


JEWISH SOCIALIST

No 16 Spring 1989 £1.20

— The magazine of the Jewish Socialists' Group —



Salman Rushdie—
challenging
religious power

Parents speak
out about
circumcision

Israel's internal
opposition

The post-War
German Left

Racism—where does it begin?

Editorial

This May is the tenth anniversary of the ascent of Margaret Thatcher to the throne of Number 10. Many people, both inside and outside the Jewish community, if asked: "Is Thatcher good for the Jews?", would answer that she is. There is evidence that the majority of the Jewish electorate, at least in areas with a high Jewish population, now votes Conservative. And some, most notably the Chief Rabbi, have appeared to lend spiritual support to the Conservative government at a time when such support has been conspicuously missing from certain quarters of the Church of England.

Anglo-Jewry likes to present an image of itself as a prosperous middle-class community — its members typically owning a family home in the suburbs, two cars and private medical insurance; an image, in other words, of those who have done well out of 10 years of Conservative rule.

But there is another side of the coin. With cuts in state benefits, many Jews are reduced to living in poverty. For considerable numbers, the Thatcherite enterprise dream has brought unemployment and repossession. Jewish welfare agencies and local authorities, both starved of cash, find it hard to offer the services their communities need. Institutions like "Food for the Jewish Poor", with its 19th century ring, are still with us and their services are increasingly in demand.

Since 1979, even many Conservatives in the Jewish community have come to the conclusion that Thatcherism doesn't work. But there are many Jews on the Left who never had such illusions. They have been active in campaigns in defence of local government, of lesbian and gay rights, of women's rights, of trade unions and the National Health Service, all of which are under attack from the current government.

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As some of the so-called leaders of our community claim to offer this government support from within the Jewish tradition, Jewish socialists will point to another tradition just as firmly grounded in Jewish culture and experience — the tradition represented by those who fought injustice in the Russian Empire, and in the countries of mass Jewish immigration, within the socialist, communist and trade union movements and which found expression in mass movements such as the Jewish Workers' Bund. As the Thatcher era enters its second decade, we take heart from our Jewish socialist tradition and look towards a socialist movement that will embrace the similar traditions found in many different minorities and harness them to confront the challenges we are facing together.

The recent Salman Rushdie affair has reminded socialists within minorities of the urgency with which they must stand up to their own religious and communal establishments while fending off racist attacks on their communities as a whole. As Ralph Levinson's article (page 6) shows, the Mullahs, the Rabbis and the high priests of Toryism share a community of interests. Their socialist counterparts within various minorities have a different common interest.

As you will already have noticed *Jewish Socialist* has a new look! We like it — what do you think? We are eager to hear. As part of the new look we are introducing a regular listings column to service the radical Jewish world (see page 31). If you are organising anything that *Jewish Socialist* readers ought to know about, send us details.

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NEWS

Supporting Salman

A statement in support of Salman Rushdie and against religious coercion and racism was issued by the Jewish Socialists' Group, based on a resolution passed at its annual conference on 4-5 March. The full statement reads:

"The Jewish Socialists' Group expresses solidarity with the author Salman Rushdie against the death threat from Ayatollah Khomeini and against attempts to stop the publication of his novel *Satanic Verses*.

We further declare our solidarity with all Iranians, socialists and democrats resisting Islamic reaction and fighting the oppression of women, minorities and the working people of Iran.

We condemn the stand taken by other religious leaders, including the Vatican and the Chief Rabbi of Britain, against the right to publish *Satanic Verses*. We consider it essential to distinguish between the banning of literature which contains controversial ideas and the banning of material which incites racial hatred.

The Jewish Socialists' Group respects and defends freedom of conscience and religious practice, but opposes any attempt by religious organisations to impose their beliefs and their practices by coercion or use state power and laws to maintain religious privilege. The JSG regards Khomeini's regime as but one example of the resurgence of religious intolerance and fanaticism within various religious groups as a major threat to democratic freedoms.

At the same time, we declare firm opposition to those like Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, sections of the right wing media or others who have sought to use the Rushdie affairs to threaten the rights and standing of religious and ethnic minorities in Britain; or who incite chauvinism against Iran. The JSG reaffirms its solidarity with other ethnic and religious minorities in Britain in the fight against discrimination and racism."

Oy vey Shamir

The rift between Israel's leaders and diaspora Jews was widened recently when prominent figures in various Jewish communities turned down a junket to Jerusalem for a "Solidarity with Israel" conference called by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Out of 130 individuals invited from Britain only 50 went.

British Jewry was "represented" by a motley crew of big funders and obedient lap-dogs. A number of those who refused the invitation, like British Medical Association

chief John Marks, Sir Isaiah Berlin, MP Greville Janner, were outspoken in their criticism of the event. Meanwhile, various cultural luminaries signed a collective letter condemning the conference and calling, albeit in guarded terms, on Israel to negotiate directly with the PLO.

Shamir has frequently chastised diaspora Jews for offering their comments and advice to Israel. Now he wonders why they won't come running to pat him on the back!

Unsettling echoes

In early 1989, the Federal Republic of Germany became the latest European state to witness significant electoral successes by *extreme* right wing nationalist parties. In February, the Republicans, a new and largely unknown quantity, gained seats in the West Berlin parliament, and in March the National-Democratic Party of Germany, known by its German initials NPD, had scattered successes in local elections in the state of Hesse, including the Frankfurt city council. The results have prompted alarm about neo-Nazism and brought to mind similar developments 20 years ago, when the NPD won seats in the Baden-Wuerttemberg state assembly and in a few local elections.

The most recent results show that the far right is still in existence, though it could hardly be termed an organised political force. In fact, three different right wing extremist groups hold seats in different parts of the Federal Republic. Before the recent successes of the Republicans and the NPD, another party, the DVU (German People's Union) had narrowly scraped into the state assembly of Bremen at the end of 1987. A nasty fluke, it seemed, occasioned by high local unemployment, but this winter's results may suggest otherwise.

The Federal Republic requires a party to gain at least five per cent of votes to secure representation. The big losers in Hesse and West Berlin seem to have been the Liberals or FDP (Free Democratic Party) who fell short of the five per cent hurdle. On the other hand, the elections brought overall losses for the right, and enabled a coalition government of Social Democrats and Greens to oust the CDU and take over in West Berlin. Change has been swift and visible. Eight of the West Berlin government's 13 ministries are now headed by women, for instance.

