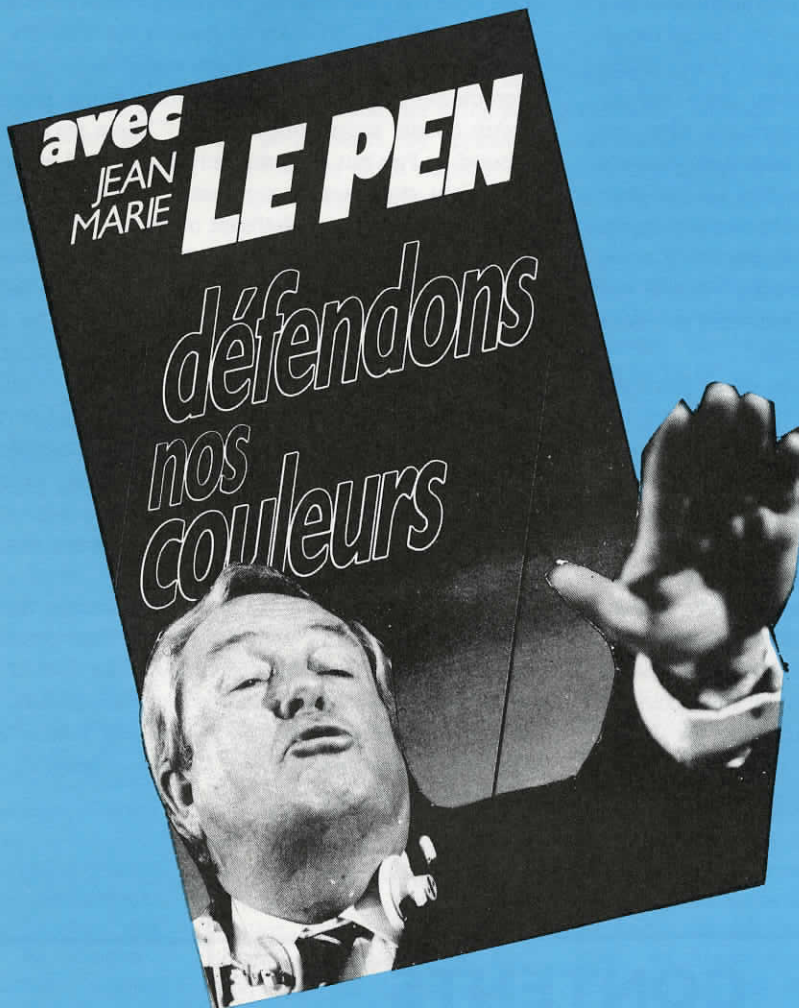


JEWISH SOCIALIST

No 13 Summer 1988

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

£1



**A
NEW
ORDER
FOR
FRANCE?**

**Israelis and Palestinians meet in Brussels
as the uprising continues**

Jews and the State

Hungary's Jews

Warsaw Ghetto commemoration

EDITORIAL

Fascism is on the march in France under the leadership of Jean Marie Le Pen. The one time purveyor of Nazi gramophone records has now made inroads into French political life with a style and programme strongly reminiscent of the fascist movements of the 1930s. Just a few months ago much of the liberal press, along with sections of the left press, were naively predicting that he would go back into obscurity after his infamous remarks casting doubt on the Holocaust. Perhaps they will now realise that a skilful politician like Le Pen does not blunder about in this controversial area. He was testing the water and sending a signal to his far right supporters that by promoting a "respectable" political self-image, he will not betray his ideological roots. The recent presidential elections have proved that antisemitism is not a vote loser.

Antisemitism is the ideological cornerstone of all Europe's post-war fascist movements and Le Pen's is no exception. His party, though, has achieved particular notoriety for its assault on France's Arab population and on Islamic culture. With the Left floundering on how best to respond to the fascist threat, unity between those who are his targets — Jews and Arabs — is crucial if Le Pen is going to be stopped. Any animosity or division between Jews and Arabs in France can only benefit Le Pen.

That unity might be hard to imagine in a period when our perceptions of Jewish/Arab relations are dominated by images of Israel's brutal repression of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Undoubtedly, the blanket support for Israel demanded by Jewish communal leaderships in various countries fosters negative attitudes in many Jews towards Arabs. That

might benefit the political Right in Israel; it is disastrous for Jews outside; especially those in France. This would not be the first time that the interests of ruling forces in Israel are in direct conflict with the interests of Jews in the diaspora.

The point at issue has been stated very clearly by Robert Hemmerdinger, a spokesperson for a fringe right wing Jewish group openly supporting Le Pen. "There are many antisemites around Le Pen but he is the only true friend of Israel," he said. The view that Israel's supposed "needs" outweigh all other considerations, even the threat of antisemitism, is not confined to the fringe Right. It pervades the ideology of our mainstream communal leaders, though it is rarely stated so baldly.

One person in Israel who will no doubt be following the French situation carefully is Israel's own fascist demagogue, Rabbi Kahane. He knows that Israel's current turmoil is likely to lead to disaffection with the conventional parties and open up possibilities to build on his already substantial support. The two Yitzhaks — Shamir (Likud) and Rabin (Labour) — may have temporarily stolen Kahane's thunder with the implementation of the "iron fist" policy, but Kahane may well be the beneficiary in the long term.

The fight against Le Pen and Kahane is one fight. Arabs and Jews in France can't wait for Middle East peace before they unite against Le Pen. Nor can they — nor should they — make unity conditional upon that peace. Nonetheless, a settlement in Israel/Palestine based on peace and justice will certainly help the process and prevent Kahane — Israel's Le Pen — from making further advances.

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Who supports Le Pen ?

Tony Blend and Barry Smerin
report from Paris.

Having recently described the Holocaust as "a detail" within the context of the Second World War, during the recent French presidential election campaign, Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of France's *Front National* party, once again revealed his true colours.

His election poster campaign painted him as the outsider in a four horse race. Le Pen was a horse which was not the favourite to win the race to the Elysée but, if it were to win, according to Le Pen's own inexorable logic, it was one that would pay out well.

Le Pen felt he had the qualities needed to be President. His family were humble peasants, not civil servants, he stressed, but of modest means, having known hard times. He has served his country well, both as a politician and a soldier. To cap it all, he is now a grandfather, thanks to his daughter Marie-Caroline. One's family is the only way to true happiness, he proclaimed. But what would his ex-wife Pierrette have to say about that? Not to worry. France needs more children; *French* children.

Le Pen surveyed a France steeped in decadence. Increased rape, murder, and drugs, or so he claimed. Increased illiteracy among school-leavers. AIDS was spreading, brought to us by Jews and Blacks. France was

impotent. Immigration was out of control: immigrants on the dole, immigrants stealing our jobs, immigrants stealing our hospital beds, immigrants hogging our social services, immigrants stealing even our prison places.

What was needed? Le Pen called for government by the people, by referendum. We must introduce the principle of government by popular referendum, on a number of social issues, he argued. Then, two referenda were to be held: one to introduce the principle of national preference (regarding jobs, housing, schools, social security and health); the other to bring back the death penalty.

Then comes Le Pen's electoral signature tune, a military march, and the election broadcast is over. Reminiscent of Pétain, and of Vichy. Can this really be 1988?

TONY BLEND

The Front National has the wind in its sails following its highest-ever poll in the first round of the Presidential elections on 24 April. Its candidate won almost 15% of the ballot, splitting the right wing vote into almost equal thirds between itself, the RPR Gaullist party and the UDF Liberal coalition. The full extent of the fascist breakthrough can be appreciated when one bears in mind that the first ballot result was

achieved in circumstances in which most people believed Le Pen to be a rank outsider, for whom a vote could be no more than a symbolic gesture.

Now that the credibility barrier has been smashed, the direst forebodings are in order regarding the FN vote in next year's local elections and in the parliamentary elections which Mitterand has called for 5 and 12 June.

Furthermore, the figure of 14.7% for Le Pen was a national average. Regional results are even more worrying. Marseille, with its high proportion of Arab residents and repatriate French Algerian colonists, voted 27%. Even more staggering are the figures for Alsace, where some villages recorded pro-fascist votes as high as 37%!

The FN demonstration held in central Paris on the Sunday between the two ballots was the largest ever. Between twenty-five and thirty thousand jubilant supporters wildly applauded Le Pen's claim to be the new leader of the French Right.

The Conservative camp is deeply divided over its strategy with regard to the FN, and the Socialist party is torn between glee at the Right's predicament (having itself used the introduction of proportional representation in the 1986 general election to bring the FN into Parliament en masse and weaken the RPR and the UDF), and fear of the consequences.

As Mitterand tries to square the circle and put together a Centre-Left coalition, and fight unemployment and fascism without overly annoying the "respectable right", there are growing indications of the shape of things to come. A "Joan of Arc" parade on 8 May, the morning of the second Presidential ballot, attended by openly Nazi groups, former supporters of Marshal Pétain and Catholic fundamentalists, was infiltrated and openly attacked by a 30-40-strong commando unit of the *Organisation Juive de Combat*

(Jewish Fighting Organisation) wielding iron bars to considerable effect. Little is known so far about the politics of the OJC, which has already claimed responsibility for attacks on FN bookshops and printing presses, but four of its members were arrested and will shortly be brought to trial.

Meanwhile, Le Pen has been seen on television cavorting along the Cannebière in Marseille, ogling the Town Hall. The mayorship of France's second largest city, no mean political power base, is likely to be his next target.

BARRY SMERIN

Having words

Jenny Bourne's recent articles about Jewish feminism and identity politics in *Race & Class* and *Spare Rib* have generated an important debate amongst radical Jews. Part of that debate has been reflected in *Jewish Socialist* (see JS12 and Letters this issue) and now a pamphlet has been published giving a wide range of Jewish feminist responses. *A Word In Edgeways — Jewish Feminists Respond* is available from JF Publications, Box 40, Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, London N1, and costs £2 (inc p&p) for a single copy or £1.65 (inc p&p) per copy for five or more. It will also be available in radical bookshops or you can obtain an order form from the above address.

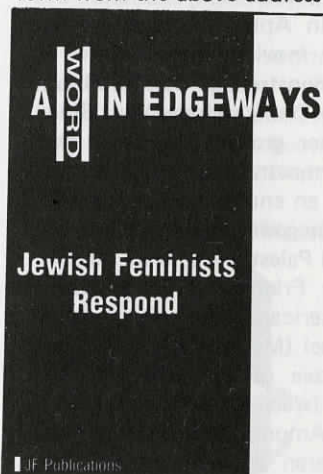


Photo: Michael Heiser

Inside Israel

On my first evening as I walked down wealthy Dizengoff Street it was apparent that the uprising had reached Tel Aviv. Not in the form of batons and bullets but at one end a group of women collecting for an East Jerusalem hospital and at the other Red Liners leafleting the late shoppers and early eaters. The following evening a group of "Immigrants against the occupation" protested outside the Prime Minister's house in Jerusalem, while a Mapam demonstration — including an ostrich representing Yitzhak Shamir — was in progress near the Knesset. Demonstrations have become a new part of daily life, "whereas before", suggests Ronen Shamir of *Yesh Gvul* (a movement of soldiers refusing to serve in the occupied territories) "you couldn't get anybody out on the street". While Yitzhak Shamir was talking with Shultz, 27 of the different issue and identity-based groups were meeting at the Mapam offices forming a loose coalition of opposition to the occupation.

The combination of Palestinians choosing not to use armed resistance in the West Bank and Gaza and the world

wide outcry against the Israeli defence forces' hard line tactics have brought to the surface in the minds of ordinary Israelis a moral, religious and political questioning of the government's "rightness". Ronen Shamir asserts that the Israelis' inclination to support the government of the day is under threat.

Israelis, especially since the Lebanon invasion, have been asked to support aggressive policies in the name of security. This has provoked a growing unease about explicit force dressed up as defence. Many Israelis are saying how "unJewish" these actions are, that peace is more desirable than land. This resistance is a diverse one, not in the stereotyped way of 12 Jews, 13 opinions but based on experience and interest. While the left parties, Mapam and the Communist party, have not seen a substantial growth in membership, groups of doctors, municipal workers, young people, artists, oriental Jews and immigrants are forming. These groups are giving Israelis who see themselves as "non political" an entry point that doesn't involve a greater allegiance than resistance to the continued occupation.

A good example of this development is the artists'

slogan, "Talk with the Palestinians", which has enabled singers like Ofra Harza (a Yemenite Jew and possibly the most popular singer in Israel) to voice her resistance even though a large proportion of her following support the government. Danny Horovitz (one of the artists' founder members) believes that the influence these artists can have on their fans far outweighs their size as a group. When I spoke to him he was organising a Band Aid style event in Tel Aviv. Another example is a group of young people who support the need for a defence force but are refusing to serve in the occupied territories. Readers who know Israel well will understand the immediate "anti-Israel" slurs that accompany any questioning of the Israeli Defence Forces.

These two examples are a reflection of a new pragmatic politics that emphasises issues and not ideology that has mushroomed since the Palestinian uprising began last December. This style of organisation is enabling Israelis to say no to the occupation without necessarily aligning themselves to "radical" parties.

Another development apparent in many of these

groups is the simple but effective stances many are taking. Emit Levinoff, one of the young people refusing to serve in the occupied territories, said "yes we believe in a defence force, but not one that oppresses others" and "we believe in democracy but not when it takes away other people's rights". There are certain issues, such as the army and Zionism, so raw that if questioned they bring accusations of "you're anti-Israel", as if certain concepts, like democracy, have been colonised by the government and its supporters. These new "yes but" politics uphold the same values but shed light from a different angle.

Given the stuttering interest of the US and the Israeli government's increasingly rigid response, which of course continue to have very little impact on the uprising, the importance of these groups in changing ordinary Israelis' minds is growing. With the uprising showing no sign of waning, unlike the interest of the world's press, this Israeli resistance can only increase and make the election in November focus on the issue of land for peace. If this happens, Ostrich Shamir may be in for some surprises!

TREFOR LLOYD

Working for peace in New York

News from the New York chapter of the International Jewish Peace Union is that they have been having a very busy time.

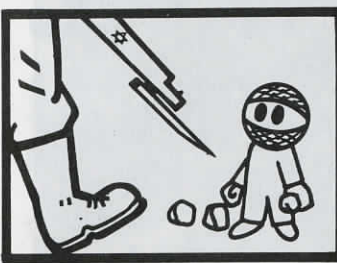
In April, the chapter was the moving force behind a demonstration of 4,500 on New York's Upper West Side. Other groups sponsoring the demonstration, which called for an end to occupation and for negotiations between Israel and Palestinians, were American Friends of Peace Now, Americans for Progressive Israel (Mapam) and the Committee of Artists & Writers for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

Among those present was veteran activist Grace Paley

and cartoonist Art Spiegelman, author of *Maus*. He said, speaking of his encounter with a Warsaw Ghetto survivor at the demonstration, "She came over to *kvell* and tell us how proud she was of us. She said there was a straight continuity between fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto and being here today." Of his own reasons, Spiegelman said: "The situation is too hard to ignore. It goes against everything I understand as a diaspora Jew."

On 18 April, 150 people packed into the Village Gate in New York to hear Dr Nasser El Kidwe (Yasser Arafat's nephew) and Dr

Arye Arnon (an Israeli economist and peace activist). The audience was mixed, Jewish and Palestinian. Significantly, the meeting took place the day after the assassination in Tunis of Abu Jihad, but Dr El Kidwe still wished to proceed with the meeting.



And here in Britain...

As the Palestinian Uprising continues, despite massive Israeli military, political and economic pressure, so the support for Palestinian rights and an end to occupation grows here in Britain.

New single issue groups have formed in the Jewish community. Jewish Women Support Palestinians has been holding regular educational meetings addressed by Palestinian, Jewish and non-Jewish speakers, as well as participating in political activity and fundraising. They also held a very successful benefit which packed out the Duke of Wellington pub in

Islington, north London, and raised £200 for Medical Aid for Palestinians. For further details about Jewish Women Support Palestinians, phone Nicky on 01-241 0433.

Jews for an Israeli-Palestinian Settlement held their inaugural meeting in February, and their first public activity in the week of *Pesach* (Passover) when they mounted a 40-strong picket at the Israeli Embassy.

This picket happened only hours after a lunchtime picket

of El Al organised by the Jewish Socialists' Group. Here the picket stood behind a placard proclaiming "Pass-over = festival of freedom. Israel: end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Freedom and equality for Palestinians."

The JSG has provided speakers on the Uprising to a range of organisations and events, including Labour Party branches, the Jewish Gay Group, a Palestinian support group in Newham,

east London, and a May Day rally organised by Birmingham Trades Council.

On a broader level, the JSG is active within the Interim Joint Committee for Palestine — a body which brings together the PLO and a range of Palestinian and Palestinian solidarity organisations. The JSG banner was displayed on a 100-strong picket organised by the Committee outside Israel's official 40th anniversary gala event at the Royal Albert Hall

in April. Our involvement provoked a certain reaction from some of the gala goers (see Dybbuk's Diary, page 6).

Five thousand people marched through London on 15 May in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against the Occupation. Organised by the Committee, it ended with a rally where the speakers included PLO Representative Faisal Aweidha, MPs from the Liberal and Labour parties and JSG National Secretary David Rosenberg.

On limits

Ofer Kassif, 23, and Charles Lenchner, 19, became the first soldiers jailed by Israel for refusing to take a hand in suppressing the Palestinian Uprising for freedom from military occupation.

As in the Lebanon War, the campaign to refuse army service in annexed or occupied territory is being led by the organisation, *Yesh Gvul* (there

is a limit). They recently sponsored a public letter signed by 400 army reservists, including many officers, stating their refusal to serve in forces of occupation and aggression.

According to *Yesh Gvul*: "... growing numbers of Israeli soldiers face a choice between obedience to the letter of military law, and obedience to their own consciences; between following orders they find morally, politically and legally repug-

nant, or defiance with all the consequences."

They are appealing for financial and political support. Money is needed to support the families of those imprisoned and to continue a campaign of public protests. Messages of support to army refuseniks should be sent to the nearest Israeli diplomatic mission, with copies to *Yesh Gvul* at PO Box 6953, Jerusalem 91068, Israel, or PO Box 4172, Tel Aviv 61041, Israel.

STOP PRESS: Israeli peace activist, Adam Keller, is under arrest even though he reported for his military service. While he was at the military camp, he painted anti-occupation slogans on 150 army vehicles.

Messages of support should be sent c/o Matti Peled MK, The Knesset, Jerusalem, Israel. Letters demanding the release of a peaceful protester against the occupation should be sent to Yitzhak Rabin, Ministry of Defence, Jerusalem, Israel.

