jewish feminism and her utter disdain for the politics of identity, it is striking that she uses the word "we" — the pronoun of identification — throughout. It is difficult not to suspect that this is purely a device to affirm her legitimacy as a Jewish woman with the right to criticise from "within". As such it seems an inappro-

priate — and indeed hypocritical — use of the word "we".

³ While addressing most of her arguments to the Jewish Feminist Group, the JSG is also attacked as being part of the new culturalism, although it gains some praise for campaigning against racial attacks, especially when this is not confined to attacks against Jews.

⁴ As the meaning of historical materialism in this context is not amplified, the reader may be forgiven for presuming she is referring to Marxist theory which, crudely put, explains antisemitism in terms of the supposed historical role of Jews in the economy. In the words of Nathan Weinstock, author of *Zionism False Messiah*, commented to the reader by Jenny as an example of the scientific analysis she supports, "popular" antisemitism was "a product of the persistent memory of the Jewish user and the historical

link between the Jews and commercial capitalism." I am one among many who would suggest that this explanation is itself antisemitic and underlines the need to understand the ideological components of anti-Jewish racism.

⁵ Because of the absence of the role of ideology in Jenny's understanding of what constitutes antisemitism, she completely caricatures the debate that rocked the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, as she put it, at the time of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. There is no space to go into this here, but what marked that incident was that Zionist and anti-Zionist Jewish feminists alike were united in their outcry against the portrayal of Jewish oppression by the Nazis in the articles on the Palestinian struggle and the silencing of the protest against this portrayal — a silencing that has been repeated five years later when letters criticising Jenny's article were again not published by *Spare Rib*.

LETTERS...

SUBTERFUGE

At the beginning of December Edinburgh University Student Association (EUSA) held its AGM. At that meeting a motion was presented by the Edinburgh Friends of Palestine (of which I'm a member). The motion noted suppression of academic freedom at West Bank Universities, closures and the killing of a number of students by the IDF. (This was before the latest troubles.) The motion resolved to twin EUSA with the Bir Zeit Student Council. All this is a very typical situation in student politics.

Typically enough, the Jewish Society, i.e. UJS, responded with an amendment noting the lack of academic freedom in Arab countries (particularly Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria) and the killing of some students in Jordan. It resolved to write to the ambassadors of these countries expressing EUSA's displeasure. The amendment did not delete any significant

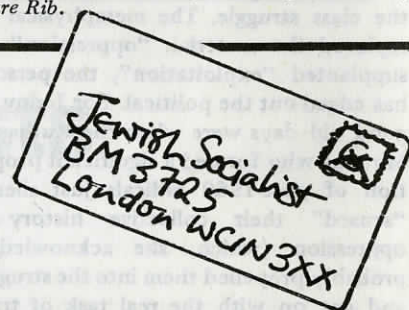
part of the original motion.

What happened was as follows: the amendment was (narrowly) accepted by the meeting, and the motion became "the property" of the Jewish Society. After a perfunctory speech in favour of the new motion, it was voted upon, and in this vote *Jewish Society members voted against the motion*, thus revealing very clearly their attitude to the whole issue of human rights and academic freedom. In short they were not the slightest bit interested in the subject, but were merely trying to wreck the original motion. First they diluted its specificity, under the pretence of preventing "a one-sided attack" on Israel and then they voted against what should ostensibly have been a motion which was perfectly acceptable to them: of course it wasn't, because it still suggested that Israel might be in some way responsible for the problem.

This kind of dishonesty and cynicism is absolutely typical of UJS's attitude to such situations. I speak here from personal experience having been involved myself (to my shame) in such manoeuvres in the past. The only honest way to oppose such motions is to say that the IDF must act to keep the peace, to protect Israeli security etc. Such arguments are not sufficient and do not represent the reality of the situation, but they are at least honest.

I hope that socialist Jewish students will in the future recognise such subterfuges for what they are, and expose them. It's time to stand up and be counted.

David King
Edinburgh



JEWISH SUFFRAGETTES

I am a student at Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology and as part of my degree I intend to write a dissertation on the involvement of Jewish women in the suffragette movement. I am particularly keen to trace literature published by the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage, and also a banner designed and embroidered by them.

I would very much like to make contact with anyone who knew any Jews who were involved and I would also like to learn of any diaries, letters, family photos, magazines and other resource material that may be relevant. If any of your readers could assist me in any of these matters I would be most grateful.

Rahelly Cutting

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COMMUNISTS IN CABLE STREET

I must take issue with Ken Leech in his attempt, in his interesting article (*Jewish Socialist* 11), to denigrate the role of the Communist Party in the "Battle of Cable Street" — a view that would be shared by very few who lived in East London in the '30s.

After dealing with what he calls "myths" about the "Battle" he acknowledges the "enormous contribution to morale which Cable Street gave to the anti-fascist struggle (and) its symbolic importance to future generations".

He says that the Communist Party's role was "ambivalent". (It was concentrating on a forthcoming Trafalgar Square rally in support of Republican Spain which was then under fascist attack.)

When Mosley announced his rally and march, it is true that a number of CP members wanted the Aid Spain rally stopped. Others argued that the front line in the battle against fascism was in Spain; that many anti-fascists including CP members had gone from Britain to help with arms in hand, and many had died doing so and that aid for Spain was paramount.

The Party had worked to get the Mosley march stopped. It had given its support to the efforts of the Jewish People's Council's petition which had gained many thousands of signatures. It had helped create the anti-fascist atmosphere by its work in the years since Hitler came to power and the British Union of Fascists' activities had begun.

My own activities at the time were mainly in Hackney where I lived, and I was among many arrested and fined on a number of occasions for organising opposition to the fascists.

During the week before October 4th, the Party finally decided on an all-out effort to stop the march from taking place and special steps were taken for the day itself.

The rest is history. But what aren't so well known are the arguments that took place within the Party on the best way to tackle the growth of fascist influence. As Phil Piratin wrote in his book *Our Flag Stays Red*:

"There were those who said, 'Bash the fascists whenever you see them.' Others among us asked ourselves, 'How was Mosley able to recruit Stepney workers?'

These people, like most in East London, were living miserable, squalid lives. Their homes were slums, many were unemployed. Those at work were often in low-paid jobs. Therefore we urged that the Communist Party should help the people to improve their conditions of life, in the course of which we could show them who was really responsible for their conditions, and get them organised to fight against their real exploiters..."

However, Ken Leech may be interested to know that there is one "myth" that can be dealt with — especially for people who know me. I was NOT at Aldgate on October 4th. I was one of a number of people deputed by the Party to "capture" the pitch at Victoria Park Square (which was to have been the fascists' final rallying place) and to hold it at all costs. We held the pitch all day long from the early hours of the morning before. And when a march did arrive, it was of the victorious crowds holding aloft their banner, "They did not pass".

Solly Kaye

London NW11

IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

I am a former German Jewish refugee, now retired and would like to carry out a study of German (speaking) — Jewish immigration experience into the UK during the 1930s. My particular interest is how women, over time, adjusted to a new and unfamiliar world.

I would be most grateful to hear from such women, anywhere in the UK and from all walks of life, who are prepared to share their experiences with me. Confidentiality as part of the research process is assured and I would be prepared to travel anywhere within the UK to talk to them. Interested women who would like to participate in this study are invited to contact me at my address.

Marion Ferguson

2 Plas-Y-Coed

Lake Road East

Cardiff CF2 5PA

Faisal Aweidha, Representative of the PLO in London

First of all I would like to thank the Jewish Socialists' Group for arranging this meeting. Secondly I would like to thank this audience for coming here and giving us this opportunity to at least expose our views to each other. I have a short time to speak about a problem that has been going on for a long time, but one must start somewhere. Historically speaking, Arabs and Jews are one family. We are all the children of Abraham, we are all Semites. We are all antisemitic and yet what we are doing to each other is much more than the antisemites have done to us. We continue to pursue a policy of destruction, a policy of mistreatment of each other and a policy of lack of policy...

Today, in the occupied territories, where Palestinians are being mistreated, tortured, deported, starved of food, one can feel also that there is history repeating itself... We all have said that it shall never be done again. And we hope it shall never be done again, but what is happening now is being done to the cousins, the Arabs, by the same people that suffered the most from the Hitler era; who should lead us into being tolerant from what they have suffered. The suffering is happening now on the land where it should never have happened.

Arabs and Jews have lived together historically in peace. I can go back to 1945 when I had Jewish friends in my house. We used to visit our Jewish friends in Jerusalem Katamon quarter. And we all remembered each other again in 1967 when the Israeli army occupied the rest of the West Bank. We were living in the West Bank and the same Jews who were our friends before 1948 came to seek us and see if we needed any help.

What was the outcome of 1967? Palestine was reunited. Whether under Israel or otherwise, again parts of the family got together. It looked like a new hope was in the air. That hope wasn't given much air to live on. We started a war—we continued our old war—because we had no alternative. You cannot expect us to live in refugee camps. You cannot expect us to live by the meagre UNWRA ration, and thank God we are still alive. We were not alive. We were dying. Our tummy was always empty and waiting for a decision at the United Nations—how much money to give to the Palestinian refugees, how much to feed them and how much to steal from their food. More than one third of the budget of UNWRA goes to the salaries of Europeans working for the refugee camps. And their salaries are five times the salary any Jordanian employee took to keep the rations going on...

We were mistreated by Arabs and Jews, and the world in the same way. It is no way out to say we belong to the Arabs, Jordan is part of Palestine, we should take Jordan. This is complete political nonsense. Jordan was never part of Palestine and Palestine was never part of Jordan. We, in the Arab world, are con-

sidered occupiers as we consider the Jews occupiers of our land, because in spite of the fact you are in an Arab country, the Arab man has his own land, his own job, his own property and we are competing with him; threatening his own livelihood. So we end up in a situation where we are neither on our land or accepted in other lands. This is what led the PLO to lead a war of liberation to return.