Both Berlin and Frankfurt have the largest of West Germany's present-day Jewish communities. Rather extraordinarily, however, one of Frankfurt's Christian Democrat councillors is a Jew, and the Greens are led by another Jew, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, once the Danny le rouge of the 1968 Paris upheavals. Today's comparatively tiny Jewish communities are of negligible political significance and antisemitism has not been prominent in recent local electoral campaigns. West Germany's leading right wing weekly however, the *National-Zeitung*, has close links with both the DVU and the NDP, and is as antisemitic as possible (the formation of a specifically neo-Nazi party and "incitement to racial hatred" are banned by law).

The far right in Germany today is notably factional and regionalist. For instance, the Republicans like NATO; the NPD does not. Rather than stressing visions of "national destiny" such as the Nazis favoured, both the Republicans and the NPD have stuck to local issues. They concentrate on the threat to economic prosperity perceived from three quarters: foreign workers, asylum seekers, and "ethnic German settlers". This last group are members of German minorities in eastern Europe who can enter as immigrants and automatically assume West German citizenship. The hostility towards them in particular indicates that calculated greed counts for more nowadays than the glorification of German racial unity previously promoted by right wing nationalists.

DYBBUK'S DIARY

HEN SHMALTZ
MIT KORN

Coming out of British Friends of Peace Now's Hampstead meeting (with the PLO), I hear some people declaring Arnold Wesker had "stolen the show". Shows how far they've still to go. It was certainly a performance. Mind you, Arnold has moved some. Back at the time of the Lebanon war, when the ex-peace marching playwright was managing a low profile, he rejected calls for talks with the PLO, saying it wasn't the "best leadership" the Palestinians could have.

Arafat and others possessed "neither intelli-

gence nor imagination", Wesker accused. The Palestinian leaders had brought nothing but "death and disaster". (This was after Sabra and Shatilla, I see from my diary). Arnie recommended "finding the leaders within the West Bank". The trouble is, Israel has been doing that for some time, and either locking up or deporting them.

Hearing Arnold Wesker finally, painfully, come out for talks with the PLO, I thought, "who says kids throwing stones can't change anything". Hope he's not just counting on the PLO leadership now as a lesser evil.

ALEH B' SHALOM,
ACHSHAV

"*New Outlook* has the support of such international personalities as Abba Eban, Nahum Goldman, Pierre Mendes-France, Bertrand Russell, Anwar Sadat and Jean-Paul Sartre," proclaims a circular just received by a friend of mine, inviting her to subscribe to the pioneering peace magazine.

Apart from Abba Eban, are the rest supporting *New Outlook* from the beyond by supernatural means, or did they leave something in their will? With a name like *New Outlook*, the circulation manager ought to at least keep up with the obituaries!

ANONYMOUS
MALEFACTORS

At a time when charities like Ravenswood, the Jewish Welfare Board and the Jewish Blind Society have all been facing money problems, it's nice to know the spirit of giving is still with us. Israel's state comptroller says the right-wing Likud raised a million quid from London businessmen for its election expenses.

Large donors to Israel are usually honoured with their names on plaques, or forests and things. Funny, though, Likud has begged the comptroller not to name names of their large contributors, who prefer to stay discreetly anonymous. We'd be interested. So might the Inland Revenue!

Wesker couldn't help throwing in some offensive remarks about the PLO chairman's "flashing eyes" (what, no silly remarks about the headgear?) beaming "across our TV screens". He presaged this by craving indulgence "as a writer". (Watch it, Arnie, a couple more endorsements and you could lose your poetic licence.) My neighbour wondered in an aside whether it was as a writer who'd had nothing on the box in years.

WEST END GHOULS

A bunch of right-wing nasties calling themselves Western Goals UK say they want to stage a picket near South Africa House, demanding imprisonment of Winnie Mandela. "What a wheeze, eh chaps?" Probably made up of the same hearties who attend Tory Students' conferences sporting "Hang Nelson Mandela!" tee-shirts.

Western Goals is not always so keen on trials and punishments. On 7 February, denouncing the call by the Parliamentary War Crimes Group for Nazi war criminals to be tried in Britain, Western Goals director Andrew Smith said "It would be an outrage."

"The Soviets are using this 'war criminals' paranoia," he explained. They were targeting decent Latvian and Ukrainian refugees from communism, because of their anti-Soviet activity, smearing them as "Nazis" and "collaborators". Sure. Everyone knows the SS Galicia Division (shipped to Britain after the war) had just been a sort of boy scouts; and the Latvian police used to help old ladies across the road. To the gas chambers.

Western Goals' handout boasts "the support of some notable Conservatives". I don't doubt it. Its patron is General Sir Walter Walker, a former NATO Commander-in-Chief who back in 1974 was talking about the need for an army junta to take over Britain and sort out the unions and lefties. He was an admirer of Enoch Powell, whom he compared to Churchill.

And who's that up-and-coming young chappie on the Western Goals UK board of directors? Why, it's Gideon Sherman, of that ilk! Not quite following-in-father's-footsteps, since Sherman senior, Sir Alf that is, had to make his way from the East End via Stalinism, the British Army field police, the General Zionists, and speech-writing for Margaret Thatcher, before getting his knighthood and becoming a le Pen-friend.

Mural cover up?

For many years the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) have proudly paraded their Middle East policy of "mutual recognition" which they claim to be progressive and fairminded. At a campaigning level though they have spent nearly all their time propagandising for Israel and extending little effort to more "mutual" concerns.

Still, after the PLO's Algiers declaration, the joint statement in Stockholm with Jewish leaders, and after Geneva, there was no doubt at all about the PLO's commitment to mutual recognition, and not even the faintest excuse for UJS to carry on sitting and doing nothing. UJS annual conference at the end of December was perfectly timed to respond. So what happened?

They passed a motion reaffirming their "mutual recognition" policy. Mutual recognition with whom? Anybody but the PLO it seems! Some progressive

Jewish students put in an amendment to give the policy some meaning and called for direct talks between Israel and the PLO. It was defeated.

Small wonder that some weeks later, when UJS held a nationally organised seminar on "Zionism" at Hillel House London, only two students turned up. Maybe this suggests that if you have nothing to say to them there will be nobody to listen!

Now, we know that there are many Jewish students who do have something useful to say but nobody in the UJS leadership is going to listen. They are too busy building their careers in the Board of Deputies for the years to come. Maybe now is a good time to ditch those who are (mis)leading Jewish students and create a genuine Jewish Left alternative on campuses. The Jewish Socialists' Group and *Jewish Socialist* will help in any way we can.

Beyond recognition

Readers will remember that last year (JS14) we reported on an anti-imperialist mural in Sheffield which contained, inter alia, an orthodox Jew arm in arm with Adolf Hitler. Local Jewish socialists protested, but the consequent emendation was scarcely an improvement; the same figure, arm in arm with Hitler, but this time with a briefcase bearing the label "Zionist". After subsequent representations and discussions with the artist, the whole section was painted out and now contains, in addition to

Hitler, the figures of Henry Kissinger and Menachem Begin. Neither is holding hands with anyone else.