Clause Out

The sheer bigotry and cynical scapegoating enshrined in clause 28 of the Local Government Bill is being challenged by an ever-growing campaign of opposition. All over the country — and internationally — Stop the Clause groups are mushrooming, including Jews against the Clause groups in London, Bristol and Bradford.

In London, a group of Jewish women met together in January this year to discuss how we could mobilise Jewish opposition to the clause. This was then taken up at the Jewish Socialists' Group national conference where a lively discussion provided the impetus for setting up a London Jews Against the Clause group.

This had its first meeting in March. That meeting, and subsequent ones, were well attended by a diverse group of people. We are a very mixed group: female and male, lesbian, gay, heterosexual, JSG members, radical feminists and liberals, obser-



vant Jews and Jews who have never set foot in a synagogue. The group has no particular political slant but is united by opposition to clause 28 and our belief that we as Jews have a particular role to play in the fight against it.

The group is particularly concerned about the Chief Rabbi's recent call for the recriminalisation of homosexuality and by the response of the gay press which has stereotyped the Jewish community as uniformly right wing and homophobic. We are also discussing how the campaign against the clause uses analogies with Nazi Germany to legitimise its claims for political support. Many Jews feel that such analogies are irrelevant, trivialising, ahistoric

and offensive. Others think that certain comparisons legitimately can be drawn between clause 28 and discriminatory measures introduced in Germany in the early 1930s. We agreed that where such analogies are used, they should always be accurate, relevant and sensitive. Groups such as Jews Against the Clause are in a unique position to influence the terms of the debate.

We have produced a briefing paper, *Jews, Democracy and Clause 28*, and a declaration deploring the clause. These are being sent to over 200 famous Jews in the hope that they will put their names to it. The declaration will then be made public, possibly in the form of an advert, although this costs money that we don't (yet) have.

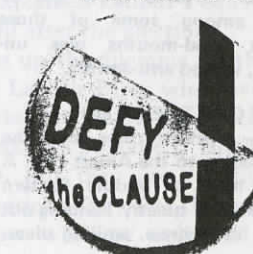
Other activities include writing to Jewish community organisations offering information and speakers. A Jews Against the Clause banner joined others on the national Stop the Clause demonstration

on 30 April. We will be monitoring and feeding information to Jewish and gay press — already we're getting column inches in the *Jewish Chronicle*!

Hopefully, our group will continue to unite Jews from a diversity of backgrounds in opposition to such fundamental attacks on civil liberties and minority rights. New members are always welcome to our meetings which are at present held in central London. We also desperately need donations (made payable to JATC [London]).

For more information, contact *Jews Against the Clause* (London), c/o LAGER, Room 203, Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ.

TARA KAUFMANN



DYBBUK'S DIARY

A NASTY PERFORMANCE

Some of the people coming to Israel's 40th anniversary gala at the Albert Hall evidently decided to stage a little performance of their own on the street outside, when they saw a pro-Palestinian demonstration.

So, Jewish youngsters who had been shlepped along with their families to what was supposed to be a cultural event were treated first to the embarrassing and unedifying spectacle of "respectable" paterfamilias screaming obscenities across the road, while well-dressed Jewish matrons stepped from the crowd to make V-signs at the demonstrators.

We are not suggesting that these types represented all the concert-goers; nor was the crowd attending fully representative of the Jewish community, either.

However, we are sure that if, say, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported someone shouting "You should have died in Auschwitz!" at Jews outside the Albert Hall, this would be front-page news, and readers would take it as evidence that the PLO and its supporters were hard-line Nazi antisemites.

That very remark, and others like it, were shouted at Jews, and by more than one person. However, we hasten to tell you that the "Auschwitz" obscenity was directed at Jewish Socialists (one of whom did as it happens lose most of her family in Auschwitz) and the deranged people shouting were some of our "fellow" Jews coming to celebrate the anniversary of Israel.

At the time of the Lebanon war, a thoughtful Israeli writer warned of the posthumous victory that Adolf Hitler would have won, if the Nazi persecutors succeeded in infecting any section of the Jewish people with their own diseased mentality.

Watching and listening to the nasty performance outside the Albert Hall, I was reminded of that warning. One translation of *Dybbuk* is "transmigrating soul". Whatever tortured spirit was at work among some of those Zionist loud-mouths was un-Jewish, indeed anti-Jewish.

PEACE OFF THE MENU!

Scene — a little further down the road leading to the Albert Hall. A young man of Middle Eastern appearance is quietly handing out leaflets in Hebrew, smiling pleas-

antly as he does so. A Jewish family approaches, and the daughter is handed a leaflet.

"But I don't understand what it's about!" she complains.

"Oh, it's the Israeli Peace movement," says her father, in a dismissive tone, striding ahead.

The young woman glares briefly at the offending object in her hand, then angrily crumples it up and hurls it in the gutter. The family continue on their way to the Israeli 40th anniversary gala. One wonders if they expect the songs to be in English, and hopes none will be about Peace.

Meanwhile, lying in the gutter, alongside a JSG leaflet previously thrown there by a gentleman wearing a *kippa* (skull cap), is a crumpled Hebrew leaflet, inviting people to celebrate *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day) by attending the opening of a new Israeli restaurant in Hendon.

GEVALT INC

Years ago, a Thai friend told me about the military intelligence officer who was forever sending back alarming reports of communist insurgency in remote jungle areas, which his forces were battling to halt.

It used to work a treat. The officer won medals and promotion. The more alarming the "Red Menace" appeared, the more dollars the gullible Americans would pour into his country, and the bigger his military budget.

I'm reminded of this tale when reading articles like the one by former Israeli embassy minister Yaakov Morris in the *Jerusalem Post* (1.12.87), headed "British labour's antisemitic chill". It's all about the valiant efforts of "responsible" trade union officials and Labourites to save their Party for nuclear defence and wider share-owning by battling the "hard-core left" which has supposedly lost its chill grip on Labour.

Mr Morris, who boasts of having met "veteran trade union leaders and shop stewards... in London, Manchester and Birmingham" for his information, cites such evils as "the ruinous trade union adventurism of miners' leader Arthur Scargill", unilateral nuclear disarmament, the deselection of Michael Cocks by his constituency (Mrs Valerie Cocks heads the Labour Friends of Israel,

you see), and "Ken Livingstone, who is now one of England's most dangerous demagogic hard-core MPs." (What, when he can't even get a desk?)

So, you may ask (assuming you have not been conditioned), "what's all this to do with the Jews?" Where does the "anti-semitic" bit come in? Granted that the Left is not enamoured of the Iron Fist of the State of Israel, and may be ideologically opposed to Zionism, must this be attributed to antisemitism?

Yaakov Morris, who claims to be well-informed, insists that it must. Forget that Theodor Herzl once wrote "the antisemites will be our greatest allies" — the terms "anti-Zionist" and "antisemite" have long been used interchangeably by Zionist apologists. In my view, this has chiefly benefited the antisemites, just as the boy who cried "wolf" was a great advantage to the wolf once he came. Mr Morris, however, produces "evidence":

"Much of the PLO propaganda is highly reminiscent of the Nazi technique: 'The Jews voted for Thatcher because they are rich; like Thatcher, they are tools of the Americans; their support of Israel is part of an international imperialist conspiracy,' etc, etc."

Leaving aside that real Nazi propaganda seldom depicts Jews as "tools" of someone else's conspiracy, you might wonder which PLO publication Mr Morris is quoting for this sample of crudity. So did we. Alas, he offers no source reference. (Surprise, surprise!)

There are antisemites who try to hide behind anti-Zionism (and there are also anti-Arab racists who hide behind support for Israel, though not infrequently those who hate Arabs are not over-fond of Jews either, and vice versa). In combating such imposters, Jewish Socialists have usually found the Palestinians willing allies, whereas the Zionist propagandists are no help at all,

since they too prefer to confuse the issues.

Yaakov Morris also quotes one Gordon Lee, "who heads the Midlands office of the Trade Union Friends of Israel", as saying that "16 full-time PLO organisers worked with unlimited budgets within the TUC". I am passing this vital information on to my friend Yousef, who I'm sure will be anxious to contact these "16 organisers" and find out how he can gain access to their "unlimited budgets"! Until now, he has been toiling unassisted for the Palestine Trade Union Federation, with neither an "unlimited budget" nor a branch office in the Midlands.

What is the point of such alarm-raising articles as Mr Morris' or the similar ones I've read from former UJS officers and other "experts" on combating anti-Zionism and "antisemitism" in British campuses, unions, etc? It can't be aimed at scaring Jews into *Aliyah* (emigrating to Israel), since most readers of the Israeli press are already there. (Is it to scare them into staying in Israel? If so, it is not being effective!)

No, the point emerges when Mr Morris, citing Mr Lee, complains of "meagre resources" and "negligible support" from the Histadrut. The Trade Union Friends of Israel head office "does its best... but its lack of funds restricts activity to a minimum". Mr Morris demands "competent *shlihim*" (emissaries), "budgets enabling them to build branches, ...seminars in Israel...".

Later, he remarks in passing, "our major asset is the idealism we inspire in others", but realising perhaps that Israel has just about used that up, he repeats that what is needed now is "essential investment" in bodies like the Labour and Trade Union Friends of Israel, "to win the battle against the PLO and the hard left...".

I must find out from my friend what finally happened to that South East Asian anti-communist general...



israel & palestine
political report

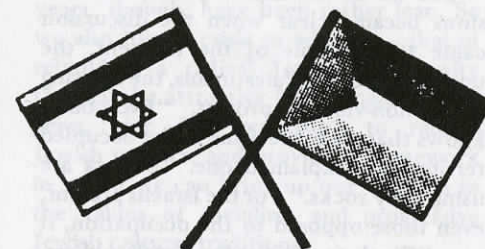
A MONTHLY REVIEW

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The courage to talk

While Palestinians in the occupied territories resisted shootings and beatings by the Israeli army, Israelis and Palestinians came together for a dialogue of peace in Belgium. Henry Stewart reports.



"Because of this uprising I have regained my integrity as a Palestinian," explained Mary Khass — an education worker in Gaza. "These young children have given me back pride and hope. I am not here to beg but to demand rights."

Mary spoke at a conference of Jews and Palestinians in Brussels in March, spurred by the uprising to try and find common ground under the slogan, "Give Peace a Chance". Among the Jews attending were five members of the Israeli Knesset (Parliament), together with Jewish academics and public figures from seven countries. The most prominent was Abba Eban, Israel's former foreign minister. The Palestinians were less numerous, and some had been denied exit visas from Israel. But Hanna Siniora and Faisal Abu Rachme, the two Palestinians allowed by the PLO to meet Schulz in Jerusalem, were present. The PLO itself was refused entry on the grounds that it was a conference of individuals, not organisations.

All participants felt the urgency of the situation. As Mary Khass put it, "If we do not talk now, only our extremists and your extremists will be there to talk."

The scene was set by a full-page spread

This seven-point peace plan was proposed by Hanna Siniora at the Brussels conference:

1. That a permanent peace should be established in the Middle East where all people of the region, including Palestinians and Israelis, will enjoy equal rights and opportunities.
2. That the reaching of a settlement is contingent on putting an end to the occupation of the 1967 war.
3. That the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be based on mutual recognition of equal rights to self-determination and on peaceful co-existence.
4. That all peoples of the region are entitled to live in their own states within secure and recognised borders, free from threats and violence.
5. That all differences should be resolved through negotiations, between the representatives of both parties, with the aim of reaching a permanent solution.
6. That an international conference be held in the presence of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all the parties to the conflict on an equal footing; the PLO representing the Palestinians as the Israeli government is representing the Israelis.
7. That in order for the peace to be established, on the same day as an international conference starts, a moratorium on the use of force should be declared. This should include any attempt to establish new facts in the occupied territories with the intention of making a negotiated peace impossible or much more difficult.

plan," stated Shulamit Aloni, Citizens Rights MK. The significance of the plan was that Siniora is closely linked to the PLO, and is often seen as an unofficial spokesperson. "If Siniora proposes it, then it must have PLO backing," suggested Aloni. "If Siniora can bring us some more names, then we could have a real breakthrough."

"It is my own plan," responded Siniora, who could be jailed by Israel if he admitted to meeting the PLO. He hoped that both sides would consider the plan.

The aims of the conference were modest. "We simply wanted to show that there was somebody to talk to and something to talk about," explained David Susskind of the Secular Jewish Centre who organised the conference in just six weeks. "What can a Jewish community do? Can we endlessly witness the killings without doing anything? Can we accept that war will last forever?"

But most of the participants had already talked to each other; some had been talking for many years. The conference was dominated by the people who were not there, the PLO. Nearly everybody agreed that the PLO must be allowed into the dialogue. In Abba Eban's words: "What if you work tenaciously to make your neighbour change his mind and your neighbour changes his mind and you act as though he hasn't? ... Israelis are living as though the PLO of 1988 is the PLO of 1964. It is not. We Israelis must learn to take 'yes' for an answer."

But this conference was not to be the place for that dialogue. Armeli Shawqe, Brussels representative of the PLO, turned up but was denied entry by the organisers. "This conference gave a big chance for peace," explained Shawqe. "We want a dialogue with all the democratic Israeli sources. But without the PLO this conference achieves nothing." The PLO is thought to have been blocked by some of the Israeli MKs present. "I will talk to anybody," explained Labour's Ora Namir, "but not until after the election."

That sums up the dilemma for the few doves in the Labour Party who have considered meeting the PLO. They recognise that peace may be possible if Israel talks to the PLO. But they are caught in a catch-22 situation. They fear that to meet the PLO now will not only end their

careers but also ruin Labour's election chances. But if there is no peace breakthrough it seems almost certain that Likud will make gains in the election and end any possibility of peace.

Some among the Israeli politicians present had talked to the PLO. General Arye Lova Eliav was driven out of the Labour Party in the late '70s for his attempts at making peace. "Some that I met were excellent, very brave men. Some were terrible. But who are we to give them the sign of kosher or not kosher?"

An unlikely newcomer to the peace camp was Moshe Amariv. A businessman, he was a close friend of Begin and Shamir and a key figure in building Likud's power in the '70s. Until last summer he was a member of Herut's central committee. Last year he decided to search for peace, 20 years after fighting in his first war. Apparently he felt that peace would be good for business. "To understand the conflict you have to see it through Palestinian eyes, you have to feel the pain they feel. It is not only Jewish fathers who have lost sons."

Amariv met Faisal Hussaini, head of the PLO on the West Bank. They negotiated a peace plan, based around a confederation between Israel, Palestine and Jordan. Arafat accepted the plan. Shamir rejected it. "For Shamir, every day that we don't have agreement, we win," explained Amariv. "For me, every day we don't have agreement, we lose." Amariv's exam-

ple was a dangerous one, for it showed that peace was possible. He was thrown out of Likud and Faizal Hussaini was thrown in jail.

"Jews outside Israel must know that there is only one target that they have to fight for in the next few years," concluded Amariv. "To help Jews in Israel reach peace."

But for all the talk of peace, the divisions became clear when the discussion came to the issue of the moment, the uprisings. For the Palestinians, the uprising is a non-violent protest. "Everybody knows that there are arms in the occupied territories," explained one. "But we are using only rocks." For the Israelis present, even those opposed to the occupation, it was difficult to criticise the Israeli soldiers.

Even General Eliav, who has been talking to the PLO for 12 years, feels tied to the soldiers and their actions. "My son is in Gaza and I do not want him to die there," he explained. "I do not want him to be in Gaza but I cannot ask him to take off his helmet and his shield or put down his stick. I do not want my son to die in Gaza." He understood the Palestinian action. "Forty years ago I was commander of an illegal immigrant boat carrying survivors of the holocaust. The British came on board, hitting us with sticks and firing gas at us. They didn't want to shoot because of the media. We fought them back with sardine cans and nuts and bolts. This was a battle against occupation."

But when it came to the crunch, he backed his flesh and blood, despite what his son was doing there.

Other Israelis were adamant that the army was justified in its action. A group of Israeli journalists were firm that soldiers only fired when their lives were in danger. Yes, even though almost 100 Palestinians and no soldiers (at that stage) had been killed.

"You don't realise what it's like," claimed one. "Don't you understand the significance of stones in the Middle East?" He went on to explain the importance of stoning to death in the ancient cultures of the area.

But the uprising had had its effect. "Thanks to the uprising, after 40 years, I hear Israeli officials calling us by our correct name," explained Mary Khass. "The Palestinians have rebelled," they say.

Did the conference do any good? It would be easy to criticise it for not going far enough. All those present knew that there could be no peace without PLO involvement. But a theme of the conference was that we must look for what unites us and not search out things to divide us. Looking at it on that basis, no harm was done and perhaps the dialogue was advanced a little. "This conference is the first step. To talk to each other. To dispel our mutual fears," explained Susskind. "The next step is to talk to the PLO." □

Occupation therapy

David Rosenberg looks at the effects of the current situation in Israel on the Jewish community in Britain

The severity of Israel's response to the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories has shaken many Jews here in Britain. Daily TV news reports have laid bare the methods of occupation and exposed more than ever before the fundamental nature of Israel's conflict with the Palestinians. Many comforting assumptions, widely held in the Jewish community — that Israel was somehow conducting a benign occupation, and that "purity of arms" was genuinely the guiding principle of its defence forces — have been revealed as being little more than empty propaganda.

If the conflict shows every sign of deepening within Israel and the occupied territories, this has many implications for

Jews here since Israel looms large in Jewish life. As Julia Bard argued in her review of *Terrible Days* (JS12), many Jews feel that reassembling their view of Israel may mean reassembling their view of themselves as Jews. There are already signs of a significant split within Anglo-Jewry on this issue. For a number of Jewish people previously identifying positively with Israel, the Lebanon War was a turning point from which their disillusionment grew. The ranks of the disillusioned are growing again, but it is a very fluid situation, as full of dangers as new opportunities and possibilities.

The "yes-men" in the Board of Deputies and the Israeli Embassy who monopolise power, resources and influence

in our community are steadily losing the intellectual and moral argument. As a result, they are becoming more desperate and are no doubt looking for their own domestic authoritarian measures to stifle dissent here. They can also see what is happening on the broader horizon of Jewish life in Britain in the late 1980s, and so should we. For although reactions to the occupation illustrate the most obvious divisions, it is only one of a number of issues and perspectives progressively dividing us. For example, the community is divided over religious orientation, both in terms of an orthodox/reform split and in terms of a religious/secular divide. In terms of general political outlook, we witness our mainstream

leadership daily becoming more entranced by Thatcherism, as if the world revolved around Finchley! But the politics of Thatcherism are clearly at odds with the human values and sense of social justice derived from Jewish experience, with which many Jews still identify, however much their own personal circumstances may have changed.