In the beginning, it was one mind, one idea, go all the way or nothing. As you see realities better you start thinking of the situation. I also don't want the Jews in Palestine to be displaced. I can't solve the problem by creating another problem. Israel was created on my land but to solve this problem it means I have to displace all those Jews from all over the world to other countries that probably no longer would accept them? The new generations that were born there know nothing but that land... Nonetheless there is a way to live and one wants to live. Things are not really as easy for the PLO as you imagine in our own population. We had to



Photo: Marian Shapiro

Left Faisal Aweidha, right David Rosenberg educate our people, go into the camps, the villages, to tell them different things with honesty that the situation can be changed and the Jew is not a devil; you can live with him as he lived with you.

In 1969, we succeeded through El Fatah, to create a consensus among the Palestinians that we can create a democratic state for Palestine, where all people can live in peace regardless of religion. In 1971 it was passed by the Palestine National Congress. A few years later, finally the Arabs accepted the proposal that was put by the PLO to them, and in '74 Chairman Arafat spoke to the United Nations about a solution to the Palestinian problem where all people can live together in a democratic situation...

This is the situation, we have to solve it, and how to solve it... Now, for the first time inside Israel itself Jews are rejecting what is going on in the occupied territories. Israel calls it "demonstrations and violence," but the people who are demonstrating are children; people who were born and raised under the Israeli occupation since 1967... To their knowledge, there is only occupation. To their understanding the only way out is to rid

ourselves of occupation. The army went into these camps, brutally trying to stop it. They failed. They imposed curfews. In the middle of the night they visit the houses in the camps, they break legs and break arms, and I am not saying this as propaganda. I will not use propaganda for you here.

The situation has reached a point, in spite of what is happening... where dialogue is possible, where reasoning can be reached, where an international conference can achieve something for both of us. Israel can never claim security for itself by occupying the West Bank. You can never have security when you have a million and a half of the people under your control against you in the night and in the day obeying you. You can never have security unless you allow these people to have their own security. Israel's security is in the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories, then, those who are secure in their territory can reach an understanding and make you secure in your own territory. I am not coming here to tell you let us make a solution. We all have different opinions. I will tell you what the PLO has proposed. We have accepted an international peace conference of all parties concerned including Israel and the PLO, meeting on an equal basis under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss a settlement. No pre-condition has been put on by the PLO. There are conditions that have been put on us, if not by Israel, then by the United States, by the so-called allies of Israel who are benefiting more by what is happening than they like to admit. They have proposed the PLO must recognise 242 and 338.

242 in no way recognises there are Palestinians, 242 says there are refugees, Arabs and Jews, according to the Israeli interpretations. According to Israel, any Jew who is not living in Israel is a refugee abroad... We are not against 242 because it also calls for Israeli withdrawal. The second part of it negates the existence of the Palestinians. This is one condition the PLO will not accept. The second condition as put by these same governments is to recognise Israel. We say no, because Israel does not accept that we exist. How can we the non-existent entity recognise the existent entity? It can't work logically and politically we can't recognise Israel because Israel is on our territory now. When Israel withdraws, when there is negotiation, when there is

In January Jews in Britain and the PLO shared a public platform for the first time in five years. Faisal Aweidha, Richard Hauser, and Elfi Pallis talked about the prospects for peace

an idea of a settlement, recognition can come to be.

Israel needs security. At the Fez conference in Morocco the Arab countries passed resolutions which give the right to all states in the region secure borders and the right to exist. Secure nations doesn't mean Syria, Jordan or Egypt. The only "insecure" or "secure" is Israel. When we talk about negotiations we don't talk about negotiations with an Arab country, we are talking about negotiations with



Photo: Marian Shapiro

Left to right: Faisal Aweidha, David Rosenberg, Richard Hauser and Elfi Pallis

Israel. You don't negotiate or make peace with your friend. You make peace with your enemy... But all this falls on a deaf ear because now in Israel you have two governments, one for the Likud, one for Labour, each one says something contrary to what the other one says. Shamir doesn't want to go, Rabin wants to beat the people with his "iron fist" policy, Peres wants to talk to Jordan and among all, the Israeli population itself is becoming confused.

A few days ago there was a demonstration in Tel Aviv of 50,000 Jews calling for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. We didn't pressure them to make a demonstration. It was their feeling for Israel that made them do a demonstration... When I say we want peace, I am speaking it on behalf of the PLO. This is not for the first time we say it, and not only for you. It has been put in the United Nations in 1974. It is today being discussed in the United Nations. Three days ago our foreign Minister Mr Kaddoumi was here with the foreign office. He met with Mr Kaufman in his capacity as the Shadow Foreign Minister. These things were reiterated to them...

I do not think we will find solutions in Britain or Washington. The solutions are

with us. We can solve this problem among us. We need to be in the UN not because we want to but because we still mistrust each other. We need a mediating party to bring us together and that is the Security Council for the UN. Israel needs guarantees as do the Palestinians. Guarantees come from the Super Powers guaranteeing these guarantees... The Palestinians need guarantees because we do not have one third of Israel's military might. We fight good guerilla warfare but we cannot fight the Israeli Air Force or tanks. Israel has a nuclear power which we do not have. There is in Israel the "silent majority". We have to impress upon these people to become an active majority. You have a stake in it. You have to help Israel if you are a Jew, as a Jew. Help Israel make peace. Help the Jews to survive in peace. Don't create another ghetto in our time for the Jews.

Richard Hauser, veteran Jewish human rights activist

I am a Jew who survived—21 members of my family did not... What recurs all the time is the holocaust which has not been digested... We heard our Palestinian friend and all we can say to him is that we are ashamed—we who had nothing to do with it directly. We have not been able to help the sad people of Israel to come out of the past. We must help them to understand the past and we must find ways and means to be positive about it soon because the dangers are grave...

I had much to do with the de-fascistisation of the Italian Army and the treatment of the Nazis when they were Prisoners of War. The sad story is how quickly people can become de-humanised when they are frightened, when they are made to be frightened. This applies to every one of us—this is what is so tragic. The Jews could never take it out on the Germans. The Germans who were representative were not the Germans who put them into concentration camps.

We must accept the fact that we have all failed in being humane enough to really take on board what needs to be done. It is wrong that Palestinians are

displaced persons in their own country. It is wrong that there are pogroms against Palestinians in Israel—it is unforgivable, not just wrong. While we, the Jews on the outside, understand that this is a crazy way to compensate for the holocaust and do not help the situation at all...

We must learn from history that we, the Jews, are the people who are responsible to see that it does not happen to other people—not just the Palestinians. We are the people who must bring hope, human rights and responsibility to many people. We, the outsiders, cannot allow that there is an attitude in Israel where the great friendship with South Africa shows that they have learned a lot from South Africa on how to treat the Palestinians...

We need to find ways and means to come out of this situation. We must meet with our cousins, the Palestinians. We must meet with Israelis who are not entirely obsessed with the holocaust. We must overcome this tremendous difficulty we have which this holocaust has produced—the obsession that it may happen again. We must not allow these people to play these views so well from the point of view of psychological warfare and to influence the young Jews to behave in such a way that they must know in their hearts to be completely wrong—when they hit Palestinians.

Let us also accept the fact that this is not just happening with the Palestinians; it is happening in many parts of the world... The situation internationally, from the human point of view, is deteriorating fast. We, who are international people, must be responsible for what is going on anywhere in the world. We can help and we can all learn from each other.

We must do something very quickly, very intelligently, very lovingly and very rudely, if necessary. For this we need new methods, new approaches and a comprehension of what makes kindly, intelligent people commit these horrible acts and how quick the deterioration is when people are surrounded by this. Every one of us is endangered. Do not think it is them—it is every one of us as well.

Elfi Pallis, an Israeli journalist living in Britain

I am not a "representative" Israeli. I am not "representing" any Israeli organisation, because no such Israeli could share such a platform without risking a three-year jail sentence under Israel's new laws. Not being "representative" all I can do is give you an outline of some of the not quite understood facts of the situation as I have gathered them from the Israeli press which I monitor daily, and as someone who still visits Israel regularly...

A few days ago a mass circulation paper published what can only be described a guide for the perplexed. It provides a detailed account of what every major Israeli politician would actually like to see happening in the occupied territories in the future, and an amazing picture emerges. Prime Minister Shamir opposed to the Camp David accords now wants

the autonomy mentioned there to be implemented. . . Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is in favour of an international conference, without the PLO, but won't say what he would give up there. . . The minister of Trade and Industry, Ariel Sharon, is for a Palestinian state in Jordan and for annexation, and the Minister of Defence, Yitshak Rabin, is against annexation but also against abandoning the occupied territories. And Minister without portfolio, Yosef Shapira is in favour of annexation and the expulsion of critical Palestinians. And that is just the Government.

None of this is what Palestinians want. . . but for those who want to know, like a large section of the Israeli press, it is not that difficult to find out. You can see the Palestinian flags, and the pictures of Arafat they are carrying, on the television screens. It is not that difficult to guess and it is not that obscured by the fact that many of the younger ones are throwing stones while making that point. As one Israeli columnist pointed out, he remembered how he himself had thrown stones at the British, but this had not obscured the point he was making.