The question for Jewish Socialist readers, ever keen to draw a distinction between a principled critique of Zionism and one that is antisemitic — is the mural still antisemitic, bearing in mind both the context and its history?

Perhaps we should run a small poll. If enough of our readers write in with their opinions one way or the other, we will publish the results in our next issue.

Lifting the lid

Antisemitic incidents in Britain rose by 50 per cent in 1988 in comparison with the previous year, according to an article in the *Independent* on 25 March. They extracted this information from the Board of Deputies — a body very good at collecting important information and keeping it hidden from the community.

During the last year only a handful of these incidents have been reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*. The Board

have no trouble finding space in the *Chronicle* when they want to pillory progressive views and initiatives in the community. Why can't they bring themselves to use their access to convey more important information to the grassroots of the community? The antisemites know how many attacks they are carrying out; it's about time the Jewish community and the wider society knew too. It shouldn't be left to a once-in-a-blue-moon article on British antisemitism in the *Independent*, welcome though it was, to tell us information we have a right and a need to know. What kind of incidents are taking place, where, when and by whom? That is the information that we need and that is the information that we must strongly demand.

Moscow theatre on trial

The establishment of a Jewish cultural centre in Moscow with the support of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) raised hopes for the rehabilitation of Soviet Jewish cultural life. However, it has been followed by a bitter dispute about the content of this culture. WJC vice-president Isi Leibler expressed outrage that the Shalom theatre group from another Moscow Jewish centre was coming to perform in Britain under the sponsorship of an anti-Zionist (Vanessa Redgrave). In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, Leibler linked the Shalom theatre group to the Soviet Anti-Zionist Committee and condemned their brand of culture as "Yiddish in form, anti-Jewish in context". (Ironically, Shalom's play is very outspoken about

past and present antisemitism in the USSR including that hiding behind an anti-Zionist pretence.)

Leibler further stated that if Shalom-style Jewish culture were to emanate from the centre he had just inaugurated he would rather not have a Jewish cultural centre in Moscow. The message, barely concealed, is that the World Jewish Congress only supports approved Jewish culture, ie Zionist. Glasnost and perestroika have paved the way for a freer and pluralistic development of Soviet Jewish culture unbound from the dictates and repression imposed by Stalinism. Will it remain free from the dictates of Zionism?



"I know this is supposed to be a meeting about Israel and Palestine, but I'd rather tell you about my new play..."

10 YEARS ON

REMEMBER
BLAIR PEACH

On 23 April 1979 thousands of anti-fascists mobilised in Southall against the National Front. Hundreds were arrested and beaten by the police. One demonstrator, a teacher from East London named Blair Peach, was killed by a blow from a weapon wielded by a police

officer. The unit of six Special Patrol Group officers responsible has been identified but the sole killer has not. None has been charged and the murderer is still at large. In the ten years since, the police have made every effort to prevent the real story of Blair's death

emerging and prevent the murderer from being brought to justice. Eventually they made a financial settlement with the family to prevent further investigations. It was also an admission of guilt.

On 23 April this year anti-fascists will be marching through Southall once again to remember Blair Peach and mark the continuing struggle against racism and fascism locally, nationally and internationally. *Jewish Socialist* calls on its readers and supporters to show their solidarity on this day. Assemble at 1pm at Southall Park.

Satanic
curses

The Salman Rushdie affair has generated overt racist sentiment and specious claims on behalf of organised religion, which socialists must reject, argues Ralph Levinson

It is easy — and tempting — to lose one's footing in the Rushdie affair. Zealots and liberals are attacking one another's values with ever-growing ferocity. All roads appear to lead back to Ayatollah Khomeini in Qum, but he simply supplied the oxygen to turn the bonfires into a raging conflagration. Khomeini's role is important but deceptive; there are factors unique to the Muslims in Britain.

One perspective. You are a Pakistani worker only too familiar with Paki-bashing and state oppression in the form of immigration controls and police inaction in response to racist attacks. Your children are mocked at school and despite the school's anti-racist policy they are under-achieving. You have few prospects and bad housing. But you do live within a close-knit community where Islam underpins your identity and self-respect, and sustains your relations with your family and the community.

You hear about a book that contains insulting remarks about the prophet Mohammed and his wives. The author is a lapsed Muslim whose book has been nominated for a number of prizes by the literary establishment. Suddenly you are no longer vilified just because of your race; your religion has now become the object of attack by the liberal establishment through the voice of a secular Muslim. You can cope with racism but this attack on your

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spiritual values, on the fabric that links you to those you hold dearest, is intolerable.

Quite right to burn the damned book. Who can blame the Ayatollah? Now the Tories are defending Rushdie's right to insult you. Hurd and Baker are telling you to stop behaving like brats and to respect British customs that allow these offences to be hurled at you. The press is taking up the cry and pouring scorn on the Imams, dismissing you as fanatics and stirring up racist sentiments. Writers take to the streets to support this Rushdie who made a mint blaspheming the Koran that you learned by heart. Why can't the government ban the book? They wasted enough money trying to ban that *Spycatcher* which only offended some dead old upper class crooks. All this talk of freedom...

This perspective presents real questions that must be understood and answered. What is our position as Jews and socialists? The response must look at the power relations within the Muslim community and make explicit the distinction between race and religion.

Reading *The Independent* on 18 February one could be forgiven for thinking that all the Muslims in Britain were ready to tear Salman Rushdie apart. The report from Bradford was headlined: "Majority... in favour of Rushdie execution". In Birmingham "Holy warriors volunteer to kill". No doubt fundamentalism has a strong grip on British Muslims; the Imams are ready to exploit this feeling and turn it to their own purposes. The fight to maintain tradition, obstruct progressive views, establish separate schools, marginalise women, is a fundamentalist fight. The

religious leaders have an interest in sustaining the material conditions that allow these violent reactions to fester. They wish to suppress the voices of democratic and socialist Muslims.

But Muslims with other viewpoints do exist. A good number put their names to an advertisement in *The Guardian* supporting Rushdie's right to dissent from "established ways of thought". Muslim writers and academics who dissociated themselves from the Rushdie condemnations appeared on a late night TV discussion. And I have talked to Muslim colleagues and friends who distinguish between attacks on Islam and attacks on race.

As socialists we can never defend racism, which dehumanises and oppresses, but we must defend the right for religious positions to be criticised and even ridiculed. Khomeini himself implicitly acknowledges the roots of power, ideology and authority within religion. In a recent speech to seminary students he condemned the "World Devourers" of the West. The revolution is a "war of poverty against wealth" and has "never given in to capitalism". He admits that he entrusted the revolution to those who did not have "pure faith". He uses Islam as an instrument of war much as Moses used Judaism in conquering tribes in the wilderness. In wielding this instrument Islam is making a claim; in a democratic society claims are open to rebuttal and counter-claim.