Among the politically committed, outside the establishment, Jewish radicalism is enjoying a very healthy phase. The Jewish Feminist Group is reviving after an absence; the readership of *Jewish Socialist* is growing and a range of groups are springing up addressing urgent issues, be it Jews Against Apartheid, Jews for an Israeli-Palestinian Settlement, Jewish Women in Support of Palestinians, Jews Against the Clause (28).

The worries of our communal leaders both about disintegration and about new radical developments are focused nowhere more urgently than on the young, whom they see as facing a triple threat of drugs, missionaries and anti-Zionism! We may smirk at the characterisation of the problem but beneath it is a real, objective situation — which we must also recognise — the severe sense of alienation of Jewish youth from Jewish communal concerns (religion and Zionism according to our leaders) and from a sense of Jewish continuity here in Britain; being part of a Jewish future.

Orthodox religion pulls in a growing minority but this only throws into sharper relief the fact that the majority are not interested. If anything, the synagogue will provide at best some social rather than religious meaning. Zionism, meanwhile, has lost its moral force, and its youth groups have lost their political idealism and values which made them attractive to progressive thinking and politicised Jewish youth in the '50s, '60s and early '70s.

The 21 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in the name of Zionism have sapped and eroded its intellectual and political basis. Jewish schools, which once had a role in inculcating a sense of Jewishness and pride in it, before the widespread development of multicultural education in the state sector, now function mainly as repositories of a narrow religious and Zionist education. Their sole appeal for many Jewish parents today is on the elitist basis of providing a better (ie more successful) education than the surrounding local schools. Jewish children passing through the Jewish education system today do not come out with a broad perspective of themselves as Jews within a wider, ethnically pluralist society, however many 'O', 'A', or 'S' levels even, they possess. And at university, for the minority of Jewish youth who go there,

the overwhelming role of a Jewish Society member is as a soldier in the "campus war" — an option only attractive to a minority of Jewish students.

But for a radical and progressive Jewish view, there has been an alienation from radical political commitment over recent decades. Over the years young Jews have supplied much of the personnel behind a range of radical causes. The Thatcher years, though, have been rather lean. So we also have a crisis to address — that of rebuilding a radical Jewish community that can be attractive for young alienated Jews, give full expression to radical Jewish politics, and provide a framework in which we can bring up our children in the values of socialism and progressive Jewish cultural traditions.

At the end of May, 150 radical Jews are expected at a four-day gathering of the "Alternative Jewish Community" in Leeds; an event that would have been barely conceivable a few years ago. It will provide a forum to examine and face up to the challenge of the political, cultural and social forces that bring us together, and which have been catalysed by the crisis in Israel and the occupied territories.

Perhaps one of the most difficult hurdles we will have to start to overcome in building our alternative Jewish community is generating a positive sense of ourselves, our place and our status. We are perhaps clearer on what we oppose, what we feel alienated from or oppressed by, than on what we collectively share and concretely put forward. We have been afflicted by seeing ourselves as "marginal", believing that the orthodoxies to which our establishment subscribe are actually representative of something called the "real" Jewish community. There is a tendency to feel that adherence to these orthodoxies, through attachment to religion, Zionism and political conservatism, are what defines a real Jewish person and that by our opposition to some or all of these orthodoxies we are not real, complete, Jews.

We need to refocus our perspective and not mistake ideological hegemony for reality itself. We should place ourselves in the centre, a position from where it becomes easier to see the establishment in its rightful place — as ideologically wayward, regressive, dangerous and marginal. But they are a marginal element commanding power and resources. To sustain their power, however, they also need authority and legitimacy in the wider community. That authority and legitimacy are daily becoming more questionable and more questioned by the upheavals in Jewish life. We need to recognise our own power to challenge this authority, to expose their outmoded orthodoxies and

rid ourselves of them. If we are going to do that successfully we have to challenge the terms of the debate and not just its more reactionary trends. Religious orthodoxy now faces a considerable challenge from reform and progressive elements. The Zionist mainstream faces challenges from groups like British Friends of Peace Now; all well and good but how do these challenges open doors for secular and non- or anti-Zionist Jews? Or are we merely seeing the erection of new borders within which radical responses will be contained and co-opted?

There is much talk today among Jewish radical circles of "spirituality". This is happening against the backdrop of some progressives, including a number of feminists, entering rabbinical training. This latter development seemed to be particularly enhanced in the aftermath of the *Spare Rib* debate which took place in the wake of the Lebanon war and sharply divided many Jewish and non-Jewish feminists and apparently made the feminist movement as a whole a less attractive and safe place for Jewish women. But what is this spirituality which has come to the fore, which seems to express itself in religious ritual, while claiming to be some sort of expression of new meaning in Judaism? The religious ritual may be performed by women for the first time, and by doing so challenges previously male-dominated spheres, but it is religious ritual all the same. Is it a liberating force or just a more "acceptable" alternative which colludes in a dominant orthodoxy of placing religion as the defining feature of Jewish life, as opposed to being just one aspect on the rich landscape of Jewish experience?

When secular Jews at radical Jewish events feel the effects of this "new" spirituality in terms of orthodox-based *shabbos* (sabbath) prohibitions, they are left wondering whether they are in fact experiencing an alternative. This doesn't mean, however, that we should then write off spirituality as just another expression of the dominant orthodoxies — because it is against that orthodoxy that it has developed and gained its strength. It should mean, though, that Jewish secularists should feel no compunction about adamantly defending their secular rights in the face of what they see as oppressive. What is most important is that we create the conditions under which proponents of secularism and alternative religion can have a fruitful debate based on mutual respect and mutual recognition, and can start to address the roots of the new spirituality which, no doubt, will lead us back to a common discussion of alienation in Jewish life demanding a radical response. □

BEYOND BUSHEY

Michael Heiser looks at the contradictory relationship between Jews and the British state

When we review the relationship between the Jewish community and the state, many well-known stereotypes come to mind. It has become a truism in the last few years that the Jewish community is moving to the Right. It is certainly something the Jewish community leadership has done nothing to counteract, to say the least. The image has been allowed to grow up of the Jewish community as ideally suited to Thatcherism. It was Hugo Young who wrote in the *Guardian* of Jews as our Prime Minister's most reliable bedrock of support. The Jewish community is made to seem almost like a Thatcherite paradigm.

Indeed the Iron Lady herself, from atop fortress Finchley, does all she can to confirm this. When the Board of Deputies of British Jews celebrated its 225th birthday (any excuse for a party) she wrote in the official card as follows: "The history of the Board is in many ways the history of the Anglo-Jewish community. . . Jews and Christians share a respect for the law, a passion for freedom and an acute sense of the importance of the moral basis of life. These common ideals go far to explain why your Board works against the encouraging background of a successfully integrated community."

Now one reaction to this must be to say this does not go for the whole Jewish community (see Ian Bild's article in *Jewish Socialist* 8). Certainly those of us who are left-wing Jews will not want to be tarred with the same broad brush. But it does find an echo. To see why we should, I suggest, look less into our own souls to find "eternal Jewish truths" and look more at the specific material conditions faced by Jews at the end of the 19th century, and the response of the state.

STATE AND SOCIETY

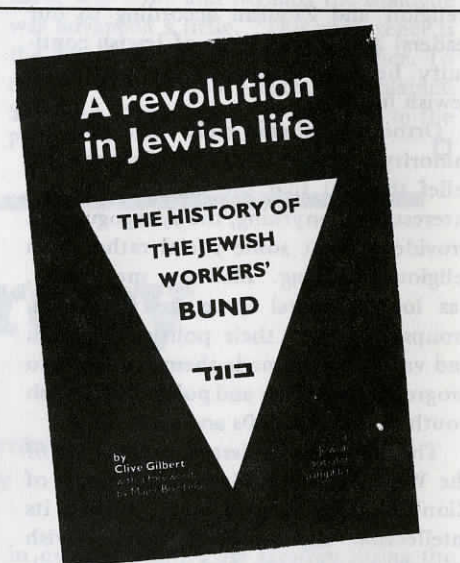
However, before starting it is important that we clarify what we mean by the word "state". Writers in the Marxist tradition have traditionally used the word "state" to refer to the government apparatus, including the police and the army. They counterpose this to "civil society", by which they mean voluntary organisations of citizens freely organised — the Women's Institute (WI), for example.

I wish to use the term, however, in the sense used by the Scottish Marxist writer Tom Nairn. In his book *The Break-up of Britain* (1976), he argues that in Britain there is no clear cut division between "state" and "civil society". This is because the English middle class, as victors of the 17th century Civil War, proceeded to take state power into their hands and to create a civil society which *was* the state. The social cohesion engendered by the process enabled British society to "work" without need for the governing class to resort to the police and army, as was frequently the case on the Continent. But that meant that institutions were created which were nominally independent but at the same time carried out roles which were conducive to social cohesion between society and state. The WI is, again, a very good example. In class terms the rural middle class both made an alliance with intellectual strata and provided a porous membrane which could, and eventually did, absorb the conscious representatives of the British working class, in the form of Labourism. The important point to get from all this is that the *political* strategy of the state is one of absorption. This was what the Jewish community faced at the end of the 19th century.

How about *economic* conditions? Nairn, again, has recently (*New Statesman*, 11 March 1988) shown how the opportunities of Empire were taken by the governing class. The public schools educated them both to absorb the working class here and to put it down in colonies. Either way it led to more profit being repatriated to the heart of Empire and employment opportunities to carry on making this profit. Look at the splendour of the late Victorian or Edwardian buildings of London or Liverpool.

A JEWISH PROLETARIAT

So how did the Jewish establishment and the Jewish proletariat fit into this at the end of the 19th century — specifically from 1881 onwards? The reaction of the Jewish establishment to hundreds of thousands of Yiddish-speaking proletarians was "anglicisation" with a concomitant attempt to suppress Yiddish as soon as possible. This worked through the creation of institutions such as the Jews' Free School and boys' clubs which imitated the institutions of the English middle classes. The carrot offered was advancement, and all the Jewish educational, cultural and religious institutions were



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From a society in the shtetl where community was a complete way of life (see Zbrowski and Herzog's *Life is with People*) — cultural, linguistic, economic and religious, where religion was an integral part, but only a part, the "deal" that the Anglo-Jewish establishment offered the Jewish proletariat of White-chapel and Strangeways was that in return for assimilation they became a "religious minority". *Minhag Anglia*, the specific Anglo-Jewish way of combining religion and society became the Jewish equivalent of the Church of England. Commercially, the newly anglicised minority fitted into the tempting structures they were offered by the middle class; the opportunity for advancement in expanding commerce and industry at the hub of a great empire. The price was a loss of a specific sense of community. Or, more specifically, the loss of the possibilities of using community solidarity to point to a very real alternative that posed a threat to the state and all its works. I refer, for instance, to the anarchism of Rudolf Rocker, to the great Jewish tailors' strikes of the 1900s, to the community definitively captured for us by Bill Fishman in his *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*.

MOBILE PRIVATISATION

And where has it led us in 1988? Here I want to introduce a concept of the late, great Raymond Williams. In *Towards 2000*, he used the phrase "mobile privatisation" and defined it as follows: "at most active social levels people are increasingly living as private small-family units, or, disrupting even that, as private and deliberately self-enclosed individuals".

Let us then go for a walk in the *Yiddish Gas* ("Jewish Street") of the 1980s and see what it looks like. Our steps take us to the delightful suburb of Bushey, as portrayed recently in the *Jewish Chronicle Colour Supplement*. Here we see each family, a proud nuclear unit standing beside its home with its car (the very symbol of "mobile privatisation"). Here we see the main street. Give or take a delicatessen or two, it looks like any other agricultural village become part of prosperous London commuter belt. And in the middle, the shul; the only visible symbol of community. Not much like Brick Lane, or Strangeways, or the Leylands. And *this* is the fastest growing Jewish community in England?

I won't assume that the "image" is the whole reality. Behind the facade of middle class respectability I am sure that there are all the typical crises of 20th century

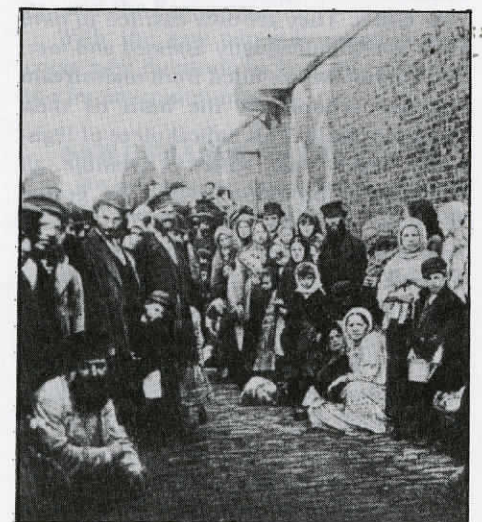
living — anxiety, stress and broken homes, which cause people to ask themselves questions as to just who they are and where they are going. Neither do I want to be too schematic, but in a sense "mobile privatisation" is the culmination of a process which has been called assimilation but can as well be seen as individualisation.

I am aware of the obvious rejoinder. Some people will say that the shul *is* the community and that is all there is to it. (The same people will say that "being Jewish" is reducible purely and simply to the Jewish religion.) But there is something in a very real sense missing when the only focus of Jewish life is through the Jewish religion; where there are no other foci of Jewish existence in a locality. For one thing it leads to subterfuge, which to the genuinely religious must be unsatisfactory. For instance, as recently as the night before writing these lines I was discussing with others (over a Seder table as it happens) whether or not I should join a shul. "I have a fundamental obstacle," I said; "I don't believe." "That doesn't matter," came the confident reply, "who does?"

I want to end this piece by sketching out alternative forms of community which will enable us to "be Jewish" in our own way. But before this I want to take a look at the very important lessons that the Jewish experience holds for other national and cultural minorities.

HISTORICAL PARALLELS

We should beware of a mechanistic reapplication of the Jewish experience. Capitalism and the state have evolved. Different minorities face different specific historical situations. The experience of Afro-Caribbean and Asian minorities cannot be taken to replicate the Jewish experience, as many have so facetiously and damagingly assumed. But that doesn't



Recent Jewish immigrants to Britain, 1900

mean that there are not parallels we can draw. To go back to Nairn, he writes (1976) of the domestic strategy of "absorption": "One may even argue that to date the 'new immigrant' population has assimilated into the existing state structure with considerable success," and he quotes Sivanandan to the effect that the "philosophy of race relations is like a barium meal, revealing the whole organism of the state". (Sivanandan has since, in my view incorrectly, broken with this analysis and more recently written of "induced repatriation" — see *A Different Hunger* (1982).)

Once we leave the stereotypes for *Sun* leader-writers and look carefully at how, exactly, British political formulations are dealing with Black minorities, we see interesting things happening.

We all remember the infamous Tory election advertisement of 1983, "Labour says he's Black, we say he's British", featuring a young, neatly dressed, be-suited Black man — proto-Yuppy. In his book *There Ain't no Black in Union Jack* (1987), Paul Gilroy argues that this symbolises the bargain the Tories offer to the Black community — we will accept you if you behave as British, adapt to British institutions, but give up your demands as a *community*. Put this way, the parallels with the Jewish experience are obvious. Except that, of course, in the Black case it has not yet led to Bushey but is still in the realities of Brixton, of Hackney, of Brent, of Southall and of Moss Side.

I should add that I am not saying, as did earlier theorists of assimilation, that assimilation is either inevitable or desirable, merely that it is the outcome of a particular historical set of circumstances.

So we come back to Jews and to the concrete experience of radical Jews; Jews who may not be part of the "consensus" or even regard themselves as "Jewish" in any organised sense. Can I briefly tell my own experience? I worked for community relations councils, first in Peterborough, then in Brent, from 1979 to 1985. At the start I had no worked-out perspective on my Jewish identity, beyond perhaps a certain residual Zionism. I came across the assertion of Afro-Caribbean and Asian people — specific demands for education, housing and employment, set in a specific context and using the cultural and political resources of their community. Increasingly, this led me to reassess and become more conscious of my Jewish identity. As I talked to other Jews who found themselves in similar positions, I became aware that mine was in no sense an isolated experience. In fact, we can come to generalise that there is a whole field of

locations — in the anti-racist movement, the women's movement, law, social services, education, the voluntary sector, psychology, medicine and on and on — where increasingly Black people have been putting demands for appropriate forms of provision, and this has in turn led Jews working in these fields, on whom in many cases the demands may be placed, to reassess their relationship to their Jewishness.

One outcome of what I am talking about has been what is called "identity politics". Now I don't think that identity politics is in itself progressive; in fact, it can be intensely reactionary: witness the attempt by Conservatives in recent years to use Jews' consciousness of their own identity to turn them to the Right. But identity politics offers a site and an opportunity for socialists to come together in socialist identity politics and thereby re-open debates on the role and location of Jews in society.

In reaching for our own identity, we can be conscious of our own Jewish socialist

tradition, for instance that of the Bund, of the Jewish feminist tradition, of the tradition and struggles of Jews in the trade union or communist movement. To get "beyond the Jewish fragments", I would suggest that we have to make sense of our own experience as Jews and as socialists, be sure of our own traditions and relate them to our present situation.

We can also look with profit at traditions in other countries. Secular Jewish socialists here can take heart in the flourishing network of Jewish progressive and secular institutions in Brussels, which have a tradition which goes back directly to the War and beyond. We can also celebrate with pride the achievements of the Bund. This is not to pretend that we will be able to recreate the Yiddish-speaking proletariat of 1930s Poland. But it is to treat that tradition with respect and honour, and to apply its lessons to the problems we face today. In that sense a Jewish socialist identity can inform a

Jewish socialist practice and can deepen and reinforce this practice.

We have, in a very real sense, as Jews in the Socialist movement, the feminist movement, the anti-nuclear movement, or in education or in local government to stop feeling as socialists who happen to be Jewish but as part of a vibrant alternative Jewish community, with its own priorities and sites of struggle. We have to form an "alternative pole". We have to stop people feeling that their experience is individual and situate it instead at the level of an alternative community.

The challenge for Jewish socialists, and the challenge of the Jewish left in the Jewish community is part of the challenge faced by the Left as a whole — how to make our solutions seem attractive in terms of people's own experience. To do this we must move beyond majoritarianism and mobile privatisation to talk about collective solutions at the level of community and lived experience. □

WHO'S MEETING THEIR NEEDS?

How do Jewish children with special needs fare in the education system and what does the community offer them? Clinical psychologist Naomi Dale investigates.