Israeli politicians, especially on the right, have a tendency to obscure the current conflict by referring to a past one. They try to make a Palestinian teenager with a stone the same as an SS Officer with a gun. What you then get is a complete confusion of the situation. . . Israel's former Prime Minister Menachem

Begin referred to the PLO as the Nazi Murderer Organisation and talked about the Israeli Army's invasion of Beirut as a march on Berlin. So, the complication here is that it is somehow timeless — the historic hostility to the Jews, the anti-semitism, is just the same as what the Palestinians are engaged in. This has been quite sharply criticised by many Israeli intellectuals who attempt to make it clear to the Israeli public that a view of that sort, which basically implies that there is no immediate cause for the current conflict, that it is all a continuation of historic antisemitism. . . leads to a conclusion that nothing can be done. If everybody is forever hostile, then Israel cannot make treaties, Israel cannot solve any problems, Israel needs perfect borders, a huge army and cannot trust anybody. It can also use any measure of force.

It also is the cause of Israel somehow accepting some of the most dreadful values of the past, the notion that some people do not need human rights, that you can plan your future without the population that you actually have. . . One of Israel's serious writers, Joshua Sobol has written very movingly about this: "History will judge whether we are victorious in our struggle against the Nazi attempt to contaminate our souls with their sickness or whether we were defeated by one simple test. The test lies in the way in which we ourselves relate to and treat the people who were left at our

tender mercies. We now rule over a conquered people. If we indeed won a spiritual and moral victory over the Nazis, we would be confounding them with our actions which should carry the message: 'We are not a superior nation. We are not a chosen race. We will not accept people living in our rule as inheriting lesser rights than we have ourselves. We will not rob them of their land or property or confiscate their sources of livelihood or violate their human rights.'" Today, these are no longer totally unrepresented voices in Israel but they are a minority. It is important that the points they raise are relevant here as well because Israel presents itself as a Jewish state. . . speaking on behalf of the Jewish people.

The prospects at the moment are not, promising. . . Israelis who have spoken out critically have been attacked publicly, termed "traitors" and in some cases physically attacked. The Israeli government is watching very carefully what degree of support comes from Jewish sources that it has taken for granted for many years. A different attitude may well result in a different policy. That has to be done publicly and very soon. Every day people in occupied territories die — whether it is 36, the Israeli official figure, or whether it is nearer 60, as Palestinian sources claim. This is not the issue. The issue is that none of this is going to stop unless people take a firm stand against it — here as well as in Israel. □

THE AMERICAN CONNECTION

The organization of a "Benjamin Linder Brigade" to Nicaragua in December 1987 to reopen the Managua Synagogue as a Jewish cultural centre was one of the key decisions made at New Jewish Agenda's (NJA) second bi-annual convention, held last July at the University of California at Los Angeles.

This, and the emotional Friday night service in memory of Ben Linder, killed in April by the Contras while working on a small-scale electrification project in Nicaragua, epitomized the spirit and politics of the convention. Linder's parents are members of Agenda.

NJA was founded in 1980 as a progressive movement for peace, social justice and rejuvenation in Jewish life. The 1960s Jewish new left and its survivals, as well as the '70s *chavurah* movement and the left wing of religious Judaism (particularly Reform) were

New Jewish Agenda has emerged as the USA's fastest growing organisation of progressive Jews. Shloime Perel reports from its second convention.

significant forces in founding the organization.

"From Generation to Generation: Hopes From Our Past, Dreams For Our Future," was the convention's official theme. For four days, 500 NJA members, including 250 delegates, from such diverse places as Santa Cruz, Los Angeles, Toronto, New York and Tuscon debated, ate together, socialized and attended workshops and artistic programmes, including a performance dedicated to the martyred Soviet Yiddish writers, an exhibition of socially conscious Jewish paintings and a poetry reading by a Nicaraguan Jewish writer, Michele Najlis. I F Stone spoke of

the dangers to Israel from the Right and praised the Israeli peace movement. There were no explorations of Jewish Los Angeles, however.

A series of resolutions were voted on and if the past is any indication, they stand to serve as real guidelines to action for the individual chapters and national organization.

Art and politics, and Jews and working class issues were two new areas of concern which emerged out of the convention through the workshops. Soviet Jewry, too, is likely to become an important area of concern as well as of possible dispute.

ALLIANCES FOR CHANGE

A central organizational focus in Agenda's overall strategy is the formation of alliances for political change. The strategy paper on the Middle East, the most discussed resolution before and during the convention thus states: "We reaffirm our two-pronged strategy of working both in the Jewish community and with non-Jewish allies, to realize the goal of a just Middle East peace."

A new trend in NJA's coalition building is the effort by individual chapters to join local federations. Agenda has in the past played a role at the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations (the "GA"), initiating, with some success, proposals favouring a nuclear freeze and limitations on West Bank settlement.

Many of Agenda's policies are initiated within its five national task forces: the Middle East, Central America, Feminism, Economic and Social Justice and Disarmament. Each task force formulates a strategy paper to present in the resolutions session; this is intended to provide the general guidelines for NJA in the relevant area of concern for the next two years.

Agenda's basic position on the Middle-East — support for the two state Israel/Palestine solution — was reaffirmed. The Middle-East strategy paper commits Agenda to work to influence US policy: (a) to support the participation of the PLO in the peace process as the internationally recognized representative of the Palestinians; (b) to help negotiate a settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to support an internationally sponsored peace conference with the equal participation of Israel, the PLO, the neighbouring Arab states, the US and USSR; (c) to work for the reduction of arms supplies to the Middle-East and the demilitarization of its conflicts; (d) to support the right of religious freedom in Israel for both Jews and non-Jews.

There was a strongly put minority opinion in the MidEast workshops that NJA has moved too far ahead of the majority of US Jews. But the overwhelming consensus was that Israel should seize the moment and negotiate with the PLO at a time when that body is very eager to do so.

MAKING PEACE

Agenda's evaluation of the PLO was reinforced in a speech at an emotional MidEast plenary in which prominent PLO member Afif Safieh said: "You can't make peace with people you never talk to. It is in the interests of Israel, the Jewish people, and moral decency, for Israel and the PLO to sit at a table with other Arab states and the superpowers and negotiate a settlement that would allow for the self-determination of both peoples. It has taken some convincing, but the majority of Palestinian people are ready to compromise."

The same session heard Latif Dori, a *Mapam* leader and founder of the Committee for Israeli/Palestinian Dialogue. "Safieh's talk here today demonstrates that Palestinians are willing to speak," he said. "If we don't shake hands, we'll end up shaking guns." Dori is one of four Israelis who met with a PLO delegation in Romania and are currently on trial for not heeding a new Israeli law prohibiting communication with members of the PLO.

Other Agenda resolutions on the Middle East condemned the government's prosecution of the four Israelis, as well as the Reagan administration's repeated attempts to deport seven Palestinians and the Kenyan spouse of one, and the attempts to close PLO offices.

In 1985, NJA sent Deena Hurwitz, of the Santa Cruz chapter, as an observer to the Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting in Tunis. The following year, Hilda Silverman, of Philadelphia NJA travelled with a US delegation to Tunis

and represented Agenda in meetings with Arafat and PLO officials.

Silverman stated at the convention that her opinion of the PLO's desire for talks with Israel was reinforced by her trip and that she found unexpected Jewish interest upon her return.

THE TASKS AHEAD

The four other task forces also presented detailed resolutions which were passed, sometimes with amendments:

1) The feminist strategy paper advocated a double focus: to develop and disseminate a feminist perspective on the Jewish family (including Lesbian and Gay families) and to become a progressive Jewish presence in the feminist movement. The proposed new Jewish family work group "will function as a 'think tank' for the development of a Jewish feminist analysis of perspectives on the Jewish family".

2) The Central America Task Force paper initiated the Benjamin Linder Brigade and reaffirmed the continuation of Agenda's previous Central America organizing: "Our work has been especially significant in building support against aid to the Contras, building the Jewish sanctuary movement, supporting material aid projects for Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, challenging disinformation (especially the myth of antisemitism in Nicaragua) in the Jewish community and the public at large, and ensuring that Jews are proportionately represented in coalitions and other anti-intervention efforts."

3) The Economic and Social Justice Task Force passed a strategy paper emphasizing four areas: anti-apartheid and anti-racist work; opposition to the far right; support for more affordable social services to families in terms of child and dependent care and job guarantees; and forming coalitions for affordable and low income housing.



מדר לדר

די גרינקנס צו קרינקנס

כון דור צו דור

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

4) The Disarmament Task Force proposal specified the need for educational work for disarmament, opposition to weapons of mass destruction in the MidEast, as well as Israeli participation in "Star Wars" or SDI research; support for an end to nuclear testing, first strike weapons such as the Trident submarine, as well as support for direct peace action.

A related resolution called for an open investigation of the Reagan administration's Iran arms sale and its Central America connection and for the initiation of impeachment proceedings against President Reagan.

RECLAIMING SOVIET JEWRY CAMPAIGNS

Soviet Jewry is bound to become more of an NJA concern. At the large May 3, 1987 Soviet Jewry demonstration in New York City, Agenda circulated a new statement: "In Solidarity With Soviet Jewry; In Support of Detente and Disarmament." It supported full rights for Soviet Jews, rejected any linkage of emigration to arms control and rejected the Israeli government's attempt to prevent emigration to the US.

However, at the convention the Disarmament Task Force removed a clause from its strategy resolution for the distribution of its May 3rd Soviet Jewry statement, with the idea that Agenda should first carry out its planned fact-finding tour of the Soviet Union.

Although Soviet Jewry has thus far not been an area of concentration for NJA, there appears to be a consensus

among members that it should not be monopolized by mainstream and right-wing Jewish groups. It seems likely that Agenda will become active for Soviet Jewish rights from a left perspective, over the possible objections of a small minority of members who see the Soviet Union as a politically inspiring country.

Agenda's work proceeds through two parallel structures: the national framework and the local chapters, with a strong link between the two. Within US Jewry, or anywhere else for that matter, the organization would rate high on any scale of democracy.