The established religions represent the forces of reaction even if they are supposed to be fighting capitalism. But outside the institutionalised forms of religion, which have always been authoritarian and violent, there have been progressive trends. Both Moses and Mohammed led movements of liberation and unification. Within Judaism there have been calls for social justice based on humanitarian impulses; voices that sympathise with the oppressed such as Isaiah and Job. The humanity of Hillel is favoured against the intolerant Shammai. Islam swept through North Africa and Spain obliterating the old dynasties and establishing conditions for great freedom of debate, a time in which Maimonides enriched Judaism. And the Jesuits of Central America have played an important role in liberation movements.

In defending Rushdie we must make it clear that religious values are legitimate and do not necessarily conflict with social progress; that the established representatives of religion are using their status for their own political purposes and that Rushdie is taking an extreme position in order to expose them.

In this context, the Chief Rabbi's letter to *The Times* of Saturday 4 March is worth examining. It is an attempt to point the way to a solution to the *Satanic Verses* problem. The letter indicates the position of our own religious establishment. It omits any reference to — let alone condemnation of — the racist backlash over *Satanic Verses*. Since the Chief Rabbi has, both tacitly and volubly, given his support to Thatcherism, he is faced by a dilemma, for the "cult" of individualism sits uneasily with the idea of shared communal values. How can the Chief Rabbi respond, in this instance, to the issue of freedom of expression?

He is on dangerous ground because he cannot denounce individual freedoms nor can he be seen to ally himself with the fundamentalist Muslims. At the same time, Lord Jakobovits also represents the institutional forces that *Satanic Verses* attacks. In the end, his response is as tepid as the immortal words of Sir Geoffrey Howe: "The book is rude about Britain."

The letter is a banal apology. He makes no distinction between Salman Rushdie and the

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Ayatollah: "Both Mr Rushdie and the Ayatollah have abused freedom of speech, the one by provocatively offending the genuine faith of many millions ... the other by a public call to murder."

He justifies his support for the protest against the publication of *Satanic Verses* because he "deprecates the falsification of established historical records". This is an astonishing statement. What does he make of the Koran's radically different interpretation of history from those of both Jews and Christians? And did someone forget to tell him that novels are works of fiction? Or is he closer to the Ayatollah in his fundamentalism than he acknowledges?

So what solution does the Chief Rabbi offer? He writes: "What should concern us are not religious offences but socially intolerable conduct calculated or likely to incite revulsion or violence, by holding up religious beliefs to scurrilous contempt or by encouraging murder." (The italics are his.) A nice sleight of hand. What he is saying is that verbal abuse of religion should come under the realm of socially intolerable conduct. He advocates legislation for these offences: "It must obviously be left to public and parliamentary debate ... where the lines of what is to be illegal are to be drawn." The words are those of a man in a quandary who has allied his community behind the New Right and is searching for an appropriate moral code.

Like the Imams, he has supported thoroughly reactionary legislation like the Clause. He voiced no objection to the move to reinstate Christian assemblies, though Muslim leaders came out against it. The difference between the Chief Rabbi and the Imams is that he perceives his own community as Thatcher's natural constituency, whereas Muslim religious leaders claim to represent a community that is oppressed. In the case of the Rushdie affair, their reaction is defensive as opposed to the Chief Rabbi's placatory role.

Perhaps Dayan Isaac Berger of the London Beth Din states the position more explicitly in the *Jewish Chronicle*. He could understand the Moslem call for the death sentence but "to incite someone to commit a murder in a non-Moslem country was highly irresponsible and would not do Moslems in Britain any good". With such authoritative spokespeople we can well understand the frustration felt by dissenting Muslims.

There are many other important issues in the Rushdie debate. The role of literature in a particular cultural and economic context has been ignored. Literature is also an instrument: the extent of its distribution is controlled by publishing houses which dominate the market and implies a relationship between content and interest. Provided the work doesn't shatter the status quo, it's acceptable. Any work offering a dramatic exposé of the material conflict of social relations confines itself to the alternative publishing houses at best.

To conclude. We ought to demonstrate our solidarity with the Asian/Muslim groups supporting Salman Rushdie. Many of our parents and grandparents suffered similar oppressions to the Muslim community. We share their anger and fears against the injustice that surrounds them, but separation and intolerance are not the answer. We encourage the maintenance of identity in cultural and political terms but the strength of that identity is best served by debate and political engagement. In threatening the loss of identity rather than supporting the creativity of a community the Rabbis and Dayanim serve similar interests to those of the Mullahs and the Imams.

Circumcision: tradition or coercion

Circumcision of sons is one of the oldest and least questioned of Jewish traditions. For many parents and newborn babies the reality is traumatic. Now is the time to break the silence and resist coercion, says Julia Bard.

"It doesn't hurt. They forget it as soon as it's been done." "There are no nerve endings in the foreskin so they don't feel anything." "They only cry because their legs are held open and it feels cold." "It's no worse than getting their fingernails cut." These are some of the lies that everyone who's had a son circumcised has been told — by doctors who ought to know better and by other parents who, for their own reasons, have chosen to forget the reality.

Worst of all is the silence which replaces any explanation of why we are expected to damage perfectly healthy baby boys; of what the baby will feel; and what the following days and nights will be like for the adults who care for him.

In the early 1980s I read a book called *From Here to Maternity* by the feminist sociologist Ann Oakley. It was the first time I had read women's own descriptions of childbirth and motherhood. It was like a window through a tasteful facade which had kept safe the truth about life with a new baby —

'An infant who dies before circumcision, whether within the eight days or thereafter, must be circumcised at the grave, in order to remove the foreskin which is a disgrace to him, but no benedictions should be pronounced over this circumcision. If he was buried without circumcision and they became aware of it immediately, when there is no likelihood that the body has already begun to decompose, the grave should be opened and the circumcision should be performed.'

Code of Jewish Law

the pain, isolation, and fear, as well as the pleasure. Since Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* in 1949, feminists have broken many silences and exposed many lies. As a result they have incurred the wrath of the powerful, but also challenged their power. Talking to Jewish parents about circumcision takes the same risks and poses a similar challenge. "Circumcision is the base line of Jewish identity which we all feel we have to go along with," said one father. But is it? When the only way of convincing parents to continue with the tradition is to fool them into believing that it causes little pain and carries no risk, we ought to ask some serious questions about what that Jewish identity consists of, who defines it, and why.