There have been dramatic changes in thinking about provision for special educational needs and learning difficulties over the last decade. Since 1970, when the Education Act at last deemed *all* children as educable and made each local education authority responsible, a powerful combination of disability lobbies, parental pressure, innovative educationalists, has gradually worked towards a revolution in special education. This was evident in the findings of the DES Warnock Committee (1978), the ILEA Fish Report (1986), and the DES Education Act 1981.

Previously, children were categorised according to their medical diagnoses and sent to special schools defined by each type of handicap. Children attending a school for the visually handicapped, or the partially hearing, or for autistic children, or for those with severe or moderate learning difficulties and so on. But the

new Education Act, building on recommendations of the Warnock Report, gave children with special educational needs new rights. They are now entitled to have their needs individually assessed and met, and cannot be excluded from mainstream ordinary schools on the basis of their handicap itself. This radical piece of legislation states that, wherever possible, all educational provision should be geared towards meeting the child's special educational needs within mainstream integrated settings. Often this will mean that the child requires additional teaching support and equipment to be able to cope with the educational and social demands. At present some children will still have their needs best catered for in special schools and units, but the long term aim should always be towards integration.

The ILEA Fish Report says: "Children and young people with disabilities and

significant difficulties . . . should have access to the whole range of opportunities in education, training, leisure and community activities available to all. Disabilities and significant difficulties do not diminish the right to equal access to, and participation in, society." The report adds: "Our definition of handicap is a dynamic and relative one . . . the degree to which the individual is handicapped is determined by the educational, social, physical and emotional situations which he or she encounters."

The existing policy of sending children with special needs to special schools was once seen as a major breakthrough in educational opportunities of the handicapped. Now it is criticised as segregating and stigmatising children and adults with special needs who are at last being recognised as a marginalised, powerless, frequently neglected group, rarely given

access to the "normal" opportunities in society. Parents have been vocal advocates for the new integration movement as they recognise and reject society's dismissal of their children's special needs. The new Education Act gives parents new rights (and duties) to participate in the assessment procedure deciding on their child's future education and to appeal against decisions. With this new involvement in education, parents are one of the major spearheads in the campaign for equal opportunities. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Labour-controlled authorities translated this trend into political demands and policies for "equal opportunities . . . irrespective of disability".

PIONEERING PHILANTHROPY

The Jewish community's traditional philanthropic self-help system of welfare services led, in the years just before and after the war, to a variety of independent, respected, and often pioneering developments for Jewish people with special needs. Charitable organisations like the Jewish Blind Society, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Jewish Society for Mental Handicap, have been responsible for major financial and practical initiatives. Some, like the Ravenswood Foundation, were started by Jewish parents and trustees and then became open to non-denominational users. Ravenswood, set up originally as a "village" to offer long-term care and education for children and adults with special needs, was one of the earliest organisations to champion the rights of severely handicapped children. Then there are a number of Jewish special schools, like Kisharon School and Delamere Forest Residential School, which provide special education within an orthodox Jewish milieu.

But for most Jewish people, the only educational provision accessible and appropriate to their children's special needs has been in local authority maintained non-denominational special schools. With the growth in "community care" policies and diminishing residential care, increasing numbers of children with special needs live at home and have to go to school in their own neighbourhood. Under the existing system, where children with a wide variety of handicaps have had to attend a diverse set of schools, Jewish provision has been insufficient to meet the needs of the community. Consider Redbridge, for example. No Jewish provision specifically for children with special needs exists, even though the Jewish population is dense. A recent survey established 52 Jewish youngsters with special educational needs in the area, 29 attending local state schools (mainly for children with special needs), six attending

a local Catholic school for special needs, seven attending special schools outside the borough, and 10 attending residential schools.

It is not known, at present, how many parents whose children currently attend a local special school would prefer some form of Jewish education for their child. Norma Briers (Principal Social Worker, Ravenswood Community Services) reports: "Families vary considerably in whether they want some Jewish input or not — not necessarily according to religious background. Nowadays, people are not frightened to say that they have a special need, their Jewishness, and they need help with it. Parents are much more vociferous. There has been a great growth in parents' forums, parents' committees. Parents will not be told what to do now."

More and more parents are now expressing their pain and distress at the lack of Jewish input in the education of their child with special needs. For example, Joyce and Alan Mays wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle* (3 July 1987), "It has been our experience . . . that observant Jewish families especially are hard hit by an agonising conflict between school and home. They see their children stranded in a non-Jewish environment. All too often there is no choice for them, which leads to frustration and unhappiness. How does one explain to a child of limited understanding the difference between the roast egg and the Easter egg?"

With the new parental assertion have come new demands on both the state and the Jewish community.

NEW DEMANDS ON THE STATE

The Jewish cultural, educational and religious needs of children with special needs have, until recently, been completely neglected in local authority special schools. The only known Jewish provision local authorities offer is kosher food or a vegetarian diet! The ILEA Fish Report recognises that the cultural, religious and ethnic needs of children with special needs and their families have received scant attention in the field of special education.

Yet even with the ILEA Report, local authorities and especially central govern-

ment appear disturbingly loath to recognise the *Jewish* needs of children with special educational needs. A large article in the *Guardian* (15 March 1988) reported the tale of Moishe Goldblatt, a nine-year-old orthodox boy with Downs Syndrome who is caught in a battlefield between his parents and his local authority, Barnet. His parents insist that the best environment for him is Kisharon, an independent school for orthodox Jewish children with special educational needs, and they want the local education authority to pay the fees. Barnet has refused to pay. Neil Gill, chief education officer for Barnet, says that the most recent placement of a child in Kisharon by Barnet was six years ago, adding: "My view and that of my officers is that appropriate provision can be made at our special school, Oak Lodge (local state non-denominational special school). There is no reference to religion in the context of special educational needs in the 1981 Act, which is entirely met by restricting provisions to the pedagogical . . . if one were to concede the argument for orthodox Jews, then similar arguments would appear for Muslims. The question of paying the fees of Kisharon was clearly a factor in the officers' policy and final decision. But we only pay when we genuinely feel that we do not have our own appropriate provision."

Oak Lodge School, Barnet, has no provision for Jewish religious or cultural practice. The parents have appealed against Barnet's decision, and Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for Education, is being asked to make a final ruling. Their request is unlikely to be met, if we are to judge by recent comments made by Mr Baker to a large Jewish audience of teachers and educationalists, organised by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He seemed reluctant to recognise religion and culture as special needs, and said the authorities could not be forced "to meet the additional costs of placing a child in a Jewish independent school, when adequate provision is available in one of their own special maintained schools" (*Jewish Chronicle*, 26 February 1988, my emphasis).

The reluctance of local authorities to take into account the religious and cultural needs of these children has had particularly distressing consequences for families faced with sending their child to residential special schools. It is in a residential setting that parents often feel most strongly about the need for a Jewish environment for their child, yet local authorities are often refusing to pay the fees for children to attend the only Jewish residential special school, Delamere Forest.

for teachers and parents; making more places available in Jewish schools for children with special needs; and persuading the local education authorities and DES that being Jewish is an important criterion when considering special education placement and curriculum.

The conference and accompanying campaign have led to a massive controversy in the community — a controversy which reflects the debate which has raged in the wider community. Writers to the letters page of the *Jewish Chronicle* have argued for or against integration, and shown the difficulties of setting up an integrated programme in Jewish schools as well as the urgent need to set up such a policy. "We see no evidence that the debate at last surfacing within the Jewish community concerning integration represents a passing trend or an 'in' concept," wrote Sam Brier and David Lerner (two members of the new steering committee). "It is a long-awaited assertion of the rights of an often ignored group of children... What we recognised was that there was no coherent overview of existing provision within the Jewish community and that many Jewish schools had not taken special educational needs into account when planning buildings, curriculum and teacher training." As in the wider British society, it was precisely buildings, resources and staff training that were seen as stumbling blocks to the development of real integration.

RHETORIC OR RESOURCES?

The whole movement towards integration in the wider society has suffered a serious setback over the last few years. Additional resources are essential to achieve true integration, but a recent House of Commons Select Committee report confirmed that lack of funding is seriously affecting implementation of the 1981 Education Act. Educationalists think that Kenneth Baker's new Education Bill will do untold damage to the integration movement, since it heralds an end to local authority planning and control of comprehensive provision for special needs.

The issue of resources is equally crucial in the Jewish community. Money is needed to alter buildings, to train staff, for materials, support staff and advisors. As Sam Brier and David Lerner (of the Steering Committee) wrote in the *Jewish Chronicle* (3 July 1987): "We are going to lobby local education authorities concerning the right of Jewish children with special needs to receive a Jewish education. We are, moreover, going to fight for and achieve our share of funding from voluntary and statutory sources in order to obtain training, research and equipment."

Severe restrictions in funding of local education authorities, such as the IEA, and uncertain policy planning of the LEAs in the face of the Education Bill, are likely to undermine new integration initiatives in the Jewish community. It is unlikely that any widespread integration programme can develop on voluntary funding alone; many Jewish schools are already limited in staffing and burdened financially. It is also unclear at present whether Jewish authorities are committed to backing this new development — J Leader, Head of Simon Marks School, wrote in the *Jewish Chronicle*: "Many headteachers of Jewish day schools have seized the initiative and are taking direct action to improve the special needs provision, with...very little help from the Jewish authorities. The Institute of Jewish Education...has introduced special needs as a component part of its teacher training courses yet it is unable to fund ongoing in-service training in special needs for existing teachers."

Apart from financial and political obstacles, widespread personal prejudice from parents of ordinary children, teachers and policy makers in the community, as in the wider British society, are likely to make the transition to integration a long and contentious process. But there is also evidence of considerable goodwill. With the impressive momentum generated in parents, teachers and members of the Jewish community, a notable number of initiatives are being successfully and effectively implemented in schools like the Jewish Free School, the Jewish Independent School, Kisharon School, Sinai School, Ilford Jewish Primary School. With the exception of Kisharon, all these schools are now voluntary state aided. A number of these schools are now admitting children with physical disabilities, Downs Syndrome, partial hearing and learning difficulties.

Overcoming years of prejudice and segregation, children with special needs are at last participating in educational and social opportunities with their peers. The popular demand for integration appears unrelenting, as one more sector in the community demands equal opportunities and the acceptance of diversity. While we campaign for this within our community, we now need to turn and demand similar opportunities within a genuinely multi-cultural state sector. □

LETTERS...

OUTRAGEOUS COMPARISON

Thank you for your report "Jews and Palestinians unite against the occupation" (JS12). All three speeches, perhaps inevitably, included references to the Holocaust. Two of them made useful if clichéd points. The third, however, contained implications of an accusation so vile and outrageous that I am appalled that the *Jewish Socialist* editors let it pass without comment.

Richard Hauser suggests that Israeli brutality towards the Palestinians is a sort of stuck-in-the-past compensation reaction: "taking it out on the Palestinians instead of the Germans". This may be a valid part of the truth, as far as superficial mass psychology goes.

Elfi Pallis rightly points out the dangerous tendency of Israeli politicians to deliberately conflate "a Palestinian teenager with a stone" with "an SS officer with a gun", to confuse the fighting of an oppressed people for its rights with cold-blooded fascist aggression. As she says, *these are false comparisons*, and they are used to justify Israel's increasing brutality.

But Faisal Aweidha takes false comparisons to new depths. I quote: "we have all 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 who suffered the most in 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." (italics mine) What is this "it" and "the suffering" to which he refers? Does Faisal Aweidha *really* know the history? I quote: "What they are doing to each other is *much more* than the antisemites have done to us." (italics mine)

Faisal Aweidha implies that Israel's oppression of Palestinians is equal or equivalent to what the Nazis did to the Jews. Now when he says that Palestinians in the occupied territories are being mistreated, tortured, deported or starved, I join him in total condemnation of this

oppression, and I bitterly admit that it does now resemble what goes on in Chile, in Northern Ireland, in South Africa. However, when he says "there is history repeating itself", in direct reference to the Holocaust, he goes too far.

It is not at all easy to talk about degrees of evil. But they exist. To smoothly, silently, secretly and efficiently annihilate millions of people is — was — on another level.

It is no defence of Israeli atrocities to insist that they do not bear comparison with what happened then. Neither do the nightmares being enacted in Chile, in Northern Ireland, even in South Africa, and this is *not* to underestimate the suffering involved.

There is a limit. This obscene comparison — revoltingly disguised in Faisal Aweidha's speech as compassionate concern — has got to be challenged and has got to stop.

Jenny Goodman
Leeds 8
Yorkshire

Jewish Socialist replies: As socialists committed to analysing the *processes* which lead to racism, fascism and authoritarianism, we see nothing intrinsically "vile", "outrageous", "obscene" or "revolting" about comparing these developments in various societies and contexts.

We recognise that arguments by analogy are weaker and often factually less reliable than arguments which focus directly on the case in point (see "Holocaust Analogies" in JS No 1), but we also recognise the usefulness of pointing to an example people are familiar with, and relating that to a current context. Such analogies can be crude and insensitive or chillingly appropriate. It depends on who uses them, how and why.

In that context and spirit, we believe that the tone of Jenny Goodman's letter is completely out of step with the tone and purpose of Faisal Aweidha's speech

as a whole and the meeting in which he made these remarks — a very successful meeting to draw Jews and Palestinians together in a common struggle for human rights.

We would also warn against the widespread and understandable tendency to claim the Holocaust as unique and incomparable. We believe this to be analytically and politically mistaken. It is not enough to stand back aghast and paralysed by its horror. We have to fully understand the processes through which the Holocaust happened and bring that understanding to bear on current struggles.

The whole question of the political use to which the Holocaust is put has been the subject of considerable debate recently, particularly in the campaign against Clause 28. We would welcome other readers' views on this.

FACING UP TO ANTISEMITISM:

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by David Rosenberg

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The Jews who fought back

זאג ניט קיין מאָל!

Zog nit keyn mol was written by Hirsh Glik (1922-44). It became the hymn of the United Partisan Organisation in 1943, and is traditionally sung at meetings commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and Jewish martyrdom in the Holocaust. It is a testament to the spirit of Jewish resistance to the Nazis.

זאג ניט קיין מאָל אז דו גייסט דעם לעצטן וועג,
כאָטש הימלען בלייבען פאַרשטעלן בלויז טעג,
קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה —
ס'וועט אַ פּויק טאָן אונדזער טראָם — מיר זיינען דאָ!

Zog nit keyn mol az du geyst dem letstn
veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye
teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte
sho —
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot — mir
zaynen do!

Fun grinem palmenland biz vaysn land
fun shney,
Mir kumen on mit undzer payn, mit
undzer vey,
Un vu gefaln s'iz a shprits fun undzer blut,
Shprotsn vet dort undzer gvure, undzer
mut.

S'vet di morgnzun bagildn undz dem
haynt,
Un der nekhtn vet farshvindn mitn faynd,
Nor oyb farzamen vet di zun in dem
kayor —
Vi a parol zol geyn dos lid fun dor tsu dor.

Dos lid geshribn iz mit blut un nit mit
blay,
S'iz nit keyn lidl fun a foygl af der fray,
Dos hot a folk tsvislen falndike vent
Dos lid gezungen mit naganen in di hent!

To zog nit keyn mol az du geyst dem
letstn veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye
teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte
sho —
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot — mir
zaynen do!

Never say this is the final road for you.
Though leaden skies may cover over days
of blue.
As the hour that we longed for is so near
Our step beats out the message, 'We Are
Here'!

From lands so green with palms to lands
all white with snow
We shall be coming with our anguish and
our woe.
And where a spurt of our blood fell upon
the earth
There our courage and our spirit have
rebirth.

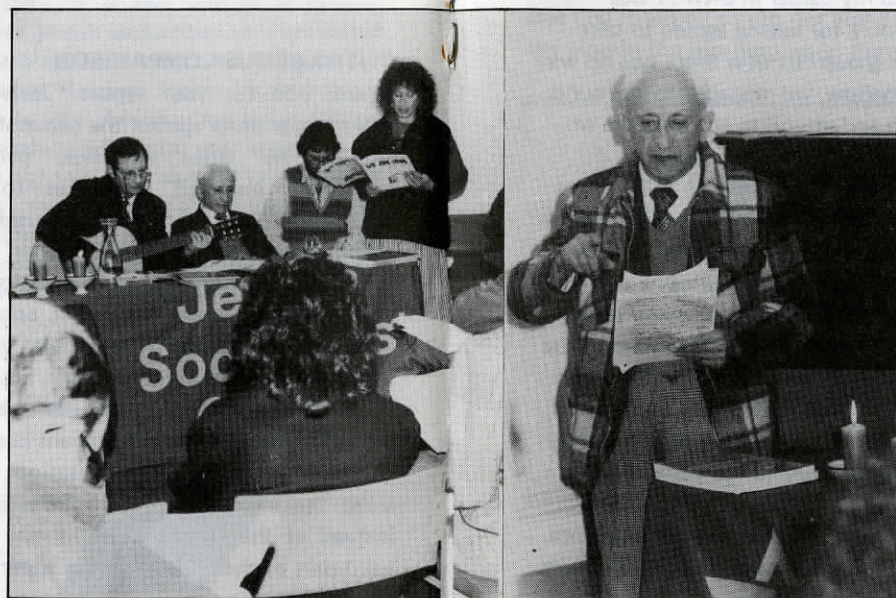
The early morning sun will brighten our
day
And yesterday with our foe will fade
away.
But if the sun delays and in the east
remains
This song as password generations must
maintain.

This song was written with our blood and
not with lead.
It's not a little tune that birds sing
overhead.
This song a people sang amid collapsing
walls.
With grenades in hands they heeded to
the call.

So never say...

(Translation from Yiddish by Chaim
Neslen)

David Rosenberg reports on a moving
commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising



With a talk, reminiscences, readings and a performance of Yiddish songs written in the ghettos, the Jewish Socialists' Group commemorated the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, at Conway Hall, London, on 13 April. Commemorations of the Uprising traditionally begin with the lighting of six candles to commemorate the six million Jewish victims of Nazism. On this occasion, though, the speaker, Stephen Ogin, began by lighting two candles. One, he explained, honoured the six million Jews, the other honoured the millions of other victims of Nazism — Gypsies, homosexuals, trade unionists and Slavs.

In his talk on the Uprising, he stressed the many different forms of resistance — cultural, political, spiritual — which sustained the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and gave them the strength to rise up in revolt against impossible odds. Quoting from accounts by chroniclers and survivors of the ghetto, he graphically described the conditions in which they struggled and brought out the heroism of those who were the first in Nazi-occupied Europe to rise up in face to face battle with their murderous oppressors.