LIVING ITS IDEAS

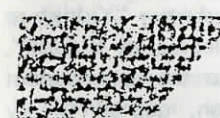
It is important to note, considering the increasing demise of the "old Jewish left" whether Bundist, socialist-zionist or Communist, that Agenda is the only Jewish left wing group experiencing substantial growth. A large part of Agenda's success must be attributed to its broad based, non-sectarian focus on peace, social justice and egalitarianism, as well as its attempts to live the ideas within the organization. The historic Jewish concept, *tikkun olam* — to repair or transform the world — has been used successfully by Agenda members as a way of expressing both the emotional and intellectual aspects of their desire to change the world. At the same time, the emphasis on participatory democracy and the lack of concern with socialism puts Agenda more in line, in many ways, with the early '60s new left than with the older Jewish left in the US and Canada. □

In the days of the Palestine Mandate David Ben Gurion described his own native tongue Yiddish as a "grating and repulsive language" (*safah zara ve-tsoremet*), and zealots of his *Gedud Maginey Ha-Safa* (Battalion of the Defenders of the Language) physically attacked Yiddish writers and their works, and burnt down kiosks which dared to sell Yiddish newspapers. The fear was of course that, given increased immigration from Eastern Europe, Yiddish might displace Hebrew as the language of the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine). But the real war was that which the members of the group, invariably from Yiddish speaking backgrounds, waged against a part of themselves, the need to be rid of the taste of exile in their mouths.

The struggle continued well into the establishment of the new state, long after it had become overwhelmingly obvious that Hebrew would not be subverted. The state even imposed punitive measures against Yiddish, levying a special tax on the Yiddish theatre, and making it very difficult for Yiddish newspapers to appear regularly. The atmosphere of the time is recalled by the Yiddish and Hebrew writer and poet Yosef Papernikov. If, on visiting a Kibbutz for a literary event, he so much as dared insert a single Yiddish poem in his programme, a riot would ensue.

A NEW LANGUAGE

Here then, was a generation that was determined not to pass on its own language to its children. There was in Israel, at least, the rationale of the "new" language for the "new" land, and they were surely following in the footsteps of Ben Yehuda and many others, without whose fanaticism for Hebrew, the language may well not have been established. In any case Israel after 1948 had to absorb Jews from non-European areas, who had no affinity whatsoever with Yiddish. But the feeling for Hebrew all too often masked an even greater hatred of and feeling against Yiddish. This is perhaps why, in Poland before the war, many members of Zionist organisations, whose native language was Yiddish, and who could not speak Hebrew, often denied a fluent knowledge of Yiddish, and chose rather to speak Polish amongst themselves.



Even if the father wanted to pass it on to his son, the poisonous atmosphere against Yiddish could frustrate his efforts. The *Ma'ariv* columnist Yigal Lev, son of the Vilna Yiddish poet Avrom Lev, recently wrote of his own experience: For the young kibbutznik, these "strange noises" were the language of the aged. He was later to realise that his generation had assisted in the destruction of their own precious cultural heritage, "and we had to start again from the beginning as if Jewish culture had never before existed in the world".

If ultimately Yiddish need not be considered *treif* neither could it be considered *kosher*. Only when the real danger was over, could Yiddish be allowed to take its place in the academic world. When the Hebrew University was established in 1925, influential figures like Menakhem Ussishkin, Ahad Ha-Am and Yosef Klausner were unwilling to countenance the acceptance of Yiddish as a subject of academic study, and only in 1951 was it accepted in Jerusalem. Courses were to follow elsewhere, and five years ago a second chair of Yiddish was established in Bar-Ilan (a religious university) which now has the largest number of students studying Yiddish, and is a major centre for the training of Yiddish school-teachers. Most teaching of Yiddish and in Yiddish is in the ultra-Orthodox schools, but this academic year, 40 state high schools are reported to be teaching Yiddish language and culture, and the Bund afternoon Yiddish school under the auspices of the *Tsikuf* (Tsentrale Yidishe Kultur Farband — Central Yiddish Culture Organisation) still continues in Tel-Aviv. Most Yiddish books published today in Israel are children's books, which are apparently also read widely by adults. Many of these books are expressly aimed at the ultra-Orthodox.

YIDDISH AND HEBREW

The number of Jews in Israel for whom Yiddish is not their main spoken language is inevitably very few. According to the census of 1983, Hebrew is the main language for 83% of Israeli Jews. Within the remaining 17%, the largest group — 15.9% — speak Arabic as their main language, while 1.1% speak Yiddish as theirs. The number who understand and speak Yiddish is of course much larger, a population which has included most of Israel's Prime Ministers, and now includes its present one, as well as the Mayors of Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, and the Deputy Mayor of Beersheva (who was born in Iraq). This is nothing new; Yiddish has of necessity always functioned in a multilingual environment. Yiddish and Hebrew had effectively co-existed for centuries and, as the Hebrew and Yiddish poet Khayim Nakhman Bialik himself pointed out, Yiddish had functioned as a protective garb for Hebrew. Indeed,

according to Yudel Mark, approximately 50% of all three letter roots of classical Hebrew are to be found in Yiddish. It is a remarkable paradox that there are many terms where modern Yiddish uses a word based on the traditional Hebrew, for which modern Hebrew more often uses a term borrowed from English — eg melancholic: *moyre skhoyredik* (Yiddish) and *melankoli* (mod. Hebrew); situation: *matsev* (Yiddish) and *situatsiah* (mod. Hebrew). In any case, regardless of official or public disapproval or indifference, and very occasionally with a small amount of support, Yiddish books and papers continued to be printed, and Yiddish theatre performed, though all in diminishing numbers.



Yiddish cultural life inevitably tends to centre on Tel-Aviv, where *Beit Leivick* is the home of the Yiddish Writers' Association and *Beth Sholem Aleykhem* is an important museum for Yiddish, where the Bund maintains its main library. A number of Yiddish literary and political journals are still published, including the prestigious *Goldene Keyt* (The Golden Chain), edited by the Vilna Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever. The *Perets Farlag* in Tel Aviv remains the main centre for publishing Yiddish books in Israel.

There are three Yiddish newspapers currently produced in Israel, two fortnightly, *Yidishe Tsaytung* (The Yiddish Newspaper), *Naye Tsaytung* (The New Newspaper) and one daily, *Letste Naves* (Recent News). This last has a circulation of 2,000, compared to 30,000 in the 1960s. The Belzer Hasidim also include several pages in Yiddish in their weekly newspaper *Ha-mahaneh ha-haredi* (The [ultra] Orthodox Camp). This has a circulation of 20,000, divided equally between Israel and the United States. It is the only Yiddish newspaper in Israel (albeit a supplement) for which there is an immediate potential for expansion. It is said that the American readership continuously demands more pages in Yiddish, particularly concerning the news in Israel.

Yiddish in a state?

Yiddish flourished for centuries as a language of European Jewish minorities in various states.

But how has it fared in Israel — the state of a Jewish majority? Barry Davis investigates.

Murder on the Rue Rollin

A man apart by Gilles Perrault
(Zed Press £7.95)

At two in the afternoon, on May 1978, a dapper bespectacled little man, still trim and fit in his mid-sixties, was seen off by his wife, and stepped down from their seventh floor flat into the quiet Rue Rollin.

Rosette Curiel went back indoors, and stretched out for a nap. She was aroused by neighbours. Downstairs, the foyer was full of police. Henri Curiel was bleeding to death, having been shot as the lift doors opened — the gunman had been waiting, ready. At three o'clock, the press received a communique: "Today at 14.00 hours, the KGB agent, Henri Curiel, militant of the Arab cause, traitor to the France which adopted him, ceased his activities...". The murder was claimed in the name of "Delta", harking back to the right-wing OAS terrorists of decades ago. Meanwhile, Rosette Curiel had been taken down to the Quai des Orfèvres (Paris CID) for questioning. So was family friend Joyce Blau. Both women's flats were searched. They felt exasperatedly that the police were treating them as criminals, rather than pursuing the murderers.

To this day, nobody has been arrested for the murder of Henri Curiel, although thanks to campaigning by Rosette and friends, some important leads were uncovered.

Henri Curiel's political life had made many friends, and more powerful enemies. Among the latter, the right-wing veterans of "Algerie Francaise" were joined by South Africa's BOSS, who blamed Curiel for assisting underground Anti-Apartheid activists and the theft of atomic secrets.

France's own DST confined the Curiels to an Alpine village in 1977, because of their somewhat dangerous "Middle-East related activities". The disinformation specialists of the CIA have produced books purporting to show Henri Curiel as a master terrorist, associate of the mysterious "Carlos".

The French government admitted a few years ago, under prodding, that the secret service files on Curiel were rubbish. Yet interestingly, as Gilles Perrault notes, the Curiels had still been under surveillance at the time Henri was murdered.

Far from being a man of violence, Henri Curiel had been a tireless worker for peace, particularly in the Middle East, and at times when it was a lonely, almost hopeless task. In the mid-1970s he had some important contacts, however, One was Said Hammami, the PLO representative in London; murdered ten years ago

on January 4, 1978, just months before Curiel.

Another, whom he had gone to meet that morning on May 4 was to be killed some five years later; a name known to some of us in the JSG — Issam Sartawi.

Whoever pulled the trigger on Henri Curiel, and whatever cause or gang of psychopaths they thought they were serving, it is tempting to see a pattern in these deaths, and construct one's own conspiracy theory. I have mine.

It is not just a modern mystery we are reading, however, but a fascinating piece of modern history that Gilles Perrault brings us, in revealing a fascinating hero-character — the real Henri Curiel. With cinematic technique, the author weaves deftly back and forth between Curiel's origins in Egypt in 1914, and death in Paris, depicting the story finely and with sympathy.