When I told my mother that I was writing this article, she asked: "Don't people forget about it once it's over?" I haven't. I remember in detail the day my twin sons were circumcised. They were a month old and dressed in smart babygros kept specially for the occasion: one pale green, the other pale yellow. They looked sweet and soft and warm; their eyes were bright and they were surrounded by people who loved and cuddled them, who talked and sang to them, who fed, dressed and comforted them.

We had resisted attempts to turn the event into a massive party and refused to invite the entire extended family, but our living room was still filled with the immediate family plus two *sandeaks* (to hold the babies) and the *mohel* (to perform the circumcisions) all in their best clothes. When I and the other three women were told to leave the room and the door was closed behind us, I knew I should not have agreed to it. I had abandoned my new,

vulnerable, happy babies to a band of men who (with the exception of their father who, by this time was feeling as traumatised as I was) had not spent a single second caring for them.

I was handed them back crying bitterly, their clothes undone, drops of red wine on their lips, their skin ashy grey and their eyes terrified. I shall never forget it.

'If a woman has lost two sons from the effect of circumcision, her third son should not be circumcised until he gets older.'
Code of Jewish Law

While Nick and Anna respected each other's views, they did not agree about whether their son, Dan, should be circumcised. Growing up on the continent in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Anna didn't find out that she was Jewish until she was 8 years old. "I grew up with no religion at all and I didn't know any Jews," she says, "but I always felt different from my non-Jewish friends. I decided for myself that the children should know what being Jewish is about. We keep *shabbat* (the Sabbath) and the festivals; we belong to a Liberal synagogue — we live a very Jewish life. For me it was very important to have Dan circumcised because I want him to know who he is."

Nick says: "I felt a clash between my views as a father and my 'instincts' as a Jew, which I think are non-rational (though not irrational). As a father you want to create an environment for your children in which they are protected from any hurt. I don't think I quite dared face the issues — I couldn't ever quite imagine the reality of the

decision to have Dan circumcised." Nick was brought up in a non-religious household. He was under no family pressure to circumcise his son; quite the opposite in fact. Nick believes that early pain and trauma cause emotional difficulties later in life, and many of his friends see circumcision as a very early form of sexual abuse. Looking back, he says, "Anna's feeling gave me a way of not making the decision I felt inclined to make; a decision which raises enormous conflicts within myself as well as in terms of my relationship with Anna and with the Jewish community."

Paul and Deborah were both certain they didn't want their son — one of twins — circumcised. Like Nick, Paul believes that early traumas lie buried but leave their mark, causing problems later on.

"I didn't feel as vehemently as Paul about the circumcision," says Deborah, "but we wouldn't have done it if we hadn't been under pressure from Grandpa (Paul's father). I think in the event, it was made worse by the fact that the twins were premature and jaundiced so we had to wait until Joe was six weeks old before the operation was done and the anxiety and pressure really built up."

Paul and Deborah agreed, finally, to have Joe circumcised, but not by a *mohel* and not with a religious ceremony, though they agreed to take the baby to be blessed by a rabbi afterwards. A friend's child had been circumcised by a medical method which, they understood, did not involve an incision and was therefore painless and much less traumatic than the traditional way.

"Either I was asleep on my feet or the doctor didn't explain properly what was involved," says Paul. "What actually happened was that it was done, not very competently, by a student nurse who *did* cut the foreskin. I was stunned. Joe screamed the place down. It was the most terrible trauma for me. I was thrown into an awful state afterwards and I was very angry with my father for putting all that pressure on us to do it."

"After that", says Deborah, "Paul didn't want to have the blessing; we both felt that the whole thing was a con; we didn't believe in any of it. I feel that the physical trauma was secondary to the family pressure. The twins were premature and they had already had so many checks and tests that I'd got used to the 'physical assault' from medical people. So for me that was not as heavy as the emotional aspects."

Anna and Nick were also shocked by the event. "Although I

was certain how I felt beforehand, afterwards I was horrified. I was really upset about it for months afterwards," says Anna. "We had a very small ceremony and invited only a few supportive friends so we'd be able to give Dan all our attention. When it was done he let out this one cry. A long, piercing cry. I don't think I'll ever forget it. To say it doesn't hurt. . .

"Afterwards I felt heartbroken. I had to give him about five baths to get the dressing off and his penis looked so raw and horrible that Nick couldn't bear to do it. We just cuddled him non-stop for about two days afterwards. I felt very guilty."

The pressure to circumcise sons is very, very powerful. I felt quite unable to withstand "three thousand years of tradition", especially in the days and weeks after the birth when I was exhausted and vulnerable. If some justification for circumcision was offered, this pressure might just be tolerable, but all the parents I spoke to said they had little or no explanation of why Judaism demands that we do this damage to our baby sons.

Those of us who went to *kheder* (religion classes) as children are unlikely to remember being taught what the *bris* (circumcision; literally, covenant) meant, except in incomprehensibly mystical terms. More time was spent learning how to translate chunks of the bible parrot-fashion and being persuaded to sneak on any parents who didn't keep a kosher home.

The only "reason" any of those I spoke to were given was that "he may have problems of Jewish identity later in life". Richard grew up in a very secular family: "My parents were in the Communist Party, which they joined because they thought it was dealing best with the threat of fascism in the 1930s. I don't remember a single Jewish practice that I was involved with as a child. My only contact with Jewish life was through other children at school. At one point I took it on myself to go to Hebrew classes with a Jewish boy who had befriended me, and I remember *Zeyde* (grandpa), who was an old 'Trot', coming round and saying to my parents: 'So he's going to *kheder*!'

"I was circumcised in hospital without a ceremony. At least half of my non-Jewish friends were circumcised. We used to ask each other if they were cavaliers or roundheads! It had no significance whatsoever. It didn't cross my mind to have my sons circumcised."

Neither Richard's first nor his second wife are Jewish, so neither, according to Jewish religious law, are his children. "My oldest two know that I'm Jewish, though if they had to explain what that meant, they might say 'He goes to the bagel bakery and reads a lot of books.' If there's a racist incident at school, though, I tell them that no one's to be under any illusions: they can't hide under a white identity."

Despite claiming to know nothing about "being Jewish", Richard's identity as a Jew quite clearly informs his socialism and underpins his opposition to all forms of racism, and this is what he wants his children to know. That consciousness is more likely to be undermined by their father's feeling of having no place in the Jewish community than by their not being circumcised.

'And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations.'
The Singer Prayer Book

"We were fed the line that Joe would have 'problems in later life'," says Paul. "It was offered as blackmail but it has an element of truth in it, which is why it's so persuasive. But I know that any discomfort Joe may have in later life is a minor question. For Dad, the important thing is that Joe is circumcised. It's a completely abstract piece of Jewish symbolism that's to do with race and tradition. The fact is, Dad couldn't tolerate the idea that he would have a grandson who wasn't circumcised."