His talk was complemented by poignant reminiscences from two Bundists who had grown up in Lodz, Poland — Peretz Zylberberg (visiting from Canada en route

to commemorations in Warsaw itself) and Majer Bogdanski. Peretz spoke of the elation felt in the Lodz Ghetto when they heard news of the Warsaw Uprising and the desperation that they were not in a position to organise an armed rising in Lodz. Majer recalled in particular the suffering of the Gypsies, and he reminded the audience of the importance of telling and retelling the details of the Holocaust when neo-Nazis were trying to deny that it had happened.

The second half of the evening took the form of a cultural commemoration. The London Yiddish Folksong Workshop, joined by Majer Bogdanski, performed 11 songs and Majer also read an extract from a tragic story by Sholem Asch about a young girl who was blinded by the Nazis and who did not wish to have her eyes back because of the evil they had witnessed.

With the help of a songsheet with full translations from the Yiddish, prepared by Chaim Neslen, the audience followed in silence and in tears songs of everyday life in the ghetto, of abandoned orphans, of people losing faith, lullabies which tell of slaughter and finally songs of resistance and freedom. The evening ended with everyone singing the evocative *Partizaner Lid*, with its triumphant last line: *Mir zaynen do! We are here!*

The 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto
Uprising included an unexpected commemoration.
Peretz Zylberberg reports from Warsaw

Having participated in a very meaningful commemoration meeting of the Jewish Socialists' group in London to mark the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, I made my way to Warsaw itself to remember and be counted.

Any return journey of this kind is an emotional and sentimental happening. Walking among the ruins of the formerly flourishing Jewish existence almost takes you out of the present and transports you both in mind and body to another era. To depict every detail of all the elaborately laid-on commemorative events is certainly too much for a letter. Let me therefore try to pinpoint an event that is part and parcel of the Holocaust and yet is outstanding.

In January 1943 news came out of the Soviet Union that the two outstanding leaders of the Polish Jewish Bund, Erlich and Alter, were executed on charges of being spies for Nazi Germany. The very audacity of the charges and lack of any trials of evidence stunned the free world. Protests came from every corner. But the war raged in all its fury and Polish Jewry was being exterminated daily in awful numbers. The USSR was bearing a large share of the war effort. Some people were not prepared to raise their protests loud enough, for fear of antagonising an ally.

The sad fact of this hideous crime

against socialism, its leaders and the Jewish people, never allowed Bundists to get over the infamy of the Soviet deed. Now, 45 years after the fact became known, some form of justice, even if only symbolic, took place in Warsaw this April. Dr Marek Edelman, a Bundist now active in Solidarnosc, and the last remaining member of the leadership of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, was instrumental in having a stone erected to their memory in the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw. It stands next to the gravestones of the Bundist leaders, Beynesh Michaelivicz and Yosef Lescinski (Chmurner). The inscription on the stone doesn't say much. It only states that they were executed in the USSR.

Maybe it couldn't be different now. But the fiery speech of Marek Edelman, where the blame for this outrage was placed squarely at the feet of the Soviets, and socialists from all over the world expressed their sympathy and revulsion, was a satisfaction that could only have been hoped for up till now.

To stand there, on the Okopowa Street Jewish cemetery and sing the *Shvve* (hymn) of the Bund, together with many other Bundists, assembled for this occasion, was something that I will always remember with an inner warmth and sense of fulfilment.



The *Yugnt Shtime* (Young Voice), newspaper of the Bund's youth organisation in the Warsaw Ghetto



Marek Edelman at a Warsaw Ghetto commemoration, 1946

A boy named Tsrulek

At a time when we commemorate the ghetto resistance, Majer Bogdanski remembers the children of the Bund in his hometown of Lodz

It was January 1939. At a meeting of the committee of the SKIF (the Bund's children's organisation) in Lodz, my hometown, Lasar said that she felt obliged to give up her leadership of the Michalevicz group of ten year olds. She was speaking with a kind of lisp as if the words were choking her. We all realised that something very serious was the matter since this was not her manner of speaking, for she was one of our best helpers. She felt, she said, that she had no contact with the members of that group; that nothing that she said registered with them, they completely ignored her and she feared that the whole group might disintegrate. And yet, she added, they were all a very good element. She thought that because she was their class teacher in the Medem school (a Yiddish secular school) the children might not like to have her also in their SKIF group and that their behaviour might have been an expression of resistance to her.

Now Lasar was not just a teacher. She was also a lecturer on many subjects and mostly on Yiddish and world literature. On top of that she possessed two more attributes; she was of beautiful looks and she spoke Polish without a trace of an accent. These latter two attributes made it possible for her to move around on the, so-called, Aryan side during the German occupation. Then she became a courier between the ghettos bringing news and all sorts of information and also money from one ghetto to another. Once when she was trying to smuggle herself into a ghetto, she was noticed by a guard and shot dead.

At the meeting in question, when she stopped speaking, Kersh spoke up. He said that he knew the group. According to him they were a gang of vandals. To them, he thought, one should assign somebody whom they would respect, a military man, Majer — meaning me. What kind of "military" man was I? At 21, like all the able-bodied men, I was called up for military service for 19 months, and there I was promoted to the "high" rank of corporal. After my military service the SKIFists nicknamed me "General Majer". When Kersh finished, Melman, the Chair



Young Bundists selling their party paper and Lasar's husband, said, "Majer, what do you say to this suggestion?" Without batting an eyelid and quick as lightning I said "yes".

The group was to meet next Tuesday at 7pm. I thought it would be a good idea for me to come a little earlier so that when they started to come I would already be there, and I would prevent them from creating a disorder. But my calculation proved to be wrong. At twenty to seven I was on the stairs leading to the Party rooms when I heard wild noises coming from inside. I ran like mad up the stairs and I found bedlam inside. There was a thick cloud of dust from floor to ceiling which made it impossible to breathe, a real smog. All the lights were switched on; they looked like tiny stars up high far away, but because of the smog nothing could be seen. I could only hear the mad yellings and the sound of jumping. After quite a while I was able to discern some shapes of overturned tables and chairs. As was customary I called out "achtung!" (attention!) and right away a mass of shrill voices answered back "achtung!" and, hardly discernible, I saw a little boy standing opposite me stretched like a violin string, saluting me like a soldier and with a voice that could pierce the eardrums, he shouted "achtung!". His name was Tsrulek Meierovics, with round, rosy cheeks, blond hair and blue eyes, a beautiful boy, so short that he could walk erect under the table; the smallest of them all and the greatest rogue, as was the popular saying, their ringleader. I looked at him in his military saluting position and I was sure that this urchin

would "break my neck"; he would make an end to my career in SKIF. I was deeply sorry for having agreed to take over this group but now there was no way out. Somehow, we managed to sit round the table and attend to the business of the day.

Six months later, in July 1939, just a few weeks before the outbreak of the war and the beginning of the Holocaust we went camping and Tsrulek came with us. This used to be our annual camp which was called "The Socialist Republic of the Children". We considered this the crown of our year's work. Not one child would be allowed to leave the SKIF, when they were grouped over to the youth organisation at the age of 16, without having been to such a camp at least once. For those who could not afford the costs we would find the money.

For sleeping purposes, the camp was divided into four groups; younger and older girls and younger and older boys. I was assigned to sleep with the younger boys. Tsrulek asked my permission to put his mattress next to mine. He wanted to sleep next to me. This was not at all to my liking, because I put my mattress at a "strategic" place. With fifteen children in a room on the ground floor the window would have to be open all the night. This would create a danger of unpleasant things and of persons with intent of malice to come in through the window. Therefore I put my mattress beneath the window, so that whoever comes in would hit me. I would wake up immediately and take the necessary steps to deal with it, therefore it would be unwise to have a child by my side. But I could not refuse Tsrulek his request. At "lights out" I blew out the lamp light and as soon as I stretched myself on the mattress I felt his arm around my neck and soon his whole body rolled itself on to me; I closed my arms around him and felt the warmth of a father towards his little child, and for the whole four weeks of camp I was his mattress.

During the six months that elapsed from the moment when I saw him for the first time, when I feared he would "break my neck" in the SKIF, until the day

when we went camping, both of us, Tsrulek and myself, managed to become the closest personal friends.

But...oh that but...there is a terrible sting in this tale...Tsrulek is no more... He was not yet 11 years old when the Germans occupied Lodz. The date and circumstances of his death I don't know; I only know that there hasn't yet been one day in which he did not stand before my eyes in the morning when they open

from sleep and in the evening when they close to sleep again. Of all the 25 ten year old girls and boys of the Michalevicz ring, of which Tsrulek was the Chair, only one was alive after the war. And had this, at least, been the proportion of the surviving, one in 25...

Of all the 750 ten to sixteen year old girls and boys of the SKIF in Lodz in 1943, only five survived the war. I leave it to the mathematicians to work out the

percentage of those who perished. Who can tell what a loss of genius we, and the world at large, suffered by their extermination? The handful of ex-SKIFists still alive are the leaders, now, of the Bund in many countries, in the Co-ordinating committee of the Bund, university professors and very famous writers.

I can see the 750 missing SKIFists and my heart moans: *Khaval al deovdin!* Woe to our loss! □

AFTER ASSIMILATION— HUNGARIAN JEWS TODAY

Hungarian Jews are generally thought of as largely assimilated but recent research has shed new light on the content of Jewish identity in Hungary today. Dr Ferenc Eros analyses the results of this research

There are estimated to be 80-100,000 Jews living in present-day Hungary. At most, between 30-50,000 can be considered as Jewish in the religious sense. Exact figures are unavailable; there have been no census data on religious or ethnic affiliation since 1949. Also, the matter of who can and cannot be considered Jewish is extremely difficult to determine within definite limits. How, who, when and why people come to regard themselves as Jewish, or to be regarded as such by others, is not based on a simple objective criterion. It is affected by changes in political and socio-economic relations, methods of defining social situations, self-awareness, and the psychological mechanisms of attribution and projection.

Despite this, we know that, among the Eastern and Central European countries (excluding the Soviet Union), Hungary has the largest Jewish population. As a matter of course, Jews are not counted as a separate ethnic or national group, since, according to official Jewish and government opinion, they enjoy the same status as other religious groups. But in everyday life in Hungary, Jews and non-Jews differentiate one another, independently of religious affiliation; their Jewish or non-Jewish character is taken into account, and it also serves as a reference group for many.

VIVID MEMORIES

Hungarian Jewry is comprised of Holocaust survivors and their descendants. The memory of its nearly 600,000 victims and the mass deportation of 1944 is still vividly present today. There is virtually no family which did not lose close relatives.

Yet the whole history itself of Hungarian antisemitism and the persecution of Jews has been taboo, at least on the public level. Hungarian historians have assigned little value to studying the "Jewish question", and — discounting the two or three years following the war — a real dialogue between the Jewish and non-Jewish segments of society has not developed on the issue of blame for the persecution of Jews and the shortcomings of Hungarian society that led to the events of 1944. And, finally, silence surrounded the fact that after 1945 antisemitic prejudices erupted once again. Only in recent years has this taboo begun to be broken, in the publication of literary works and critical writings. A long-overdue, symbolic, breaking of this taboo can be seen in the recent unveiling of a statue of Raoul Wallenberg (who helped rescue thousands of Jews).

Where does this possibility of freer and more open treatment of Jewish problems leave Hungarian Jews? Some people believe that the Hungarian Jewry is a dying community that, within a few generations, will have assimilated into the surrounding society. Others think that the relatively large number of Jews still living in Hungary attests to their survival capacity. And, in recent years, within Jewish intellectual circles, there is a growing current voicing the need for Jewish cultural autonomy — independent of religion — and, moreover, for some sort of political representation as well. However, still others warn against assuming such roles, feeling this would only foster antisemitism. Hungarian Jewry is thus extremely divided, with conflicting and not very well-defined notions of their identity.

IDENTITY DEBATE

The question of "Jewish identity", or at least the identity of the Diasporic Jews, is much debated in Western Europe and in America. For those functioning as Jews in one way or another in Western Europe and America, Jewishness is a kind of natural entity and a culturally bequeathed legacy. The individual decides what he/she is able or wants to do with this legacy. They don't need to massively repress or conceal the simple fact of belongingness to the group. In Hungary research suggests that the mere act of taking on such an identity is rendered more difficult by many factors, which leads us to wonder if Isaac Deutscher's pessimistic question may well be justified. He asks:

"Is it at all possible that no trace should be left of the Jewish presence in Eastern Europe? Some traces are certainly left, but whether, in the long run, they will have any more meaning than the traces that the Red Indians have left on the American civilisation of today is another matter. For Jews of our generation, it is extremely difficult to absorb the reality of Central and Eastern Europe being *judenrein*, ie, of the elimination of the whole social element which once had its tremendous weight."

LIFE HISTORIES

Hungary is certainly not "*judenrein*", but for many people to be Jewish has meant to be silent — a major phenomenon, documented and confirmed by our research on Jewish identity. We have collected a relatively large number of very detailed life histories of people belonging to the "second generation", ie, those born after the Holocaust (1945-1956), from different social, educational and occupational strata and geographic regions, in an effort to determine the specific features of their identity formation. In some cases we interviewed their parents as well. We also interviewed some individuals who survived the Holocaust as children.

We investigated the interviewee's family history, traced back to two or more generations, as seen through his or her eyes; the personal history of the interviewee, with a focus on childhood roots of Jewish identity; and the interviewee's attitudes, feelings and conflicts about Jewishness, antisemitism and related questions.

One of the most striking points was the tendency of the survivors' families to repress the memories of their sufferings during the Holocaust and to even conceal the fact that they belong to the once-persecuted group. Children growing up in these families experienced an inconceivable family secret and were socialised in an environment where traditions had been more or less eliminated and the generational continuity of the family history disconnected.

For many respondents, even learning about the fact of their being a Jew proved to be an extremely conflicting emotional experience. Often they had been "enlightened" by strangers, and even when the "enlightenment" took place within the family, it was typically a reaction to a painful situation experienced by the child outside the family, as illustrated by the following examples from two of our case studies:

"At the age of 13, I didn't know what it meant to be Jewish; I think I didn't even know the word... when I first heard the word, it was not from them [my parents], but from a friend... He told me that we are Jews and all about what had happened to the Jews... I learned for the first time what had happened to us, and I became very frightened, and ever since then I haven't been able to accept this. The truth of the matter is that I have never been particularly willing to deal with it, believing, as a matter of principle, that if I close my eyes they cannot see me. In short, if I don't deal with the problem, then there won't be any, just as there won't be any antisemitism."

"I must have been between 12-14 years of age when I picked up such expressions in school as 'kike' and 'stupid Jew'. When I used these expressions at home, without really having known what they actually meant, the subject was then raised for the first time. This was the first occasion that they told me: 'Watch out, you are one too!... I had used these expressions without having been aware of my own origins, and then my mother and father enlightened me. Until then, there had never been a single word about this, and even then they didn't become truly outspoken or explanatory. They said... that people who hold such prejudices are stupid. The whole matter was doused with some such ideological claptrap about one not being free to talk about it, and they only mentioned as an afterthought that I am Jewish too... It went something like this: 'Well, it's better for you to know that you are Jewish, but there's no need to talk about it or to conceal it.' I asked them what I should say if they should ask me what my religion is, to which their blunt reply was that I should tell them that I have no religious affiliation."

The "strategy of silence" was the most characteristic way in which survivor parents treated the problem of their origins, belongingness and persecutions in the presence of their children. It is a psychological defence mechanism, intended to prevent their children's future victimisation. These defences have been counter-productive; that very same "strategy of silence" left their children defenceless against a series of severe conflicts and identity crises. But to arrive at a deeper understanding of this phenomenon we must examine the entire problem within the context of the history of Jewish assimilation in Hungary.

From the second half of the last century, in an atmosphere of relative politico-economic liberalism, the assimilation of Hungarian Jewry progressed rapidly. Neither the rising political antisemitism after 1919 nor the persecution of Jews between 1938-45 were able to halt this process of assimilation and to transform it into disassociation, except for a significant minority. Nevertheless, the process had not reached complete assimilation and merger.

LIES AND ILLUSIONS

The Hungarian history of Jewish assimilation is a history of its lies, illusions and tragic events, as well as the interruption of this process. Assimilation per se does not, in itself, possess any content value; under healthy circumstances, it could be seen as an organic, constructive part of the formation and development of a society. The assimilation of Hungarian Jews, however, in many respects, cannot be considered "organic" or "natural", as it had to bear the brunt of all the conflicts and problems of Hungarian social development. We are indebted here to István Bibó's classical work *The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944*. According to Bibó:

"There was perhaps no other country in Central and Eastern Europe in which the internal world of the community being assimilated was so disparate and the issue of Jewish assimilation so fraught with lies and contradictions as in Hungary... From the very beginning, Hungarian society assimilated or offered possibilities for assimilation under dishonest and unfair conditions; it equally deceived itself and those assimilated."

Bibó sees the fundamental lie of assimilation and its programme-like character as indicating that it was never accepted as a "factual process", but only as "something of considerable importance for the recognition and praise of worthy moral and national actions". Bibó goes on to assert that Jewish assimilation in Hungary took place more on the external and superficial level, rather than as a truly integrated process, as there was no homogeneous dominant set of

communal values, intellectual attitudes and lifestyle into which they could be fully assimilated.

How does this particular path of assimilation, laden with lies and illusions, affect the problem of identity? For the group undergoing assimilation, it signifies the relinquishing of the group's self-identity, the gradual loss of identity groupings and distinguishing characteristics (religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, etc). This does not necessarily mean that one's consciousness of belonging to a group is completely extinguished. After the objective criteria by which a group may be identified are dissolved or suspended, the group remains as a body of individuals of relatively homogeneous occupational standing, social status and position, possessing similar origins, a common past, and shared historical traditions. Moreover, assimilation itself, as a series of life situations calling for a response, can create a community of shared personal experiences, which, with the help of allusions, can sustain an exceptionally strong cohesiveness.

Members of an assimilating group labour under an enormous psychological burden; they must continuously define and redefine their selves and must develop ever newer constructs, to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Its almost natural concomitant is an "identity crisis", which either stabilises or resolves itself in some way. Under more fortunate conditions, it arrives at some sort of *polyidentity*, which allows the co-existence of several different social frames of reference.

The prospect of stabilising an identity crisis is especially great (in the historical case of Jews, for example) if conflicting expectations become difficult for the group. On the one hand, Hungarian Jews were under strong pressure to assimilate — the condition for being accepted into the "body of the Hungarian nation". The leaders of the Jewish community generally insisted on this as well. On the other hand, the fundamental experience has been that assimilation does not satiate the "appetite" of increasingly hysterical political and cultural antisemitism. It only seems to stimulate it further, since, from the racist perspective, it is completely irrelevant as to where one stands in the assimilation process.