It is a story of Egypt, old and rustic, dragged into the modern market world and mugged by Europe's bankers and British bayonets. A land of rich pashas, starving fellaheen, struggling workers, and strutting officers.

It is the story of a Jewish family and their friends, of Jews from Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus and Istanbul, who made

their way in trade and finance, acquiring cosmopolitan tastes and identities; and their children, greedy for learning, donning the latest clothes or ideas, and deciding they must reach out from their parents' rich homes to embrace the cause of the poor.



It is a story about Communism, as it came to Egypt and the Sudan; about clandestine wartime meetings with strikers, soldiers and mutineers from the Greek navy; about getting Marxist literature into Arabic; about contacts with the "Free Officers" who will later jail you, just as Farouk did; about strange political encounters in prison cells between Jewish communists and Moslem Brothers; and about the now-forgotten time when France's Communist Party had its own little "Moscow Trial" and one of the charges against veteran André Marty was that he'd met with Henri Curiel.

Like the Palestinians, Curiel was a loser of the war of 1948 — a war which

he'd opposed. Like them, he was driven into exile, and betrayed by those in whom he'd placed trust. Perhaps this created a stronger affinity.

Perrault writes penetratingly that from the time of his exile, everything Curiel did, whether for Algerians, or Black Africans, was really a substitute for what he'd wanted to accomplish in his beloved Egypt. Looked at another way, we might say he spent a lifetime breaking down the partition that had intruded between Jew and Arab. He was, after all, both.

History, the cynics say, is written by the victors. Gilles Perrault, a fine and capable writer, with several successful books behind him, had to search high and low to find a publisher in France for this one. Beaten but unbowed, dead but not yet defeated — the ghost of Henri Curiel is still haunting some corridor of power.

Thanks to Perrault for persevering and thanks to Zed for having the imagination to bring this out in English. We look forward to the next volume. Freed from the obscurity and calumnies under which his enemies tried to bury him, Henri Curiel is with us in the struggle today.

CHARLIE POTTINS

BETWEEN APOCALYPSE & APOPLEXY

As a child I was, I recall, particularly impressed by an episode of "The Twilight Zone" which featured a pair of magic spectacles. Enigmatically engraved with the word "Veritas" (which few in the American television viewing audience were expected to understand), the glasses enabled whoever wore them "to see themselves as others saw them." The twist was that everyone who did immediately died of shock, their faces twisted into an unforgettable expression of horror.

Can reading Lenni Brenner's newest book, *Jews in America Today*, have the same effect? Seeing yourself as Brenner sees you is certainly an uncomfortable experience. But is it "Veritas" that will make you squirm?

It would surely be foolish to expect a rose coloured view of American Jewry from the author of *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*. Brenner's previous work,

Jews in America Today
by Lenni Brenner, Al Saqi Books, £7.95

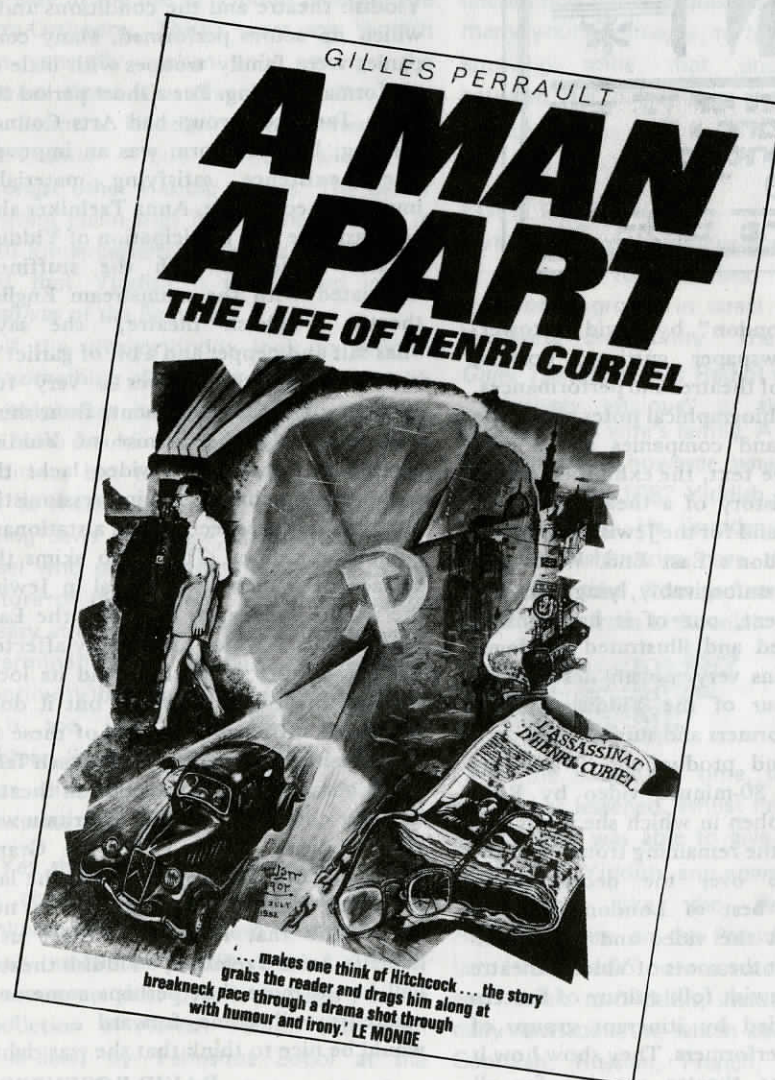
alleging, inter alia, Zionist complicity with the Third Reich, has established him in some circles as a courageous iconoclast and in others as a notorious antisemite. *Jews in America Today* establishes him as neither, but still makes for a provocative read.

The book attempts a popular Marxist analysis of contemporary American Jewry. A sort of *Portnoy* with footnotes, it addresses just about everything you wanted to know about American Jews but were afraid to ask. There are chapters on Jews' economic position, on Jews and the Left, Jews and Religion, Blacks and Jews, Zionism, the Jewish political establishment, the Jewish intelligentsia,

Antisemitism as well as a rerun of Brenner's thesis about Zionism and the Nazis.

He opens with a potted history of Jews in America which yields some fascinating titbits — such as the existence of an enclave of Jewish origin within today's Mexican-American community; General Grant's attempts to ban Jews from certain parts of the South; the role that some Israeli emigrés play in American organised crime. The sources Brenner uses for this romp around the origins of America's 5.4 million Jews are in the main journalistic, and the result is more readable than revelational.

Brenner soon proceeds to a bracingly contemptuous polemic on established Jewish wealth. Having established that about 5% of contemporary American Jews are millionaires and that around a quarter of America's 400 richest families are Jewish, he presents the reader with a



(Bash the Rich) list naming over 100 of America's wealthiest Jews.

There is something tastelessly engaging about Brenner's disdainful biographical low downs on such well known figures as the Annenbergs, the Sulzbergers, Estee Lauder and Meshulam "Meshugeneh" Richlin. He treats everyone on the list (with the exception of Armand Hammer) with all the delicacy of an axe murderer, though in view of recent events, Ivan Boesky gets off rather more lightly than he deserved. Of Lawrence Tisch, whose family interests include 25% of CBS television and Bulova Watches, Brenner writes: "... Larry Tisch is the ultimate old-fashioned petty Jewish capitalist, and although he has struck it rich, intellectually he is still stuck in an old country shtetl."

In an interesting comparison with *Fortune* magazine's 1936 survey of Jews in the American economy, Brenner points out that today's Jewish rich are no longer the "pariah elite" they were 50 years before. Now the "full partners of their Christian equivalents," Jews are no longer concentrated in a few areas like radio or retailing but are far more widely dispersed with the only "distinctively Jewish" areas remaining in sports and real estate. Regarding this last group, Brenner makes the questionable connection between the traditional Jewish "Shmirer" (locating his origins in corrupt Czarist Europe where you had to bribe to survive) and shady real estate practices amongst Jews today. But Brenner is not arguing an antisemitic case here. He does point to the corruption in American business predating Jewish immigration and rejects the notion that the Jewish rich are any more corrupt than the rich in general.

Nor does he think the present over-representation of Jews amongst the rich should divert people from the anti-egalitarian nature of capitalism itself. But an historical discussion explaining (à la Hannah Arendt) why this over-representation exists would have been welcome.

Summarising mainly from secondary sources, Brenner concludes that today's Jews are fully assimilated into the capitalist system, are over-represented in the middle classes, and have since the 1960s earned more on average than even the WASPS. He is not denying the existence of the Jewish worker (though most of these are white collar — 20% of Jews according to one survey are teachers) or

the Jewish poor (most of these are elderly and/or female). Indeed he does predict that the number of Jewish poor will increase in the future as the population ages and medical costs rise. Moreover, he implies that the present plethora of Jewish millionaires is a temporary phenomenon as the children of today's Jewish rich will not follow in their parents' footsteps. The "future of American Jewry is in the intellectual fields."

The thrust of Brenner's argument here is that modern American Jewry's role as a progressive political force is played out and that only a "minority of the Jewish intelligentsia will be found in the trenches in the final battles against exploitation and oppression."