'May the All-merciful, regardless of the merit of them that are akin by the blood of the circumcision, send us his anointed walking in his integrity, to give good tidings and consolation to the people that is scattered and dispersed among the peoples.'
The Singer Prayer Book

Such a spurious justification (you should do it because everyone does it and therefore he'll be the odd one out) for a ritual which is clearly of no physical benefit to the baby and quite likely to do both physical and emotional damage (infection is common after the operation), can only be described in terms like "blackmail" and "coercion", especially when it's combined with the patently untrue claim that infants don't feel much when they are cut with a knife (a notion not unique to Judaism).

But what is to be gained by coercing parents to put themselves

and their new babies through all this? "It's a mark of power," says Deborah. "Originally it must have been a demonstration of acceptance of the power of God."

Nowadays it feels like an acceptance of the power of the rabbis. I do feel I have compromised myself by making a sacrifice of my children for no reason that I can justify. Any debate and discussion is disallowed. The authorities demand the right to define "Jewish" as born of a Jewish mother and in the case of a male, circumcised. The current row in the Jewish community about conversion of adults is important because it introduces an element of choice. A newborn baby cannot choose his or her identity and that's how the rabbis want to keep it. (And they reserve the right to boot people out of the community later on, circumcised or not, if they express their Jewishness in ways that threaten, or even question, communal authority.)

In the case of the Ethiopian Jews brought to Israel, who were circumcised and who had no "identity problem", the rabbinical court insisted on the men enduring a token circumcision, thus humiliating them by denying their identity, demanding the right to re-define it for them, and by turning them into "babies" again. Interestingly, for anti-racists, this was never demanded of the many uncircumcised Russian Jews who went to Israel.

Paul says: "If you think of that baby as a human being, you couldn't do that to it." And all the nonsense that we're fed about "no nerve endings" and "like having their fingernails cut" reflects the prevailing view that infants (and black people) are less than human.

"We must reject the idea that if you don't circumcise your son he won't be Jewish," says Nick. "We must challenge the idea that Jews can't exist in their own right — that they need circumcision or antisemitism or some other factor which makes them different. We're clinging to our difference as though if we lose that, we will lose all our Jewishness."

In reality, "Jewishness" must be an act of will and choice. It must rest on a broad and varied base — cultural, political, social, religious. If being a Jew is reduced only to whether you have been born to an acceptable mother and been circumcised (or coerced into circumcising your child) — both without reference to your humanity — then I can think of plenty of other things it would be more useful to be.

Braving the Nazis

We may be familiar with the broad facts of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, but many individuals showed extraordinary courage and subverted, or at least delayed, Nazi ambitions. Many of their stories were lost, along with them, in the gas chambers. Others are accessible to us only through those who knew them and survived the War. Majer Bogdanski remembers three comrades.

Rosa Eichner was one of the leaders of the Bund in Lodz, Poland, and was also married to a Bundist, Dr Eichner. When the Germans occupied Poland in 1939 she became the manager of the Vladimir Medem Sanatorium for children in Miedzeshin near Warsaw. This sanatorium was founded by the Central Yiddish School Organisation (CYSHO) in Poland in the mid-1920s to care for children at risk of contracting tuberculosis which was rampant among the Jewish poor.

Rosa's 15-year-old son, Janek, and her 24-year-old daughter, Mirka, went to the sanatorium with her. Janek was still a schoolboy, but Mirka had qualified as a doctor in Rheims in France a few months earlier, and she took on the children's medical supervision.

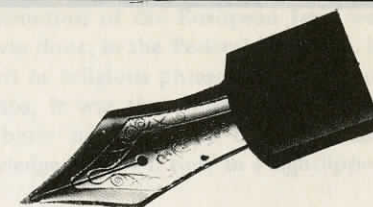
One day, very early in the morning when everyone was still asleep in bed, a heavily-armed Gestapo unit surrounded the sanatorium and ordered everyone out into the yard. When all the children — over 100 of them — were assembled in a marching column, the Gestapo commander told Rosa that they were only going to take the children. Rosa, they said, could stay in the sanatorium if she wished. Rosa scornfully rejected this offer. Instead, she took one child by her right hand, another by her left hand and stood at the head of the column;

in the middle walked Janek and at the rear Mirka. And so they marched, mother, son, daughter and all the staff, together with the children in their charge, to the cattle truck in which they were taken straight to the gas chambers.

Abram Weishof was one of the leaders of the Bund in Piotrkow-Tryb, a small town near Lodz, about 140km south of Warsaw. Born and bred in that town, he knew everybody and they all knew him — from the youngest to the oldest. And from the time that Poland became an independent state again in 1918, he was elected as a member of the town council.

One of the very first tasks the Germans carried out when they occupied the town in 1939 was to go to the main synagogue. This synagogue, completed in 1792, was considered to have been one of the most beautiful in Crown Poland. In Moorish style, it was so constructed that, despite its large size, daylight came in from all four sides and there was no need to use artificial light during the day. The Germans took out all the *sifrei torah* (scrolls of the law), some hundreds of years old, and dropped them on the bare ground on a small plot of earth adjoining the synagogue. They left an SS man armed with a machine gun to guard them. It was November: rainy, snowy and very cold. Abram realised that the scrolls would soon begin to rot, so he called together a group of Bundists. They decided that such a desecration of the scrolls could not be tolerated. With their bare hands they overpowered the guard and rescued all the *sifrei torah*. They took them to the Jewish cemetery about two miles away and buried them in accordance with the Jewish custom.

Esther Malka Wolsztejn — we called her simply Esther — was a ladies' dressmaker by trade; the daughter of a tinsmith and roof mender known in town as Yuma Blachosh.



PARADOX OF ZIONISM

David Rosenberg's "Prisoners of Zion" (JS14) was a useful and illuminating analysis of the appeal of Zionism and of where "orthodox" anti-Zionism has failed but he did not really take into account the way that Zionism has dominated American Jewish cultural life over the last forty or so years. There — more than in any other country — it provided a sense of Jewish identity for emancipated Jews, much in the way that Irish Republicanism gave a sense of identity to non-practising Irish Catholics. It did not need much work on the part of the "communal establishment to mould Zionism to our Jewish identity". Zionism did not involve Jews in being apart from the rest of society in the way that strict religious observance did. "OK so maybe we don't keep kosher anymore, but we do give money to Israel." Cultural identity became something you could buy: here was one of Zionism's greatest appeals. The neat way it fitted into the American way of life. It may well be defeatist to say so, but I do not think it will be easy to replace this potent force, especially if justice is forthcoming for the Palestinians.