Bibó talks about "Jews in the middle of the road between self-awareness and assimilation", about "the state of transitional hovering between assimilation and affiliation with the original community". In the case of Hungarian Jewry, it became a more permanent or lasting state, which broke the resistance and the members of the Jewish community, abandoning them and rendering them vulnerable to the annihilation plans of Hungarian and German fascism.

NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

After 1945, a significant minority of survivors gave up their assimilation strategy and assumed a Jewish national or ethnic consciousness. Many emigrated. Most survivors, however, chose to continue their lives in Hungary in a new society promising to break radically with its antisemitic past. They tried to continue the tradition of assimilation, but in a very different social and political setting. Functions and positions in the new power structure were opened to them but, in exchange, they had to give up their *public* Jewish identity as well as their *private* identities. Many of them adopted, instead, the elements of a universal identity, as required by the Marxist ideology of that age.

Many of our subjects came from this type of family. One interviewee asserted: "We were Communist, not Jewish." But this identity model lost its strength, without, however, successfully clarifying their relations to the lost community (Jewry) or to the assimilating dominant environment. They had to elaborate models of personal identity in this intermediate state.

We found two basic types of identity model: *positive* and

negative models. The "positive" model attempts to give meaning to the experience of belonging simultaneously to two or more communities. One interviewee said: "I am a person assimilated to the Hungarian community, but, at the same time, I have a Jewish consciousness." This indicates *integration* based on *polyidentity* as an alternative to enforced assimilation. Its positive elements are: interest in and recognition of Jewish history, traditions, culture, religious holidays, customs and rituals. In most cases, it does not mean that the respondents believe in and/or practise the Jewish religion, but they acknowledge it as part of a Jewish cultural identity, distinct from, though interconnected with, other cultural identities such as Hungarian or Central European.

The "negative" identity model is defined in terms of what *one is not*. It is a permanent identity crisis transformed and fixed into an identity model. It is a special case of *marginal* identity. The "negative" identity model is associated with psychological insecurity, fears and anxieties concerning antisemitism and possible future persecutions of Jews. For these people, to be Jewish means a vague feeling of being different. Respondents often described Jews as being more emotional, family-loving, more intelligent, possessing greater self-irony and drinking less alcohol. Most of their close friends and partners are Jewish, without consciously aspiring for or having sought out only Jewish contacts.

UNIFIED BY TRAUMA

The single most important factor in Hungarian Jewish identity, however, is the memory of the Holocaust and an awareness of their parents' sufferings. One of the respondents said:

"Among surviving Jews, there is a kind of... disunified... but unconscious sympathy towards the person who — if not himself, then his parents — suffered through the same thing. It is not possible not to notice, if, when you are speaking with him, his shirt sleeve slides up and reveals a number tattooed on his arm. Among a person's close or distant acquaintances, it is certain that someone fell victim... but even if everyone in the entire family survived the catastrophe, then that too caused terrible damage. Of course, this... is a kind of unifying force."

Recently, Hungarian psychoanalysts have begun to conduct clinical studies on the traumatisation effects to be found among Holocaust survivors and their descendants. In some particularly revealing case studies, Dr Teréz Virág demonstrated the process of an unconscious transmittance of the trauma from parents to children and from children to the grandchildren. Our investigation though attempts to go beyond individual case histories to explore the commonly shared, relevant social experiences acquired by the "second generation" growing up in postwar Hungary. We found that the consequences of the Holocaust do not necessarily appear as pathological symptoms, but they do affect the personal and social identity of the "second generation", as do also the trauma of silence and their later experiences of Jewishness.

For most Hungarian Jews — as reflected in our interviews — the basis of their belongingness to the Jewish group is a system of *allusions* formed through a commonly-shared experience referring to the parents' sufferings, to their own anxieties and fears of the possibility of being persecuted, and to the vague feeling of a common fate.

"In our eighth-grade textbook at school... there was a total of 15 lines... concerning the Hungarian Jewish question. My God, is that all that the lives of 600,000 people are worth to Hungary?" These are the words of one of our respondents. It can only be hoped that future history books will devote more than a mere 15 lines to this psychologically, socially, and morally important issue.

UP AGAINST THE WALL

Their status and future uncertain, Palestinians in West Berlin live in hostile and restricted conditions, says Dima Ahmad

It is ironic that in the last decade Palestinians have become a social and economic "burden" on the Federal Republic of Germany. West Berlin, part of Hitler's capital, takes the lion's share of the "problem" as around 15,000 Palestinians have made the city their temporary home.

It is also ironic that it was the Second World War which created the possibility for unwanted groups from non-Christian, non-white backgrounds to enter the city. As no formal immigration controls exist in West Berlin, it has been possible for thousands of Palestinians and others to arrive in the city, where the only legal means of regularising residence is through application for political asylum. In October 1986, a deal struck between the two Germanies removed the possibility of asylum seekers entering the FRG through East Berlin.

At the end of 1987 the West Berlin authorities tried to deal with the particular legal "problem" posed by Palestinians. Individuals who fitted a number of specific criteria were given residence permits and thus rights which had been denied to them for many years, including the rights to work, to study and to move freely. Although some benefitted from this change in status, almost none were recognised as persecuted political refugees so they could not set a legal precedent which would benefit potential new arrivals.

Large scale Palestinian migration started in the mid-1970s, when the survivors of the Tel el Za'atar camp massacre arrived in the FRG. Others followed, generally at times of danger and particularly following the Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982 and the massacres in Sabra, Chatila and Nabatiyyeh. Although the overwhelming majority are refugees from the camps in Lebanon, a few came from other areas of the Palestinian diaspora, including some carrying Egyptian-issued travel documents

for Palestinian refugees, generally from the Gaza strip.

As the economic recession of the mid 1970s brought the beginnings of unemployment and an increase in xenophobia, asylum seekers were seen as an economic and cultural threat. Asylum policies were thus formulated to deter refugees from the so-called Third World, and as von Neiding, Director of the Federal Agency for the Recognition of Refugees (quoted in UNHCR report 1983: 6) said: "The FRG is a white society, its asylum policies are primarily oriented towards ethnic Germans and other European countries."

Non-European asylum seekers were unwelcome, and the policies and procedures of asylum were formulated to reinforce this policy. Berlin's former Minister of Interior, for example, said "... we have to safeguard the identity of our country ... oppose ourselves to a large foreign influx..." (*Landespressedienst*, 8 April 1982). Other officials and well known personalities expressed in the *Heidelberg Manifest* their "... great concern (about) the corruption of the German people due to the influx of millions of foreigners ... the denaturation of our language, culture and spiritual patrimony ... ethnic catastrophes which strike multinational societies" (17 June 1981).

Political asylum in the FRG is a long and complicated process which can take four or five years, culminating in either recognition or deportation. Throughout the process of applying for asylum, restrictive procedures regulate all aspects and act as a deterrent. Restrictions range from curbs on further and technical education to the learning of the German language and the possibility of working. In many cases restrictions have contradicted the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and the 1950 Fundamentals of Freedom.

Since 1978 asylum seekers have been distributed on arrival all over the FRG, sometimes splitting families. Like all asylum seekers, those allocated to Berlin were legally confined to the walls of the city; unauthorised visits to other areas were severely prohibited and punishable with a fine or imprisonment.

In addition to restrictions on movement, the 1982 Law on the Procedure of Asylum restricted the housing of asylum seekers to special areas of collective residence, called *Heims*. Restrictions of asylum seekers to residence in *Heims* have recently become more lax. Today the law stipulates that individuals are to stay in *Heims* for up to two and a half years, after which they can live in a private home and this is paid for if the residence fulfils certain requirements.

Heims have been established in former military barracks, abandoned hospitals, schools, hotels and other buildings. Some are infamous, like *Heim al Fahem* or the *Heim* of the coal as Arabs call it, which has a sinister history: it is one of those which were used during the Third Reich as detention centres and SS offices.

Asylum seekers in *Heims* are usually under enormous social and psychological pressure. Families have to live within a very restricted space; toilets, bathrooms and kitchens are shared. No privacy exists in these *Heims*, and adults often do not have more than 5-6 sq metres of private space. Many of the *Heims* are quite isolated from any contact with the outside world.

Living conditions in these *Heims* have been heavily criticised over the last few years. A leaked internal UNHCR report talked of bad sanitary conditions, unhealthy and offensive food and the "inhuman conditions in which they (asylum seekers) are forced to live" (1983: 4). *Heim al Fahem*, for example, got its name from the mounds of coal dust stored

in its vicinity. Although doctors have reported respiratory problems, especially among children, it still is "home" for many.

Certain improvements have been made to living conditions of asylum seekers in *Heims*. More effort has been made in the last couple of years not to serve pork to Muslims and to improve the quality of the diet — to include more fresh food, for instance. Conditions in these collective premises remain very difficult. Educationalists, for example, have often noted the change in children's performance at school when they move out. Many Palestinians have been able to get out of these collective premises in recent years, and live in privately rented houses. Yet, despite the liberalisation of the law, a number of factors, including racism and shortages of cheap housing, still make life difficult.

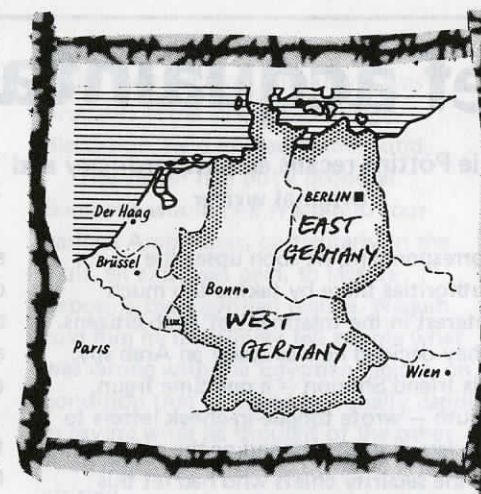
In 1980, asylum seekers lost the right to work. All their needs were to be met by aid from the government, given, whenever possible, in the form of food rations. Labour laws now stipulate that asylum seekers are not to work for the first five years of their asylum (one year for East Europeans) and that employment after that is subject to regulations which make it almost impossible. All the needs of the asylum seekers are thus met by the relevant authorities.

Benefits are generally given in two forms: asylum seekers living in collective premises get almost all the aid in food rations, plus a very small quantity of cash. The monthly sum (DM70 for the head of household and DM50 for other adults) is to cover all non-food expenses (including lawyers) and additional food. This works out to a daily cash allocation of little over DM1.5 — less than the minimum public transport fare.

Asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers living in private homes now get all their aid in cash. Social help, called "help for survival", in Berlin is 22% less than the normal social benefits. Although this discrimination was made illegal by the Federal authorities in 1985, Berlin has retained its "privilege" to discriminate on the grounds that "asylum seekers have less needs than Germans".

The decision to reject or recognise political refugees has, from the start, been a question of political rather than humanitarian considerations. Most asylum seekers who have arrived since the mid 1970s came from the so-called Third World, and they never really stood a chance of recognition.

Palestinians, like many others, were declared to be "not politically persecuted". In 1986, when the crisis in the Palestinian refugee camps was escalating,



Lebanon was described by a Berlin official responsible for asylum seekers as: "A country like any other in the Mediterranean" (September 1986). A number of deportations to Lebanon took place, ending, in some cases, in the death of the deportee soon after arrival. The deportation of Palestinians, however, was often hindered by a number of factors, including the closure of the Beirut airport and some popular protest headed by the West Berlin Protestant Church.

If an expulsion order was made but immediate deportation was impossible, Palestinians were given "Tolerance Permits". These did not confer a right of residence, but were temporary residence permits pending deportation. Although immediate expulsion was delayed, they lived under the shadow of deportation to an insecure fate in Lebanon from a country where many had spent more than 10 years.

As the numbers of Palestinians on Tolerance Permits increased to include the majority of the community, several factors induced the West Berlin authorities to regularise the status of some, but in such a way as not to constitute a legal precedent. A new law was introduced in October 1987, but it did not include all Palestinians in the city. It benefitted married couples with children and others who arrived in West Berlin before January 1981, but it excluded parents of juveniles who had committed several offences and criminals (defined as persons with 90 days' non-successive imprisonment or the equivalent fine). Many "criminals'" offences consisted of dodging transport fares.

Behind every case of asylum lies a story of the Palestinian exile. In Berlin they tell the story of the refugee camps in Lebanon — often a tale of destruction. Most Berlin Palestinian homes have on their walls the pictures of at least one, often many, members of the family killed in one of the massacres: Tel el Za'atar, Sabra, Chatila, Nabatiyyeh and many others.

Radwan Ahmad is a Palestinian who has never been to Lebanon nor seen a massacre. He left Gaza in the early 1960s and sought employment in Libya. Like all Palestinians in the Gaza strip, he carried an Egyptian-issued Travel Document. His case differs from most Palestinians in West Berlin in that his asylum is not linked to a case of personal tragedy. Nevertheless, Radwan's experience remains a "wonderful" example of both the state of the asylum laws and the national status of Palestinians.

After working for many years in a sandwich bar, Radwan lost his work-and-residence-permit in Libya. Like all Palestinians from the Gaza strip, his Egyptian Travel Document does not give him the right to enter Egypt or anywhere else without a visa, so he remained "in orbit": travelling and being rejected by one immigration control after another, until someone suggested the possibility of asylum in the FRG.

Like all other asylum seekers, his application was rejected on the grounds that he is not politically persecuted. Like all other rejected Palestinians, he was given a "Tolerance Permit". This was not given pending the situation in Lebanon, but, as he is not the legal responsibility of any country, his deportation was delayed until a country could be found to which he could be deported.

Radwan has been waiting four years for his deportation. He has been sent by the Federal authorities to a number of countries, including Egypt, but all have turned him down and sent him back to the FRG where he was imprisoned for over eight months as his demand for political asylum was rejected. But, as he arrived on 26 January 1981, he is not eligible for the change in status offered by the new law.

Although it is quite clear that no country will "claim" Radwan, like all Palestinians in the FRG he is *not* considered stateless. He, like the rest, is of *undeclared* or unsettled nationality or citizenship. The change was introduced by the Ministry of Interior, probably as a direct result of the September 1954 Convention relating to the status of stateless persons.

So Radwan, who is not stateless, still awaits a place to be deported to. His is not an isolated case. Although the legal status of many refugees has improved the daily living conditions of a large section of Palestinians, many still await a decision about their fate. They hope that the law applied on 1 October will be applied throughout the FRG this year. But until it includes all, many Palestinians will continue to be denied rights and to await deportation to nowhere. □

A brief acquaintance

Charlie Pottins recalls an extraordinary and original writer

We used to meet for a lunchtime pint at the Feathers, in Marylebone, sitting outside at a table on the quiet street. It was in the summer of 1968, and our conversation must have touched on the hopes and questions raised in Paris that year, and events in Warsaw and Prague.

Our main topic was inevitably the Middle East, however; the relationship between Arab and Jew; the Israel-Palestine conflict. He was interested in what to make of Jewish political life; I was keen for his insights into the social realities and aspirations of the Arab world. We were a couple of dreamers who thought we could do something.

In 1967 the Israeli forces had defeated the Arab states and conquered the whole of Palestine, in doing so laying bare the basic problem beneath the posturings of statesmen. The Palestinians were staying put and fighting back. No longer submerged by the Arab regimes, they were making their own voice heard.

I had met some Israeli left-wingers Matzpen supporters, in London, and joined them on a picket at the Israeli embassy demanding withdrawal from the occupied territories. They introduced me to Waguih Ghali.

An Israeli cartoonist and humourist, Shimon Tzabar, was planning to hit at the chauvinists and provoke some thinking by launching a little magazine in London which would combine revealing snippets from the Israeli Hebrew press with cartoons and satire. Ridiculing the new boasts of "Greater Israel", it was to be called *Israel Imperial News*. Still the satirical 'sixties.

Waguih, also a humourist, and no mean writer, had been enlisted as his collaborator.

Waguih was an Egyptian whose feeling for his people had led to his being thrown out of his country and deprived of nationality. He had been with the Revolution but he despised the new officer rulers, and protested against their treatment of Jews and communists. He had only written one book but it was described as one of the best novels about Egypt ever written.

Accepted in Israel as a journalist and

correspondent, he soon upset the authorities there by taking too much interest in the treatment of Arab citizens. They decided he was really an Arab spy. His friend Shimon — a one-time Irgun youth — wrote tongue-in-cheek letters to the Israeli press demanding the resignation of the security chiefs who had let this dangerous "spy" in; but such subtle debunking was to no avail and Waguih was chucked out.

So Waguih had become, like the Palestinians, stateless.

The British government would not grant Waguih a work permit. His education and medical training could not be put to use. From his correspondence with the Home Office, he believed Callaghan was more illiberal than Roy Jenkins. Neither would let him stay.

So this talented and well-educated man, fluent in three or four languages, had been scraping a living here and there; casual labouring in Germany, the odd bit of translation, some clerical work for the British Army pay corps in BAOR, the odd article sold. An English writer and publisher, Diana Athill, taken with his work and charm, let him live at her flat while he was over here.

One day in late summer when I happened to mention a café I used, a lorry-drivers' place in Shepherds Bush, he begged me to enquire from my mate, whose Dad ran it, whether they could take him on as a dishwasher and assistant. In Waguih's novel *Beer in the Snooker Club* (1964), the protagonist Ram quotes a letter from the Home Office:

Dear Sir,
The Under Secretary of State directs me to inform you that your application for an extension of stay in the United Kingdom may not be considered unless proof of adequate means of support is forwarded to him within a week.
Your obedient servant...

He comments: "I have a number of letters from this obedient servant, the last of which is an answer to a private letter I sent him, telling him he was not an obedient servant at all."

The novel tells with the humour that sweetens sadness of Ram's difficulties with his upper-class family the day the

students blew up a police chief when demonstrating, under Farouk. (Ram had been upset because the police had landed a shell through the roof of his aunt's car and she did not know he'd borrowed it.)

He describes the England he'd met: the lady in South Ken who didn't want to let to "coloureds" but whose husband, the Captain, had met "a surprising number of very intelligent Egyptians there at the Gezira Sporting Club." The *Guardian* and *New Statesman*-reading family in West Hampstead; and Vince, who had a go at him over his rich relatives when they were drinking in a pub in Kilburn, accepted his angry retaliation about what British imperialists had done, and became a good mate when he was in trouble.