Most of the new generation of Jewish intellectuals, he laments, will be seduced by the "cocaine and quiche" world of yuppieism or the scarcely less contemptible world of academia with its "crackpot... propensity" for "lesser evilism" (Brenner's code word for liberalism). Now this vulgarisation of Gramsci's analysis of the role of intellectuals overlooks one point. If American Jews are going to be increasingly concentrated in the intellectual stratum, even if only a minority join the barricades, would it not mean that they are going to constitute a disproportionately large percentage of radical (ie., progressive) intellectuals? Brenner would undoubtedly answer that their progressivism would have everything to do with their position as individual intellectuals and nothing to do with their Jewish background. For Brenner's exhortation to battle is grounded in the belief that progress can only march forward along with total secularisation and assimilation. Veering between apocalypse and apoplexy, his tone is that of a Trotskyite Jeremiah lamenting his peoples' corruption and urging them to identify with the world's oppressed, but only on his terms.

Such a stance is admirable in intent but can be criticised in so far as it is based on a crudely determinist interpretation of Marx. In his discussion of American Jewry, cultural values are dismissed as mere reflections of the economic base with no causal force of their own. A sense of communal identity is invariably condemned as intrinsically reactionary and chauvinist.

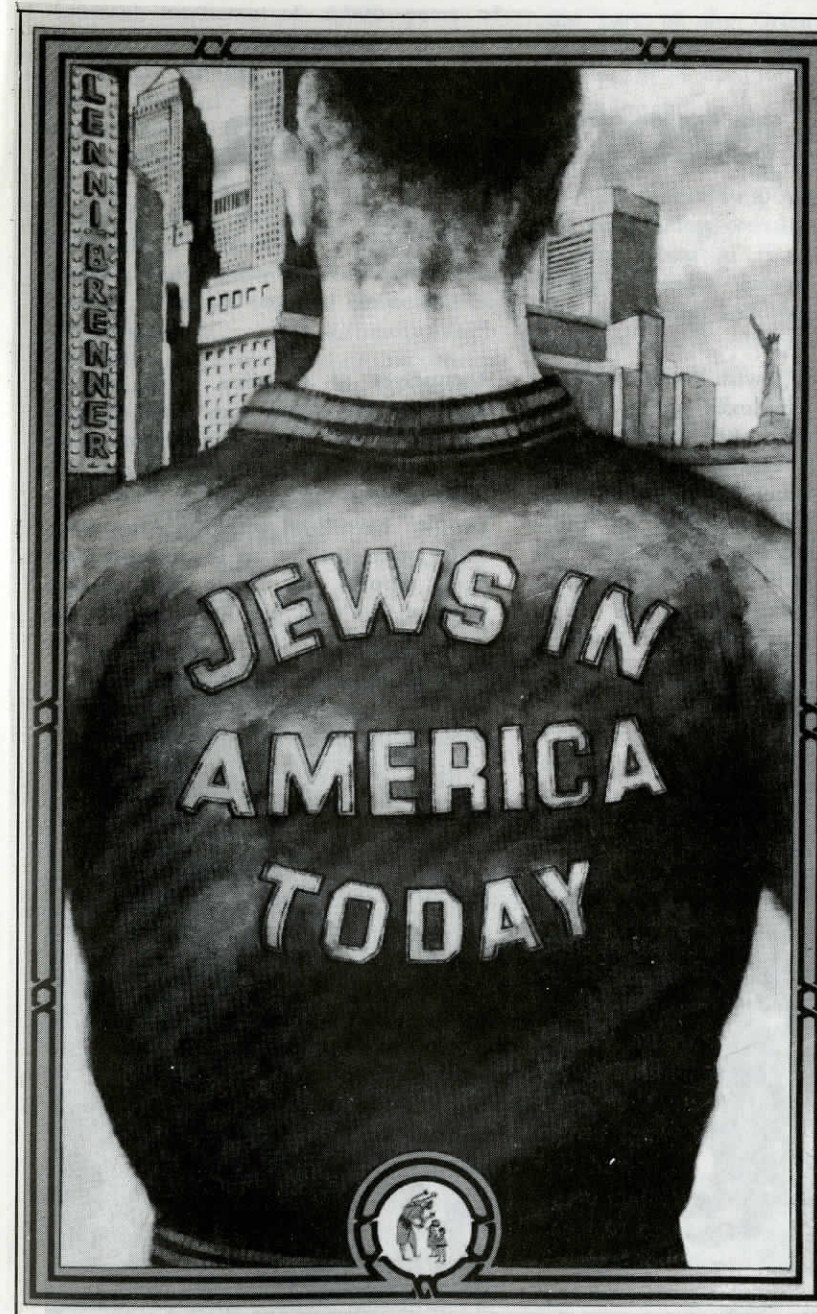
Brenner's assimilationism and his hatred of liberalism lead him to describe

the "massive and disproportionate" contribution which Jews have made to American culture in overwhelmingly negative terms. (The fact that Jewish scientists were central to the development of the nuclear bomb is cited but their contribution to medicine is not.) Brenner notes that Jews form a disproportionate number of gallery and concert goers but sweepingly dismisses "the fossilised world of classical music and the plastic arts, so dependent on the philanthropy of the richest Jews." He quotes a *Jewish Yearbook* estimate that one quarter of the American book buying public are Jews — quite a statistic given that Jews constitute less than 3% of the US population. But then Brenner sees this "immense thrust towards the intellectual life" primarily as a source of Jewish hubris, "their Golden Calf."

There is something in Brenner's contention that "For many Jews their notion of their intellectual superiority is really all they have left of their separatist heritage." And one has to smile at his assertion that you would be rich if you had a penny for every Jew who is proud that Jesus was a Jew. Along with the baptised Christian Marx, the atheist Freud and of course Einstein.

But is that really all there is to be said about Jewish attitudes to Jewish cultural values? When Brenner admits that Jews as a group are more progressive on certain political issues but then dismisses these issues as secondary, is he not being reductionist? His thesis that "all efforts to find the key to the Jewish future in the progressive aspects of the Jewish past alone, are doomed to come to reactionary conclusions," (my emphasis) is arguably valid. But is one's past to be jettisoned in the quest for ideological purity?

Now many of Brenner's irreverent and sweeping generalisations contain just enough truth to make one look again at cherished assumptions. But at times these are delivered with such corrosive vehemence that one is left wondering just what makes Lenni run. For example, Brenner seems to spend a disproportionate amount of time slanging his personal political opponents on the left and detailing the unfair treatment he feels he and a fellow journalist have sustained at the hands of the Jewish liberal media. This is after all supposed to be a book about American Jews of which, Lenni Brenner (in so far as he still identifies) is only one. (His



discussions of Jewish liberal reaction against Ed Asner, Vanessa Redgrave and Mike Wallace are more interesting and disturbing precisely in so far as they are less personalised.)

Nor does Brenner always pursue the implications of his own conclusions. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his discussion of Jewish attitudes to Zionism and anti-semitism. Brenner, an advocate of a democratic secular Palestine, has, perhaps surprisingly, little time for the PLO. He cites its historical and contemporary links with reactionary Arab regimes; the "irresponsible demagoguery" of Ahmed Shukeiry (the PLO's first leader) in the early '60s; the exces-

sive militarism of the present day PLO; its failure to publish in Hebrew and make more public links with progressive Jews; its refusal to repudiate more explicitly the terms of the Palestinian National Covenant; and its use of terrorism. Brenner declares that.

"While there is no doubt that many of Israel's Jewish supporters have grown restive as Zionism has increasingly identified itself with Reagan and Falwell here, and Botha and other reactionaries abroad, nevertheless they will not break with Jewish chauvinism unless they see a viable alternative. None of the PLO's present factions present them with that alternative."

This statement, tucked away as it is on page 105 of Brenner's 360 page book, does not seem to tally with the contemptuousness with which Brenner dismisses the fear for Jewish survival which to my mind underlies much of the Jewish support for Zionism.

Furthermore, Brenner's vulgar reductionism has led him to undervalue the political force of religious belief in general and that of Muslim fundamentalism in particular and is responsible for another inconsistency in his argument. For earlier in his book, when discussing Assad's regime, he characterises the Muslim Brotherhood as "anti-Jewish" (note, not "Anti-Zionist" but "anti-Jewish"). Yet nowhere does he grapple with the Brotherhood's growing influence in the Middle East. By ignoring the significance of Islamic fundamentalism (though he has some choice words to say on the oppressiveness of Jewish fundamentalism in Israel and America) he completely underestimates both the difficulties faced by a secular movement like the PLO and the reasons why so many Jews are uneasy about the viability of a secular democratic state as a solution to the present crisis. He does not address these complexities; for him "... Zionism is strictly the Philistines against the Palestinians." But however telling his analysis of Congressional cynicism, however witty his exposé of vulgar American Zionism, it just isn't that simple.

Brenner's cataloguing of Israeli injustice and his indictment of American Zionists for failing to act against these injustices are important parts of Brenner's book. His demolition job on Farrakhan and his discussion of Black-Jewish relations contain some insightful arguments. But to assert that American antisemitism is a completely spent force (hasn't he been to the Midwest lately?), to imply that all references Israelis make to the Holocaust are strictly as "Shoah business" and to label the feeling post-war American Jews had for their surviving European kin as 'purbblind chauvinism' causes one to question the fairness and subtlety of Brenner's judgement.

It is not enough to inveigh against the complacently myopic. What is needed is an analytical vision which embraces and attempts to understand a contradictory reality. Brenner's book leads us instead into a seaside Hall of Mirrors where the images are often amusing, sometimes revealing but ultimately distorted.

MADGE DRESSER

Behind the propaganda

Terrible Days by Adam Keller
(Cypres, £8.95)

The shooting, beating, teargassing, searching and detaining of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza should have finally killed the myth that the Israeli army is more humane than all others and that it only ever acts in self-defence. But that myth has many lives, particularly in the diaspora, where many Jews feel that reassembling their view of the State of Israel may mean reassembling their view of themselves as Jews. This frightening and often painful step, and the sense of isolation it creates is nurtured by both the Israeli and diaspora Jewish establishments, which attempt not only to censor critics, but to push them out of the Jewish community. This is a threat whose power many anti-Zionists fail, or refuse, to recognise. But not recognising the ideological mechanism which maintains a degree of conformity among Jews means, ironically, that those very anti-Zionists contribute to the process of pushing potentially dissident Jews back into the "cradle" of their community.