There is a paradox inherent in Zionism, perhaps also in Jewish culture generally, the desire to show that Jews are no different from any other people while in fact believing that they are. The early khalutzim set out to show that they could "create a state like any other state while at the same time determined that theirs would be a better state. They failed. The paradox was laid to rest: Jews are no different from any other people, no better, no worse: they are quite capable of torturing those they see as their enemies; quite capable of selling arms to the highest bidder; quite capable of offering sanctuary to the oppressed; quite capable when it comes to making mistakes. Why should they be different? Why should they want to think they are different?

Anthony Stoll
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She had blue eyes, honey blonde hair and was very myopic. Her thick glasses and slim build made her look so frail that it was hard to imagine her being able to withstand the slightest physical blow.

When she was 14 she joined the Bund's youth organisation and was active in the Bund's children's organisation, SKIF. When the Germans created the ghettos she went to live with her mother in the ghetto of Piotrkow-Tryb. There she reorganised the Bund's youth section and became its secretary. There was no possibility of her earning a living from ladies' dressmaking in the ghetto, but she managed to obtain a clerical job in the office of the *Judenrat*. This was the Jewish "Council" appointed by the Germans. They installed the *Judenrat* in an office in the Gestapo building so they could keep a close eye on it.

One day Esther was arrested. It was clear that the Gestapo would search her possessions and if they found the list of Bund members they would arrest every one of them. All the comrades lived in fear of death. No one slept at their homes and no one slept in the same place twice. The Gestapo did make a thorough search; they took away every scrap of paper but they did not demand that anybody should report to them and they made no arrests.

A few days later it became known that the Gestapo were going to deport all those they had recently arrested. The comrades went to the railway tracks where a train of cattle trucks was waiting. Soon the people who had been arrested came marching along, but Esther was not to be seen. She was amongst them but no one recognised her. During the few days that the Gestapo had held her, the torture they subjected her to disfigured her to such an extent that her closest friends could not recognise her. But she recognised the comrades. When she was in the cattle truck she called to one of the comrades through the little window, told him who she was and said he should tell the others that they need have no fear: she did not divulge any names. She also told him where to find the membership list. She had kept it in the place that was both the most dangerous and at the same time the most secure from discovery: in a drawer of her desk in the office in the Gestapo building itself. Risking their lives, the comrades broke into the office that same night and recovered the list.

Esther was deported to Auschwitz. She was neither seen nor heard of again. Esther was my wife.

Left over guilt

From the hardline, militant Baader-Meinhof group to the Red-Greens in parliament today, the postwar German left has failed to face up to the challenge of the Nazi era, argues Ute Ruge.

In 1967 in the Federal Republic of Germany, a book emerged assessing the failure of the German public to deal psychologically and morally with the Nazi past (*The Inability to Mourn* by Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich). But the West German left had already reached the brink of an extraordinary crisis — both in their school of thought and in how they were dealt with by the establishment.

The complexity of the situation is best expressed in a small biographical note by one of those who participated in the students' movement. Twenty years after the event, Detlef Claussen wrote: "2 June 1967. We have installed the loudhailer-equipment for our anti-Shah-rally in front of the Pauls-Church (Frankfurt); part of our group from the SDS (Sozialdemokratischer Studentbund) intends travelling the same evening to Berlin. Before the march arrives I talk to the deputy-chairman of the national SDS. His book about Vietnam has shown him to be an expert on international affairs. So I ask him: 'What about Israel? The Arabs threatened to throw her into the sea. Should we not be organising another rally this week? Not only against the Shah?' There was a slight pause. 'But you know, comrade, that Israel is an imperialist country.' The march arrives; the same evening Benno Ohnesorg is shot dead (at the anti-Shah-rally in Berlin). On Saturday we have a second rally: protesting against the murder of Benno Ohnesorg. Jewish friends are standing on the pavements lining the street: they distribute flyers against the threat to Israel's existence. We protest against the Springer Press (right wing press monopoly) charging it with creation of a pogromlike atmosphere (against the students). The same Springer Press which headlines on Monday: VICTORY! — DAYAN — ROMMEL OF ISRAEL."

As part of her foreword to the German translation of Isaac Deutscher's comments on the Six-Day War (in *New Left Review*) Ulrike Meinhof wrote in 1967: "What has led to this questionable solidarity (of Germans with Israel) is not the acknowledgment of the Jews as human beings, but their war efforts; not recognition of them as citizens, but their use of napalm; not insight into our own crimes, but the Israeli Blitzkrieg; in other words, solidarity with brutal expulsion and conquest. This is the spirit of the old phrase 'I define who is a Jew' — a spirit which fraternises with Israel and at the same time with those killers from Berlin."

Although Ulrike Meinhof still spoke the truth about the overall situation and gave her pointed attitude towards it, her text nevertheless fails to recognise her own ambivalent position in this historical mess. What Detlef Claussen could only voice 20 years later was that at this point a split between emotion and analysis, or ethics and politics, had already occurred.

A postwar childhood

All this happened far away for me, since I was still a child then and still learning the basic lessons about German politics and emotions at the family dining-table on a remote farm in the north of the Federal Republic. That my family stems from a region that was incorporated into the German Democratic Republic and had left only in the early 1950s made certain discussions a bit more heated than in other families. But the basic ingredients were more or less the same as everywhere else.

Picture something like this: dinner is in progress and some relatives are visiting. The adults talk, the

children have to behave themselves. The talk touches on politics as well as everyday matters, gossip about other people and so on. After coffee "the past" starts to crop up more frequently — but only in strictly private terms: our village and family in "those times" and during the war. When I was still quite young I was curious and used to ask questions, as children do, to try and decipher the language of the grown-ups.

"Why was grandpa evicted from his farm?"

"Well, you know, the Russians. . ." A year later or so that answer wouldn't do any longer and I heard he had been a member of "the party".

"And the Russians of course. . ."

"But wait. Was he really a Nazi?" Then the child would be drowned in endless stories about the "totally unpolitical" grandfather.

"Any more questions? Oh well, you can't imagine anyway how it was. . ."

Later the questions would become more aggressive and the answers, too. One knew already that treading the ground of "the past" could easily detonate bombshells of emotion or, even worse, utter silence. All that shouting and banging of doors would leave you in the end feeling like the guilty party for having brought "it" up again. And it was useless because all those uncles and aunts and neighbours behaved in the same way so you could be certain that you wouldn't be given clear answers anyway.

On the other hand, sometimes the odd neighbour or uncle or official would actually come with awful Nazi apologetics. And the interesting thing about that was: although it left you feeling hopelessly disgusted, it did serve as some kind of proof that yes, there had really been something like the Nazi times, and yes, people had been real Nazis and some still were. My reaction to this response was relief more than worry, I think, because the overwhelming notion of some ghostly unreality (where had all the Nazis disappeared to?) was finally exposed: they were still there.