Against the poverty and corruption of Egypt, Ram talks of the club "where middle-aged people play croquet, the crisp notes in crocodile wallets, elegant members. All the people who were members before the Revolution are still there, he says, but they now have some officer members too.

A true humourist, poking fun at himself, as Ram, trying with his pal Font to knock up a passing imitation of draught Bass in their snooker club back in Egypt, arguing about Gaitskell and Victor Gollancz. His hero is Dr Hamza, a "sincere socialist" who was jailed under Farouk. "I like Dr Hamza; as a matter of fact I'd like to be like him: well-dressed and soberly aristocratic and having been imprisoned for socialist views. I would not like to go to prison, but I'd like to have been."

We had a disagreement once about humour, me and Waguih. It was while the satirical magazine was still just an idea. Having been reconciled to it (I'd wanted something more serious), I suggested as a picture we could use one I'd seen of a certain then well-known Jewish Conservative all dressed up in huntsman's pink, riding to hounds, looking pompous and ridiculous. It had made me laugh.

Waguih said we did not want the slightest trace of antisemitism or anything that might be taken for it. I protested, reminding him that I was Jewish; but of course he was right in a way. They were producing a Middle Eastern, not a Jewish

magazine. And what might be OK for me to laugh at as a Jew could look quite different from where he was.

Looking back, I think identity was a theme running through Waguih's discourse, though I don't recollect him ever using the word. As a good writer, he was observant, not inward-looking. But this Copt who could identify with Egyptian national aspirations, who could not identify with his rich relatives, or quite with a corrupted bourgeois revolution, this man who'd been deprived of his passport, "knew what was in the heart of a stranger".

In *Beer in the Snooker Club*, Ram is asked, when enquiring about a room, whether he's "coloured". "I looked at my hands to see whether I was coloured."

Mistaken identities: at a party he went to with some Jewish friends, he found himself cornered by a bore who enthused for Israel, wouldn't let him get a word in, and kept telling him what horrible people all Arabs were. Eventually, running out of steam, the man asked him: "What part of Israel are you from?" Waguih confessed that he was from Egypt, actually. "Why didn't you tell me?" asked the man indignantly.

In Diana Athill's memoir, *After a Funeral*, she recalls how friends had been talking about a Jewish person going back to Germany on business trips; and "Didi" (read Waguih) had remarked, "He wouldn't do that if he could get into an Egyptian skin from time to time." He told them how, when strangers in a German bar heard he was Egyptian, they'd nudge him and say, "Ah, you will understand that Hitler knew what he was doing."

Although Waguih could always see the comedy of life, he was never flippant. He used to speak with genuine feeling about Egypt, about the poverty of the *fellaheen* and city slum-dwellers, about the conscript soldier torn from his village, sent, underfed and poorly-equipped, into a war of which he knew little. He told me of the old schoolteacher, held in a prison camp and tortured as a communist, who had nevertheless cried when he heard Nasser say he was resigning. He could understand this and convey something of it to me; the way people had seen their own pride and dignity symbolised in that figure, though they deserved better.

One afternoon, I called on Waguih and found him in a really bitter and angry mood. The previous day he'd had a phone call from the airport, someone saying

they'd just flown in from Beirut and could they see him. Thinking it was probably some student wanting a discussion, he'd invited them round.

The visitor had put a proposal. Someone would like Waguih to tour various Arab states, particularly in the Gulf, all expenses paid, to lecture exposing the Egyptian regime. Waguih told him he'd willingly tell people what was wrong with the Egyptian regime, on condition that he could be equally candid in saying what he thought of the other Arab regimes, including those he was visiting.

The stranger was taken aback; he had come with a generous offer, and Waguih was after all in no position to reject well-paid employment. There was then a political discussion in which Waguih became heated, and the visitor impatient. When Waguih started to say something about the Palestinians, the visitor contemptuously declared: "To hell with the Palestinians! What are you worried about them for; they get what they deserve!"

"I wish I'd had a tape recorder," Waguih told me. "If only I'd thought to tape the bastard!" The visitor, it appeared, had come from a big Beirut newspaper group, representing powerful wealthy interests. At that time such cynicism and hatred for the Palestinians was generally masked behind lip-service to their cause.

Waguih had been privileged to catch a glimpse of what was to come at Ain al Rumanah, Tel al Zaatar, Sabra and Chatilla.

That was probably my last political discussion with Waguih Ghali. Earlier that year, I'd applied for a place at Newbattle Abbey, the adult college near Dalkeith in Scotland. (It has now been closed by Malcolm Rifkind.) After an interview, and submitting an essay, I'd heard no more until quite late in September I heard I was accepted.

With little time to apply for a grant, which would be discretionary anyway, I had to make a decision without waiting for the council to reply. Waguih persuaded me that I should not miss the opportunity of further education, that I should take the chance and that he would approach people he knew to raise the money for me if necessary.

I took his advice, packed in my job, and went up to Scotland. As it happened, I was able to write back to him a couple of weeks later, thanking him for his encouragement and telling him that the

council had come through with quite a decent grant after all.

I settled into student life, enjoying my lectures on history and logic, learning to go boozing with my fellow students, getting politically active around the Midlothian coalfield and going hiking in the Scottish hills.

I lost touch with Waguih.

The following summer I was invited to speak at a meeting in Amsterdam organised by the Dutch Palestine Committee. One of my fellow guests was Moshe, a member of the same Israeli circle in London where I'd met my Egyptian friend.

"How's old Waguih getting on?" I asked him casually. He turned and looked at me. "Didn't you know?" It turned out that Waguih had committed suicide in that quiet flat in London on Boxing Day 1968. "Of course, he was a manic-depressive, you know?"

I hadn't known. (I probably didn't know what a manic-depressive was, or how to spot one.) All I'd known, in my shallow way, was a good bloke to have a drink and a discussion with, a bloke who'd been kicked around from one country to another by governments and gone through a rough time, yet could still make jokes about it and show more concern for your troubles, such as they were, than for his own.

Since then, *Beer in the Snooker Club* has been re-published. I've read it again and again, realising, now, the pain behind the humour, and yet still laughing with Waguih. I've also now read Diana Athill's book, *After a Funeral*, about the man she knew: a gambler; an alcoholic; a reckless, selfish, self-destructive sponger; victim and bringer of much sadness.

It can't be my friend Waguih? And yet it was. Diana Athill writes about their relationship with an honesty that is almost as painful to read as it must have been to write. She remarks on his ability to keep distinct categories of friends quite separate. Perhaps that was part of his problem.

She knew Waguih Ghali for five years and they were deeply involved. Mine was only a brief acquaintance. Which of us knew the real Waguih Ghali? We both knew the same person — or different parts of him. □

Beer in the Snooker Club by Waguih Ghali has been re-published by Serpent's Tail (£4.95).

After a Funeral by Diana Athill is published by Jonathan Cape (£9.50).

MORE LETTERS

BOURNE AGAIN

Thank you Francesca Klug for your critique of Jenny Bourne's pamphlet on Jewish feminism. For it helped me to put my finger on what has for so long worried me about the politics of Jewish feminism.

If Jewish feminists identify themselves as radical and progressive, why do they insist on throwing out the whole tradition of marxist analysis and in particular the tool of analysis provided by historical materialism? (Isn't it this Marxism that Francesca objects to in Jenny's approach?) After all, Marxism is a part of our Jewish tradition as well — why not celebrate this?

Francesca also seems to be arguing that Jenny does not have the right to talk about antisemitism and its history because she is not an "expert" on this (presumably Jewish feminists are). But I don't think that Jenny was attempting to approach the subject of antisemitism as an "expert" but rather as an ordinary Jew and as a feminist compelled to speak out. I hope that more of us will find the courage to do the same.

Esther Weil
London SE2

Francesca Klug's reply to Jenny Bourne really set me thinking about whether "discovering" identity can be separate from "discovering" politics, and I think that for committed people the process is inseparable.

In my country, South Africa, in Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Zaire: against Palestinians, the repressive political, economic and military role that the state of Israel plays, in the name of all Jews, acts directly as a catalyst for black people to discover exactly where they stand.

I suspect this is not the identity Francesca Klug meant in her article. As blacks, we see in Israel that even the need for, and idea of, a homeland cannot be achieved merely by culture, ideology or blind obedience. Such things by themselves never have and never will succeed in securing and maintaining the peace and comfort we imagine in our "homeland".

Economic and military might, and the brutality of regimes backed by Israel, mean that for many people in the Third World the threat is not from ideas or culture, but from death.

The challenge to Jews, surely, is to refuse to be accomplices in this new type of genocide, whilst at the same time continuing to educate the world about the particular lesson from their own history.

Pumlani Morrison
London SW8

I hope you will allow us to continue the important debate opened by Jenny Bourne in her pamphlet, *Homelands of the mind: Jewish Feminism and Identity Politics*, and continued by Francesca Klug in *Jewish Socialist* No 12. For Francesca, though she has tried to be open-minded and fair in her critique, has, by her loose language, confused rather than clarified issues. For example, she criticises Jenny for viewing "the quest for political expression as Jews" as a mere indulgence. As far as I can see, Jenny is not against Jewish cultural expression per se, but rejects the idea that the quest for it is political. (In fact she states clearly at the end of her pamphlet that she is against any ethnic demand or culturalism which becomes an end in itself.) Francesca confuses the issue by calling cultural expression, political expression. How is it political, is the question that Jenny asks? Similarly, when Francesca criticises Jenny for being hostile to "all Jewish liberation politics", what does she mean? Many people would answer that the only liberation politics as a people is Zionism (though I hardly believe that this is what Francesca had in mind).

Secondly, because Francesca obviously feels that Jenny has not paid sufficient attention to contemporary antisemitism and antisemitism's recurring nature, she goes over to another extreme and describes the ideology of antisemitism "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" to be "as old as Christendom itself". She thereby lumps together all manifestations of antisemitism. But it was precisely this tendency in Jewish writing and thought that Jenny was inveighing against. I believe she was asking us to understand the specifics of each epoch's antisemitism (or for that matter anti-black racism). For not to do so was to visit an unbearable burden on ourselves of some kind of eternal, immutable hatred — a burden which we could neither lighten nor fight. Incidentally, "values, religion, psychology, culture" (which Francesca feels that Jenny ignores) may not be economic forces but they are still material — and would still need to be analysed in their contexts and their times. For example, antisemitic ideas, symbols, literature, attacks, etc, might have been prevalent at many points in our history but under Nazism antisemitism was not just quantitatively but qualitatively different — it was an ideology.

Francesca believes that the exploration of our identity which included the understanding of the ideological roots of antisemitism helped to widen the struggle against racism and imperialism and that feminists are still fighting in a wider struggle but doing so now as recognisably Jewish feminists. That may be the case. But Jenny was making a wider point about Jewish Feminist struggle within the context of the Left generally. She noted that the centre of gravity of all Western "left" politics had moved from an outward, other-oriented struggle (which also involved a notion of class and of state power) to a self-oriented sectional movement.

Finally, and this is not a point of clarification but a point of protest, if identity is anything surely it is subjective? And none of us has the right to determine how Jewish or how feminist someone else feels they are. Who then is Francesca (a self-avowed believer of Identity Politics) to question Jenny's right to identify herself as a Jewish Feminist?

Anna Pollack
London E8

FRANCESCA KLUG REPLIES

I welcome the opportunity to respond to these criticisms of my review article as a means of continuing to explore the issues Jenny Bourne raised in her article. In the space available I can only comment on what I see as the main points raised. I wish it were the case, as Anna Pollack suggests, that Jenny is not opposed to "Jewish cultural expression per se, but rejects the idea that the quest for it is political". Indeed, if that distinction had been made as succinctly as that anywhere in Jenny's article, I suspect that it may not have aroused the wholesale indignation it did amongst so many Jewish feminists and socialists.

I entirely accept that cultural expression should never be mistaken for political activism. I likewise acknowledge that Jewish feminism has, in part, revolved around the quest for identity. But for Jenny the point is that "there is, in the end, no stable diaspora-based identity for us as Jewish feminists; all roads seem one way or another to lead back to the question of Israel".

Jewish feminists and socialists who oppose that assertion do so not only from a conviction that we have a right to our identity wherever we live, but also from our practice. This plainly demonstrates the continued presence of a non-Israel-focused Jewish identity based on a common cultural experience and, above all, a common understanding and in many cases experience of racist oppression. To many of us the apparently endless attack on, or denial of, this identity from all directions cannot but be understood in the context of that oppression. Even in late 20th century Britain Jew is a boo-

word to so many. And those of us who are not Zionist would be bound to add that the opposition to, or dismissal of, our collective expression as Jews, in particular on the left, contributes to the powerful hold Zionism has on many Jews whose politics is otherwise demonstrably radical or progressive.

This said, I too share the conviction that the point is not to interpret the world but to change it! I also share some of the reservations expressed by Jenny about the development of a culturalism and individualism on the left — but only insofar as this has superseded, rather than complemented, other forms of political struggle. But it is not enough to berate this emergence; the forces which gave rise to it have to be faced and understood. Much has been written and debated about this elsewhere so I will very briefly comment on the radical Jewish experience in this context.

The fact that the left or the feminist movement were not entirely comfortable places for many Jews with a strong sense of their own history was clearly a major force in the development of radical Jewish groups. In this process many feminist or socialist Jews came to realise that whilst supporting struggles which were unquestionably far more immediate and pressing than their own, they had yet to develop an adequate understanding of, and therefore resistance to, their own oppression (an example of "discovering" politics through identity in the way I understand Pumlan Morrison to mean). I repeat what I said in my article: there is no reason, and, I believe, no evidence, to suggest that in the process of developing a keener understanding of the way our oppression

works we have contributed any less to wider political struggles either as individuals or groups.

In my view the fact that some individual Jewish feminists have not publicly spoken out against the racism of the Israeli state is not a product of the Jewish feminist movement. This small movement has neither contributed towards the development of Zionism nor has it substituted for other political involvement. Its measure stands and falls in its role as a safe place for Jewish women. It is simply a vehicle for exploring both Jewish identity and the nature of antisemitism.

Why not turn to Marxism, Esther Weil asks? It seems to me that it is entirely possible to embrace a Marxist analysis of the forces of capitalism and imperialism, as many socialist Jews do, whilst frankly acknowledging that Marxism offers no more than the crudest understanding of the nature of antisemitism. (Indeed, I gave an example in my article to suggest that specific Marxist analyses of antisemitism themselves resort to classic anti-Jewish stereotypes.)

Of course it is the case that antisemitism has taken different forms depending on historical and economic circumstances. I would entirely agree with Anna Pollack that it is not an immutable fact of life for all time. But the stark reality is that antisemitism has been a popular and lethal force, time and time again. It may well be too simplistic to trace its roots to Christianity. But the truth is that the left has yet to embrace a theory of antisemitism which accounts for its power and persistence. Enter the Jewish Feminist and Socialist groups.

FRANCESCA KLUG

Beyond the fragments of the fragments

Labour: A tale of two parties by Hilary Wainwright (The Hogarth Press £5.95)

After practice comes theory, after the lived experience, invariably, the book. For many British socialists the experience of the Greater London Council from 1981 to 1986 marked the birth and the coming to maturity of a "different" sort of Labour municipal politics — one which looked outwards instead of inwards, which was enabling and empowering, which went to people as they were; Black, female, anti-nuclear, lesbian and gay, and did not try to pretend that they were all

part of a grey, uniform, white, male, heterosexual, working class mass.

Hilary Wainwright's own personal odyssey must qualify her for the role of chronicler to this process. Co-author of *Beyond the Fragments*, which put many of us in touch with what the women's movement had to offer the traditional Left, she went on to work for the GLC Popular Planning Unit. This worked with groups — tenants, mothers, bus workers — to enable them to create conditions where they could have more control over their lives and to give them a vision of what life could be.

Could all this have come out of the Labour Party, the grey be-suited junior partner of British imperialism, which so many of those who think like Hilary Wainwright have grown up fighting in and against? It could and it did, and how it happened is the theme of the book.

Wainwright goes up and down the country talking to participants in this process, not only in London but also in Sheffield, Manchester and Glasgow. She finds them in touch with an older "enabling" tradition of municipal socialism — for instance Annie Davidson, a Glasgow socialist, remembers the Socialist Music

and Drama festival in that city before socialism became "just voting Labour". In the vanguard have been the Women's and Black sections. She scorns the taunts against these as "unrepresentative" and shows, for instance, how the Black sections have succeeded in mobilising a whole layer of Black protest and activism. (Incidentally, she is much too kind to Poale Zion, calling it the "Jewish Labour Party", which until very recently it has never claimed to be.)

We await Wainwright's conclusions eagerly. Will she have succeeded in suggesting what the "next step" is for us municipal socialists, buoyed and enthused by the excitement of the GLC experience but demobilised and dismayed by the lacklustre quality of leadership we get from the Labour Party nationally?

Wainwright poses the dilemma for the Left concisely. How can it develop policies which can be seen as radical and appealing, whilst at the same time packaging them in a way that will bring electoral success? A

question which, following the defeats of 1983 and 1987, all socialists must be asking themselves. Unfortunately, Wainwright's answer seems to be that socialists should talk about democratic reform of the existing undemocratic institutions — the City, Whitehall, the judiciary. This is all very well as far as it goes, but it leaves you with a sense of "this is where we came in". Certainly reforms to our archaic institutions are needed but this is a platform which can unite all, including radical liberals and even the odd wet Tory. Where is the socialism?

In the final analysis this book doesn't provide the answer. One possible stab at a way forward may be to re-examine the GLC's "ethnic minorities" experience. The GLC Anti-Racist Year 1984, for example, actually succeeded in mobilising an alliance that went beyond the watchword "anti-racism" to embrace a wide alliance of cultural and national minorities. The current situation in Scotland seems particularly hopeful for socialists, and

this must have something to do with the Scots seeing themselves as a nation. There is room for serious dialogue between all — Scots, Welsh, Irish, Black Asian and Afro-Caribbean and Jewish — over what we have in common. If Black Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities increasingly come to see themselves as non-territorial national-cultural minorities (scrapping the meaningless term "ethnic"), with problems that can be discussed with territorial minorities such as the Scots and the Welsh; if we look seriously at the question of English regional government; if we look at issues from a European perspective, seeing them from a Belgian or Dutch viewpoint, for instance, somewhere in there may lie the answer for serious socialists. These are all questions to which the Chesterfield process, of which Wainwright is herself a leading spirit, could profitably address itself.