Writing which should be a useful resource for people seeking a progressive analysis of the Middle East and the Israel/Palestine conflict often appears to be accessible only to the converted. Because of its polemical tone, the reader has to accept the arguments *before* having access to the information it offers. Adam Keller, an Israeli peace activist who was imprisoned for refusing to perform military service in Lebanon, attempts to move beyond this impasse in *Terrible Days: social divisions and political paradoxes in Israel*. Adam's commitment is to untangling the skeins of the Zionist dream and its reality which Israel's propagandists have tried to weave into a coherent, often beautiful, picture.

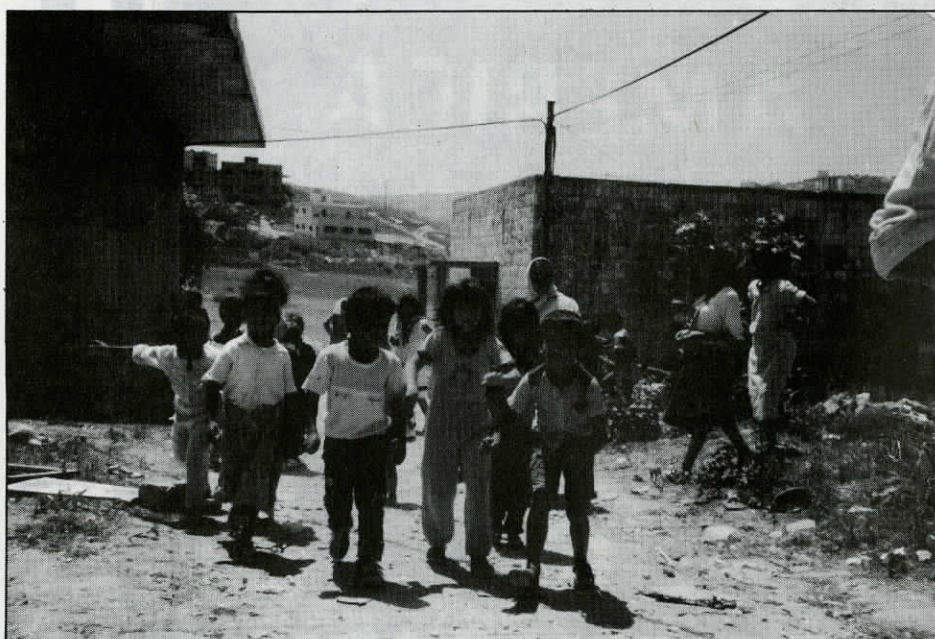
CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

Some of the information in *Terrible Days* will be familiar to anyone from a Zionist background, but a great deal will be unfamiliar. This is because Keller reveals conflicts and contradictions in a political philosophy which is normally portrayed as drawing together the dis-

parate strands of Jewish life and bringing into line the paradoxes of Jewish life outside and before the existence of the State of Israel. This is an unflinching description of Israeli politics, even when the history and mechanics of those politics are immensely complicated. For example, simplistic assumptions have been made on both sides of the debate about this relationship between Sephardi

themselves as socialists. This, so the theory goes, is just one more example of white, European racism; one more expression of western imperialism. The right wing Zionist version is that "these people" have lived with the Arabs; they know what they're up to, so no wonder they support the "Iron Fist" policy because that's all the Arabs understand.

In fact, the influx of Jews from



and Ashkenazi Jews and about where members of the different Jewish ethnic groups can be expected to stand politically. Historical incidents are picked out to support either Zionist or Anti-Zionist positions and inconvenient facts ignored in order to keep the analysis clear. The reality is both more difficult to understand and more promising for the future.

A crude anti-Zionist position claims that the Moroccan Jews were hoodwinked into emigrating to Israel in the 1950s, only to be oppressed, exploited and used as a source of cheap labour — all in the name of Labour Zionism. As result, they swung to the Right, which may have been against their class interests, but was understandable given the abuse heaped on them by those describing

Oriental countries after 1948 had contradictory and unpredictable effects which fit neither of these positions. The fate of these immigrants was clearly determined by official and unofficial racism which has not abated to this day. Some of the forms of this racism are so well known they have been incorporated into Zionist ideology which is, in turn, portrayed as bringing these "primitive people" into the 20th century.

"The Israeli authorities charged with absorbing the Sephardi immigrants were dominated by the ideal of *mizug galuyot* (the mixture of the exiles), an Israeli version of the American Melting Pot philosophy," says Keller. "... Jews from all over the world would be ingathered to Israel, by which act they would shake

off both the physical oppression which they had suffered in the diaspora and the spiritual remnants of 2,000 years of subjugation and persecution.

"In the 1950s . . . the Ashkenazis were assumed to have long since completed their part in this process. *Mizug galuyot* thus turned out in practice to be a one-sided process in which Sephardis were required to discard their own culture in favour of a general Israeli culture, the fundamentals of which had already been set out and elaborated by the Ashkenazis . . . Any difficulty which the Orientals encountered in this process was ascribed to their 'backwardness', out of which they were to be gradually 'educated' and 'made fit for life in a modern society'."

RACIST FOUNDATIONS

This racist ideology of "backwardness" laid the foundations to justify or explain the depressing poverty and vastly differential treatment of immigrants from east and west. As Keller describes: "While the Ashkenazi immigrants who arrived at the same time were soon absorbed into the mainstream of Israeli society, . . . the Sephardi ones suffered a trauma which still strongly affects the second and even third generation."

The racism took a variety of forms. At one end of the spectrum were Ashkenazi disc jockeys who refused to broadcast songs recorded by Oriental singers until their massive popularity, among Arabs as well as Jews, forced them to give in. At the other extreme was the case of the Yemenite Jews who, soon after their arrival, "fell prey to a group of unscrupulous doctors and nurses who put up hundreds of Yemenite babies to be adopted by childless Ashkenazi couples while their natural parents were told that the children had died. The conspiracy was extensive enough to include the systematic issuing of false death certificates for the adopted children and to ensure that for several decades demands for an investigation were hushed up."

Keller goes on to explain how Ben Gurion, architect of the "only democracy in the Middle East" had "established an unchanging dictum by which two parties — Herut (a right-wing party) and the Communist Party — were political untouchables . . . Members of Herut were almost completely barred from entering the civil service, the army's officer corps and all branches of Histadrut industry. In practice they lived on the margin of the Mapai (Labour Party) — dominated society."

The Labour Party reaped its rewards in 1977 when Begin was elected. Keller traces his rise to power as a long, slow, complicated process. He does not

attribute it, like many Left Zionists, to a kind of primitive anti-Arab racism on the part of the Oriental Jews whose vote swung the election, but sees it partly as a result of the Likud seeming to offer a stake and a say in Israeli society. "Though the massive move of Sephardi voters was not the only factor which brought Begin to power," says Keller, "it nevertheless constitutes an important turning point in Israeli history. From being powerless pawns in the 1950s, the Orientals had become a central force in Israeli politics, capable of overturning the entire balance of forces."

This has not meant that Oriental hopes for genuine equality and a place in political life have been met. Although the Far Right *Kach* party led by Meir Kahane, which advocates expelling Arabs from Israel and the occupied Territories, and the more mainstream Herut Party, draw much of their support from the Oriental communities, they are still led by "Ashkenazis spreading nationalist ideologies of western origin."

DANGERS FOR THE PEACE MOVEMENT

Most members of the Israeli peace movement, though, are also Ashkenazis, and though the present crisis in the Territories has, for the first time, prompted explicit criticism of the Labour Party, their informal links with the "historical Labour Movement" make many Oriental Jews distrustful. Keller says: "This situation contains a grave danger for the peace movement, the danger that the social differences between the Ashkenazi 'haves' and the Sephardi 'have nots' will become identical with the political difference between the peace movement and the annexationists." Indeed, peace movement activists have, on occasion, expressed explicitly racist ideas in public, thus alienating a huge group of people who, in reality, have an interest in the peace movement and in opposing not only anti-Oriental racism, but also Arab racism.

In the last few years, though, there have been groups of Oriental intellectuals and activists who have begun to make links between both forms of racism and to express a specifically Sephardi demand for peace negotiations. The Committee for an Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue Founded by Israelis of Oriental Origin, for instance, says: "We reject the vile accusation that all Jews of oriental origin are 'Arab-haters' . . . (they) are singularly able to serve as a bridge between Israel and the Arab world and renew the centuries old tradition of cultural partnership as a step towards peaceful co-existence . . ."

Keller describes the Sephardi Jews as

"an unbound giant", saying. "They are not homogeneous either in social position or in political allegiance; but they all share the determination to take their rightful place in all spheres of Israeli life."

But the place of the Sephardi Jews in shaping events in the Middle East is just one element in Keller's rigorous portrait of Israel. His detailed explanations of all the other aspects of Israeli political life are at times uncomfortable and often enlightening. He is not content merely to dismiss reactionary elements like *Gush Emunim*, the organisation which believes it has a religious mission to settle the Occupied Territories, but explains the origins and politics of groups which have "welded religion and nationalism into a new alloy: Political Messianism".

ROOTS OF MESSIANISM

He devotes many important pages to a description of what many of us will have dismissed as religious mania, whose aim is to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and re-establish the Jewish priesthood on the Biblical model. The recent shooting of teargas into El Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount takes on a more sinister meaning than any of the official explanations if we trace its roots and acknowledge its links with the Messianic movement whose ideas are gradually becoming acceptable within mainstream Israeli politics.