MICHAEL HEISER

REFUGEES NO THANKS

From the Jews to the Tamils, by Steve Cohen, Manchester Law Centre, £2



Britain's mistreatment of refugees

Steve Cohen's new pamphlet *From the Jews to the Tamils* compares British treatment of Jewish immigration, in the first half of this century, with the treatment of Tamil refugees today. One of his purposes is to destroy the popular myth that Britain is, or ever has been in the 20th century, a liberal haven for asylum seekers. The comparison is an interesting one, and Cohen brings to light important historical material which has been conveniently forgotten.

Today the UK's "obligation" to give asylum to refugees derives from being a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees. This defines a refugee as a person who has a "well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" in their country of origin.

The Convention is incorporated into UK domestic law by the Immigration Rules. In recent years refugees have found it increasingly difficult to persuade the Home Office that the persecution they fear is such as to warrant the granting of asylum. A recent House of Lords decision has effectively endorsed the Home Office's sceptical approach.

In the case of *Sivakumaran* (which concerned some of the 64 Tamils who arrived from Sri Lanka and staged a strip-protest on the tarmac at Heathrow) the House of Lords ruled that the question of

whether a person's fear of persecution is well founded is a purely objective one, which the Home Office must judge. The Home Office is entitled to ignore both the fact of the asylum seeker's fear and the reasons he or she gives for it, substituting its own view of the political situation in the country in question.

Steve Cohen shows that a very similar approach was taken by the Home Office to East European Jews fleeing from pogroms, who sought asylum under the Aliens Act of 1905. That act banned the entry of "undesirable immigrants" but purported to make an exception for refugees.

He quotes cases from the *Jewish Chronicle* of 1907: "A Roumanian named Simcowitz, a shoemaker by trade, arrived in this country. He told the Appeal Board that he had come to England because there was little peace for Jews in Roumania. How true his plea was, let the frequent antisemitic outbursts in Roumania last year and the heavy immigration of ruined Hebrews through London at the present moment, testify. . . But in spite of this the alien, obviously a refugee from persecution, was rejected."

During both world wars many

immigrants were interned. Steve Cohen draws a parallel between this and current immigration detention, in particular that of Tamil asylum seekers on the Earl William prison ship. He cites cases where the despair at being detained has led people to suicide.

During the First World War about 29,000 "enemy aliens" were interned. Most were people of German origin, among them German Jews. Some, like my grandfather, had been naturalised as British 10 years before war broke out, but this made no difference to the Home Office. They were held on liners moored in the Thames Estuary, and in camps on the Isle of Man. In 1914 five internees, protesting at the appalling conditions, were shot dead by military guards. Steve Cohen compares this to the hunger strike staged by the Tamils on the Earl William.

In the Second World War "enemy aliens" (citizens of Germany, Austria and Italy) were put into three categories according to perceived threat. Those in Category A were interned from September 1939. While most were Nazi sympathisers this group also included left-wing activists and International Brigaders.

In May 1940, when Holland and Belgium fell, the majority of people in categories B and C were also interned. In one camp 82% of internees were Jewish and 30% had been in Nazi concentration camps before escaping to Britain. They were interned alongside Nazis and members of the British Union of Fascists.

Steve Cohen comments: "The drive

for internment came very much from popular antisemitism and anti-communism with Jews, socialists, spies and aliens being seen as indistinguishable and all being seen as subversives."

Steve Cohen describes Jewish and labour movement opposition to internment, with particular reference to Manchester, and goes on to discuss the Sanctuary Movement in support of deportees, which began in Britain in 1983. The pamphlet ends on the hopeful note of the massive campaign in support of Viraj Mendis, who has now been in sanctuary in a Manchester church for 16 months.

This pamphlet makes fascinating reading, but Steve Cohen fails to make out the case against the government's current treatment of refugees as forcefully as he could. He begins effectively enough by dismantling the myth that Britain in

this century has been a haven for refugees. But he loses the force of his argument when he widens the debate, saying in effect that no distinction can be made between political and economic refugees and that anyone who wants to settle in the UK for economic reasons should be allowed to do so.

Whether or not one agrees with the "no immigration controls" position (and it is a much more complex issue than Steve Cohen presents it as being) there is no need to argue it when seeking to expose the UK's historic and present approach to refugees. To do so merely serves to confuse the issue, and no doubt to alienate those who might otherwise be shocked at the way the government is reneging on its existing legal obligations to refugees.

The fact is that if the Home Office were to follow the UN Convention in both its spirit and its letter they would

have to grant asylum to thousands more people than they do at present. They would not, for example, be able to dismiss Tamils as "economic" refugees as Steve Cohen criticises Douglas Hurd for doing.

Although the Convention defines "persecution" and the reasons for it in narrower terms than some of us would like, recent British interpretations of the Convention have narrowed down those definitions a whole lot further.

The courts, responding to political pressure, have now rendered the Convention meaningless, allowing the government to evade the obligation it undertook by signing it. And, as the pamphlet makes clear, that is exactly the same approach as the government took to the provision in the Aliens Act 1905 which purportedly allowed entry to political and religious refugees.

TERESA THORNHILL

Poles

Winter in the Morning, Pavanne £3.75, and A Dream of Belonging, Virago £4.95, by Janina Bauman

In these two books Janina Bauman tells the story of her life and that of her family in a tale spanning 30 years and three countries: Poland, Israel and, finally, England.

Born in Warsaw, the eldest daughter of a family of well-to-do secular Jews, Janina Bauman's secure, comfortable world ended in 1940. At 13, with her mother and younger sister, she became one of the nearly half a million Jews sealed into the Warsaw ghetto by the Nazis. She and her family were among the few survivors. Living on their wits and money saved from before the war and with help from an uncle in the despised Jewish police, they survived the ghetto for three years, escaping just after the second wave of deportations to Treblinka. They spent the remainder of the war hidden by gentiles.

The book is an inspiring account of the struggle to maintain some sense of normality under the most appalling circumstances and is written with objectivity and even humour. I was left with a feeling of tremendous admiration for the human spirit which can keep on going in such conditions and emerge not with despair, but with a sense of hope, identity and political purpose. Inevitably, you ask yourself "what would I do in this situation?". Janina Bauman's father provided the answer in a time when to be identified as a Jew was literally a matter of life and death: "Be what you are, never pretend to be somebody else. Be Jewish if you were born a Jew, even if you don't quite understand what it means... don't deny your identity."



Janina Bauman (right) with her sister Sophie just after the War

Using a more impressionistic style, the second book skips from Janina Bauman's present life in England to Poland between 1945 and 1968. She documents vividly the feeling of being an unwanted stranger in Poland in the years immediately after the war. "The Nazis were gone, the pattern was shattered. The Poles and the Jewish wrecks were left on their own in their devastated country. The terror was over but the memory remained. It was hard for the Poles... to see Jewish survivors as just their compatriots. They reminded them of something they would rather have forgotten." This feeling of isolation led her to espouse Zionism and join a Jewish youth group working clandestinely

apart

to go to Palestine. Chance and illness prevented her emigration and she plunged into work and study. Gradually, her political position changed and she became a committed Marxist. Eventually, following the example of her husband, Zygmunt Bauman, she joined the communist party. She describes in detail her attempts in juggling her commitments as a student, wife, mother and political activist in a society struggling to establish itself after the devastation left by the war. Gradually, she became politically disillusioned but remained committed to the communist party until the 1967 six day war precipitated a new wave of Polish antisemitism hiding behind a thinly disguised anti-Zionism.

In 1968, Janina Bauman and her family relinquished their Polish citizenship and left in the only way open to them: by going to Israel. Disappointingly, the book does not touch at all on her time in Israel and only hints obscurely at her reasons for leaving. The story ends in England where, although finally settled, Janina Bauman still feels a stranger.

At one point in the second book she says, "I think I've wasted a good deal of my life toiling at things that were evasive, ambiguous — maybe harmful sometimes — and producing nothing." I disagree with her; to me the books were an inspiration, showing a courageous, imperfect, all too human woman doing the best she could under often impossible circumstances. I would like to think that I could survive as well.

MARIAN SHAPIRO

Bitter experience

Salt River by Yana Stajno, directed by Julia Pascal

The violence and fear underpinning white power in South Africa don't change, but the way that power is expressed (through money, patronage or the barrel of a gun) depends on historical and political events and which "racial" group you belong to. It also depends on whether you are male or female.

Salt River picks up all these threads and looks at four women whose relationships with each other are defined by both apartheid and patriarchy. Often painfully, and at times humorously, the play describes the pecking order in a Jewish household in Cape Town. Rose, the Black maid whose husband has been sent to live in the Transkei, is at the bottom. Above her is Soraya, a Moslem whose private tragedy is to be childless and whose husband is planning to take a second wife. Next is Elizabeth, the "coloured" maid who earns more than the others, enough to save for her retirement. Ruling over them all is Estelle, the Jewish employer.

Her days are filled with giving to charity (the Jewish National Fund, Soweto), aerobics, shopping and ordering the servants about while using them as sound-insulating boards for her personal problems.

Men appear only in the dialogue. Estelle's husband had been "a good man" apart from his "uncontrollable sexual appetite" which, it transpires, was serviced by Rose. He summoned her to his room regularly, saying: "Play with my little man", and asking again and again, "Is it as big as an African's?"

Elizabeth, now middle-aged, was, as a young woman, raped by the son of the household in which she worked, and then had a backstreet abortion. Now she announces her plan to marry a bible teacher called Jan Retief who's "coloured way, way back".

The only man who sounds in the slightest bit appealing is Estelle's father, a refugee from eastern Europe who taught her all about the poverty and pogroms he left behind. But there's an incomprehensible gap between her periodic references to this history of oppression and her behaviour as a powerful white woman. Ultimately, all four women are drawn equally as victims of both men and of apartheid, their mutual oppression forging a sisterhood between them. The play implies that just as the Black and "coloured" women are enslaved, so is

Estelle enslaved, her life hedged in by meaningless imperatives to be glamorous and to display her wealth. She is also confined by guilt about her privilege which she expresses through the recurrent references to Jewish suffering in Europe.

Salt River is an engaging and moving play, but in the end it is frustrating because it does not face up to the painful paradox that people who are oppressed and exploited can at the same time reap the benefits of oppressing and exploiting others. Ultimately, however unhappy she may be, Estelle has choices which are bought at the expense of the human rights of the other three. They are not sisters unless they choose to struggle alongside one another, which they do not, during the course of the play.

A pecking order is not simply a scheme into which people fit or are put; it is a power structure constructed to enable some people to use others as a resource for their own benefit. It is neither natural nor stable but must be maintained by coercion, collaboration and co-option. Smashing apartheid means facing up honestly to who is coercing, who collaborating and who being co-opted. It means facing up to the fact that despite their history, Jews — even Jewish women — can perpetuate oppression. If they do they must be held as responsible as anyone else.

JULIA BARD

Promoting our values

This Island's Mine by Philip Osment
Gay Sweatshop, Drill Hall Arts Centre, London

Last March saw the final vote in the House of Lords on the Local Government Bill containing the now infamous Clause 28 which will outlaw the "promotion" of homosexuality and lesbianism by local authorities. Coincidentally, it also saw Gay Sweatshop's production of *This Island's Mine* at the Drill Hall in London, due to return from 21 June to 9 July.

The play takes its title from one of Caliban's speeches in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It borrows not only the themes of exile and belonging but also a Shakespearean comic series of misunderstandings and coincidences to look at issues of class, race, imperialism, sexuality and age. Drawing on storytelling techniques and using music, seven actors play 15 parts (including a cat). The political content of

the play emerges through the acutely observed details of the personal lives of ordinary people. Martin, a gay solicitor, and Miss Rosenblum, his elderly Jewish landlady, provide a temporary home in London for Martin's young nephew, Luke. Luke has run away from his Northern working class family in order to come to terms with his homosexuality. By chance, their lives interconnect with the lives of the other characters in a pattern of parallels.

Miss Rosenblum draws specific analogies between her life in Vienna in the 1930s and the rising tide of reaction in contemporary Britain, analogies which are echoed by the racism and sexism the black characters experience. In this way the play explores the significance of the past for the present and future. The diverse threads of the plot come together when Martin helps Selwyn, a gay black actor, when he is harassed by the police. In return, Selwyn gives him tickets to the production of *The Tempest* in which he is playing Caliban. Martin plans to take Miss Rosenblum with him, without either of them knowing that her wartime GI boyfriend, whose offer of marriage and the American dream she had refused, will also

be there. His personal and commercial exploitation of black people symbolises the failure of this dream; what began as passive collusion ends as active oppression for which he refuses to take responsibility.

This is the issue which underpins the play. Although it was written before Clause 28 raised its ugly head, it strikingly delineates the danger we face if we see Clause 28 as an issue affecting only one part of the community. The characters (and actors) come from very different backgrounds; what links them together is the way in which contemporary Britain increasingly marginalises those who are not white, heterosexual, middle class and employed.

As the author, Philip Osment, says in the programme note, "... the play ... celebrates values which will endure long after Clause 28 has been recognised as an aberration foisted on us by small minded legislators whose names and actions have been forgotten." In the light of this sentiment, it is extremely poignant that both Gay Sweatshop and the Drill Hall could be threatened by Clause 28 and the homophobic backlash it represents.

AMANDA ARISS
AND MARIAN SHAPIRO

Landscapes of a lifetime

POETRY

David Bomberg, an exhibition at the Tate Gallery, London

"The strength which gave the cave-dwellers the means to express the spirit of their lives, is in us to express ours." Thus wrote Bomberg in 1953 in a manifesto on how he saw painting.

David Bomberg was born in Birmingham in 1890, the fifth child of Polish-Jewish immigrants. His father was a leather worker. In 1895 the family moved to the East End of London and Bomberg began to study painting with Sickert in evening classes. In 1911 he entered the Slade School of Art with financial support from the Jewish Education Aid Society.

Although as a young man Bomberg was associated with an East End group of left-wing writers and intellectuals, he was never deeply involved in politics.

In 1933 he was briefly a member of the Communist Party. A visit to the USSR in that year left him disillusioned, in particular with Stalinist ideas about art, and he left the party on his return to Britain.

Bomberg identified fairly strongly as a Jew, as is apparent in several of his paintings. He was sceptical about the aims of Zionism, and his visit to Palestine in 1922 (subsidised, ironically, by the Zionists' Palestine Foundation Fund) did not change his position.

The recent exhibition at the Tate began with his early work and spanned right through to the last paintings before Bomberg's death in 1957.

I found his early work uninteresting.

Australian Jewish video

In the Jewish Museum in Melbourne they showed a video:

The History of the Jews in Australia.

Very interesting too.

I didn't know that on the very first fleet of convicts

that went out in 1788

there were eight or nine Jews on board.

One of them was Esther Abrahams

who had nicked some lace.

(A couple of days later

I read in a book

that one of the first bushrangers

was a cattle-thief called

Teddy the Jew-boy.

He was hanged)

So there I was watching the video...

and soon it got into

big Jews,

great Jews,

mighty Jews

governors, judges, generals.

The motivation behind it appears to be cerebral, it lacks sensuality, the paint lacks texture, and one gets no sense that he enjoyed making it. Under the influence of Cubism, and later Vorticism, he reduced the human figure to hard-edged, angular forms often drawn against a grid.

Bomberg's experiences in the trenches during the First World War apparently destroyed his former enthusiasm for the "machine age". After the war he developed a more humanistic interest in the figure and in landscape.

There are some small drawings from his home environment in the early '20s: "Family Group" and "Man and Woman". The figures are stylised, but warm. "Ghetto Theatre" shows members of the audience at the Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel: roughly hewn figures in profile, leaning over the bar of the stalls.

In 1922 Bomberg left London to paint in Palestine. The work he did there is very varied. There is a wonderful moonlight painting of the Judean hills, but many of the Jerusalem cityscapes are tight and constrained. The use of colour is adventurous but unsuccessful.

In 1929 Bomberg made his first trip to Spain, the country where he came into his own as a landscape painter. In the cityscapes of Toledo, he begins to experiment with texture and colour, although he is still too obsessed with the detail rather than the spirit of what he is looking at. But changes are happening: the two views of the Monastery at Wadi Kelt, simple blocks of colour sponged on to brown paper, are beautiful.

I should be proud that a man who sent soldiers "over the top" in the Great War (to end all wars) was Jewish???

And on it went:

contribution to violin playing,

short story writing,

retail clothes trade

one of our boys did it

one of our boys did it

one of our boys did it

Then suddenly

all change

and we weren't talking about Australia

any more.

It was Israel.

There was:

The Beautiful Life on a Kibbutz,

There was:

Dangerous Left-Wing Enemies of Israel

In the early '30s paintings of Ronda in Andalucia, Bomberg finally lets go. They are full of passion and made from the intuition and the eyes working powerfully together. Bomberg's approach becomes simpler, he is more able to get to the essence of his subjects — the upward movement of a cliff, the line of a ridge against the sky, the mood of a storm in the mountains.

Bomberg took this new ability with him on his return to England at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Obligated to work in Britain over the next 10 years, he produced landscapes of Devon and Cornwall, portraits and some extraordinary flower paintings. He also produced a series for a wartime commission, "Bomb store", and began to teach at the Borough Polytechnic, where he was revered by his students.

It was his adventurous use of colour for which Bomberg perhaps is best known. He works with colour almost as if it were clay, using it to build up form. Sometimes it works, sometimes the result is chaos. In many of the canvases on show at the Tate (such as the Church of Chrystostorus, Cyprus) there are areas which work and others that are unformed and troublesome.

When it does work, Bomberg's achievement is very much an expression of the spirit of which he spoke in the manifesto. In the really strong landscapes he seems to have found the connecting thread between his eyes, his emotions and the spirit of the land.

TERESA THORNHILL

and finally:

in a great burst of Jewish Australian

Patriotism,

someone told us

that Jewish Australians

send more money per Jew to Israel

than any other Jews

in the whole wide world.

Music.

Credits.

Lights up.

And we looked at each other feeling so pleased about that contribution to

poor little Israel's terrorist activities, and so nice and safe here in Australia away from those police cells where Aborigines happen to die.

MICHAEL ROSEN

WHERE WE STAND

Socialism has been central to the modern Jewish experience. The struggle for our rights as Jews has been closely allied with the fight of oppressed humanity. Collectively and individually, Jewish women and men have contributed enormously to working class struggles and progressive movements.

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.

JOIN THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP NOW
WRITE TO: MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, JSG, BM 3725 LONDON WC1N 3XX

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There are many strands of Jewish life and experience but only a few voices are heard. This is not because the others have nothing to say but because they lack a place in which to say it. **JEWISH SOCIALIST** gives a voice to radical Jews and is dedicated to reaching the parts of Jewish and socialist life that other publications cannot or will not touch.

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