Keller explains how in the years following 1948, the Israeli Arabs were both fragmented and ghettoised in villages which were individually declared closed military areas, leaving them cut off from neighbouring villages and towns. He also provides relentless, but crucial, details of how land was confiscated from the Palestinians and also of who benefitted including some of the most left wing kibbutzim. He describes the mechanisms by which Arabs were and are excluded from jobs and how they are denied the services and facilities Jews take for granted, like irrigation and agricultural subsidies. "Since 1948 not a single new Arab village has been established in Israel," he says. "Establishing new settlements is a privilege reserved for Jews."

The problem with *Terrible Days* (apart from the Terrible Title) is that it is packed to the brim with information. It is a wonderful resource and fascinating to dip into, but it's a reference book rather than an easy read. Nevertheless, it's worth the effort for anyone who wants to move beyond the sloganising towards a real understanding of the forces working to shape the destiny of the Middle East.

JULIA BARD

Waking up to the reality

"Shattered Dreams;
Picking Up the Pieces".

Director: Victor Schonfeld

"The Messiah isn't coming anymore, the Messiah isn't coming anymore" pound the words of the singer. The audience is catapulted into a vibrant throbbing concert hall seething with screaming people. The urgency, pace, rawness of this opening note pervades the whole length of the film as contemporary Israeli society is surveyed.

Schonfeld's panoramic view of Israel ranges from the invasion of the Lebanon, divisions between religious and secular, Sephardis and Ashkenazis, women and men, political parties, economic problems, the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians in Israel and the occupation of the West Bank. The film is punctuated by excerpts from early Zionist propaganda films — visions of what a Jewish state might be. They encapsulate the zeal of the pioneers, the sense of purpose, the belief in a future embodied in building collectives, making the earth fruitful. It is this gap between the "dream" and the reality that we are forced to confront throughout the film.

For instance, in one scene a citizens rights movement of Palestinians and Jews attempts to plant a thousand olive trees on the West Bank as a protest against the seizure of Palestinian land. These are immediately ripped out of the soil by Israeli soldiers. Interspersed is old footage of a young Zionist planting a tree and watering it with the caption "I'll heal you".

by—yes—shared history and religion, but also by ideology, by an all-embracing military machine, by fear and by a will to survive at all costs. And it is this cost of survival which Schonfeld shows so clearly — the costs of war whether it is in terms of wasted lives (the shot of disabled soldiers playing basketball in their wheelchairs rams the point home) or in terms of a society crippled by its own militarism.



Fierce arguments on street corners abound. Following the Sabra and Chatilla massacres one woman shouts of Begin "He's saving our nation". But these are not the superficial rows of people who love an argument, but expose deep-seated divisions. These culminate in the Peace Now demonstration following Sabra and Chatilla where Emil Grunswieg, a Peace Now demonstrator, is killed by an explosion planted by the fascist Kahane movement. Grunswieg is further beaten by soldiers in the ambulance on the way to hospital.

Kahane's fierce demagoguery, as he whips up violent hatred of Palestinians at a meeting in Afula, is met head on by opponents who gather outside the meeting hall. It is an ordeal to sit through the detailed depiction of fascism. You have a feeling of uncomfortableness — can this be Israel? Some might argue that Kahane is not representative of Israel,

that a whole society cannot take responsibility for its fascists and it therefore distorts things to give so much film length to him. But Kahane could not exist in a vacuum, he can only capitalise on an already existing climate. He can feed and exploit the latent racism.

But the film touches not only on the extremes, but also on the indifference, numbness, and blindness of people who can find no way out of their situation. Take the comments of the soldiers in Lebanon "It's not very inspiring, but we have no choice" and "I don't interfere. It's nothing to do with us".

The film is not, however, an entirely negative picture of Israeli society. Schonfeld is saying there *is* a choice. In each section of the film there is an element of hope, whether it is the group Yesh Gvul (There is a Limit) who mobilised 200 soldiers not to fight in the Lebanon and were put into prison as a result, or Neve Shalom (a joint Jewish and Palestinian project), or the movement planting olive trees in the West Bank in defiance of Israeli law. Add to this restoring Palestinian homes in Jaffa, politicians who defy Israeli law in order to meet PLO representatives, or the simple act of friendship between the Palestinian and Jewish sculptors in Afula. Perhaps the most articulate expression of hope is in the voice of Shlomo Bar, a Moroccan born musician. As a Sephardi Jew he sees himself and the Sephardis as the "natural bridge" to peace. He brings Moroccan music into a kindergarten of Palestinian and Jewish children, linking the Jewish and Muslim cultures through his music. He is able to put his finger on the psychological element in the political situation. "The problem is within us, peace comes

first inside then outside. A man who hates himself has to vent it on something. It will pass"

"Equality threatens the state's Jewishness, inequality threatens the state's democracy" explains an Israeli soldier focusing on the conundrum of the occupation of the West Bank. The camera picks out the Jewish settlements, the illegal labour market as Palestinians wait on the roadside to be picked up to work, the brutal searches and beatings, the American citizen living in a settlement outside Hebron, who fails to notice the irony in his statement: "The Arabs may stay as our respected guests". The images of occupation are accompanied by the strong words of the radical Rabbi Leibovitz "We have raised state to the



level of God, this is the meaning of nationalism today. We have to stop using the lie of Israel as a democracy. We cannot be a semi-democracy when one and a half million Arabs have no civil rights. If the West Bank continues it will be like South Africa".

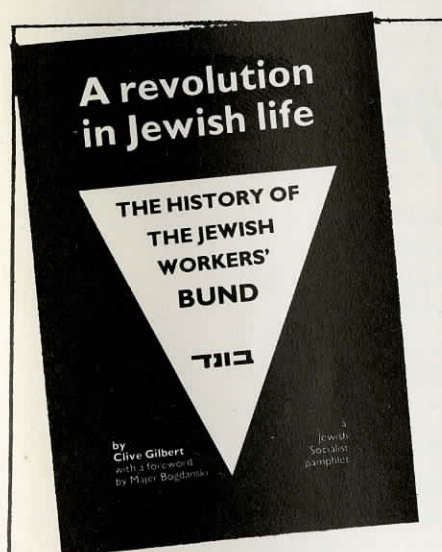
The weakness of the film is precisely its comprehensiveness. In trying to cover everything sometimes the analysis is too superficial, fragmentary and lacks coherence. For instance the treatment of women, although given a separate section, is unsatisfactory. We are told that feminism has not made headway in Israel because of religion — that Israel is in a sense "Khomeinistic" says the woman

who runs the women's refuge. But nowhere does the film touch on how a military society affects how women are perceived in terms of their traditional roles, their "duty" to provide more men for the battlefield, and "coming home to the family" as the justification for war.

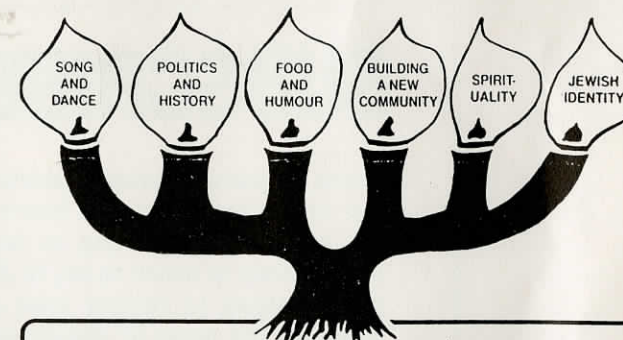
The film is also very much directed towards an Israeli and Jewish audience. Palestinians in the film have fewer voices, those who speak do not have the same status as Jews who speak. So there is a sense in which the film is primarily self-reflective.

But perhaps the most persistent question relates to the status of the "dream" which interrupts the film in the form of old clippings. Was there ever one "dream" of Israel? Surely there were varied dreams, many different interests at stake and many different reasons for why people came. So is the "dream" Schonfeld holds out for us the "picking up the pieces" dream or reality?

CAREY OPPENHEIM



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In Britain in 1988 our Jewish establishment actively oppose progressive causes; many Jews have enjoyed considerable social and economic mobility; and the general image held of the Jewish community, apparently confirmed by its institutions, is one of relative comfort and security.

But there is an economic and political power structure in the community and this picture is drawn in the image of its more affluent and powerful elements. The Jewish community is diverse, as are the social positions and interests of its component parts.

In Britain today, with mass unemployment and economic stagnation, an increasingly authoritarian political atmosphere in which racist and chauvinist ideas have gained "respectability", we view the interests of most Jews as linked with those of other threatened minorities and the broader labour movement. Our common interest lies in the socialist transformation of society.

- * We stand for the rights of Jews, as Jews, in a socialist future.
- * We fight for a socialist movement, embracing the cultural autonomy of minorities, as essential to the achievement of socialism.
- * We draw on our immigrant experience and anti-racist history in order to challenge antisemitism, racism, sexism and fascism today. We support the rights of, and mobilize solidarity with, all oppressed groups.
- * We recognise the equal validity and integrity of all Jewish communities, and reject the ideology, currently dominating world Jewry, which subordinates the needs and interests of Diaspora Jews to those of the Israeli state.
- * We support a socialist solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict based on recognition of national rights and self determination, including statehood, of the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples.

We believe that without a revived progressive political movement within the Jewish community in Britain, its present problems of individual identity, cultural stagnation and organisational apathy will grow worse. Without a transformation of the present economic and political structure of society, a widespread resurgence of antisemitism is to be expected. And unless the socialist movement abandons assimilationist tendencies and recognises the important contribution that different groups have to make in their own way, it cannot achieve real unity or the emancipation and equality to which it has constantly aspired.

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