Even though this insight seems a bit simple and even though there have been lots of different versions in different families, I still think that this basic lesson lay beneath much of what could be called the political culture of the left in postwar Germany. The issue of "realness" — real Nazis, real Jews — never quite went away, and nor did the fact that emotions and politics are a very precarious matter in Germany.

East is east and west is west

The existence of another German state, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) was a paramount subject of emotional debates and arguments, at least for the first 20 years after the war. Again this was only on the surface. Underneath it again lay "the past" to which both states referred in totally different languages, on both sides highly ideological and with a somewhat twisted notion of the role of the population as a whole.

In the Federal Republic the picture of a criminal regime that had somehow managed to hijack Germany emerged — and now one had, as a decent people, to pay the price for the past. In the GDR it tended to be represented as an example of how capitalism had logically developed into a fascism which had perpetrated its crimes mainly against communists and the working class.

'Treading the ground of "the past" could easily detonate bombshells of emotion or, even worse, utter silence.'

'The cold war... had put an end to thorough denazification in the West and furthered it in the East.'

Where the destruction of the European Jews was touched upon it was done, in the Federal Republic, in a language steeped in religious phraseology and, not surprisingly perhaps, it was the church which more than any other body in public life tried to build bridges or acknowledge guilt — if only in a tightlipped fashion and late.

To understand why it was so difficult for those who were to emerge later as a new, radical left to find their own voice between "anticapitalist antifascism" and moral credibility one has to go back to the historical environment of their thinking.

The immediate postwar period up to the foundation of two German states (1949) was more or less taken up by the attempts of all the victorious allies to get their part of occupied Germany into order again — their order, naturally. For the three western zones this meant establishing democratic structures in a sort of (militarily) supervised experiment. In the Russian zone the rule of a one party system was forced down the throat, at first slowly and cautiously, but with the escalation of the cold war the incorporation of central Germany in the inner circle of Soviet satellite states seemed unavoidable. (Since organised groups of former residents of that region have caused many a chancellor a lot of embarrassment one should mention a third territory, East Prussia, Lower Pomerania and Upper Silesia, all of them part of the newly formed People's Republic of Poland, thus "making up" for the lost eastern parts of Poland which were swallowed up by the Soviet Union.)

It was the cold war that by the same token had put an end to thorough denazification in the West and furthered it in the East. But even before that, political demography would have detected thousands, maybe even millions more heavily involved Nazis, SS men and war criminals in the West than in the East. When the war was over they had known why, under no circumstances, they wanted to be in the hands of the Russians or Poles on whose soil they had perpetrated their genocide policies.

With its fierce stand against all incriminated people and its appeal to those political emigrants from Nazi Germany (Social Democrats, Communists and Jews) who had any wish to go back, the Russian zone and later the GDR presented itself as the "other, better Germany" and created a social and cultural atmosphere of "moral purity" (sometimes developing into suffocating complacency) which up until today remains much in evidence as the basic belief ("our antifascist fatherland"), even in oppositional circles.

But restoration in the Federal Republic had come about with the return not of the political, but of the administrative Nazi elite — senior civil servants in the police, judiciary, local government, universities and schools — often enough with the support of the American vetting agencies. The uniting ideological force between all those little (and bigger) Nazis, the Americans and the majority of the population was anticommunism. And that, of course, since it had already been a powerful element in Nazi times, appeased the newly born democrats of the western zones and guaranteed their co-operation. This was not easily obtained, as became clear on certain occasions, like the violent clashes during the first postwar years

of hunger when industries were dismantled and freedom of expression, especially for trades unionists, was curbed.

When the two states were finally set up, both showed themselves to be extremely loyal allies to their respective masters.

While the main aim of the Adenauer administration (1949-63) was western integration, its obstacle in international terms was still "the past". European countries were more or less satisfied that partition kept Germany at bay politically. The American government even decided to pamper this former enemy because it needed its soil and loyalty for military purposes in confronting the USSR at close range. There seemed to be only one remaining group which couldn't forget the past so easily: the Jews. By identifying this group with the state of Israel and coming to a reparation agreement with Israel (1952) Adenauer managed skilfully to avoid any official involvement in the question of national guilt. As a state, the Federal Republic would settle things by paying money according to certain rules and regulations and thus acknowledging itself only to be the "legal successor" of a "criminal regime", duly pointing out that the GDR failed to do this.

Thus West Germany could go on fairly undisturbed with its own integration into the western block: rearmament followed in 1953-4; membership of Nato in 1955; membership of the EEC in 1958; and a friendship treaty with France in 1963. Home affairs were marked by a ruthless restoration of capitalism, and the population as a whole seemed to be quite happy to be occupied with rebuilding their houses and their families and reminded not of "the past" but instead of the terrible lot that had befallen their brothers and sisters in the east "who are still not liberated from totalitarianism". The *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) was thus closely linked to the ideological position of a free market society and, not surprisingly, to a near hysterical non-recognition of the GDR. It was within this logic that the prohibition of the Communist Party in West Germany (1956) did not result in any public outcry.

Radical left and the old right

All this was closely watched and written about from 1959 onwards by a very talented and passionate journalist in Hamburg, Ulrike Meinhof, and I would like to draw attention to her fate as an extreme, but by no means atypical, example of her generation as the first independent left in West Germany. She was born in 1934 and was politicised by the international anti-nuclear bomb movement of the 1950s. She wrote clear-sighted and straightforward articles and analyses about developments in both Germanies and how they were linked and determined by international factors.

One of her concerns was always the personal continuity between "then" and now: she pointed out the first Commander of the new Federal Army as a high Wehrmacht General; she wrote about the trial of the SS man, Kurt Wolff, in 1964; she commented in strong words on (President) Lübke's and (Adenauer secretary) Globke's involvement in the Nazi times; and about the huge state pensions for widows of Nazi functionaries. When after three short years of the Erhardt government (1964-66), the economic recession

'The closing of ranks in the political establishment aborted any hope of a decisive shift to "left" politics.'

and, in its wake, the emergence of the neo-Nazi party NPD, brought about the Great Coalition (CDU and SPD), she and others felt their viewpoint confirmed that the closing of ranks in the political establishment had aborted any hope of a decisive shift to "left" politics — even if it only meant a wish for slightly more independence from the USA or a clear distancing from the past. SPD foreign minister Willy Brandt side-by-side with ex-Nazi and now Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger, seemed a particularly revealing spectacle.

For the radical left it was more disturbing to see the "respectable" and somehow "whitewashed" Nazis back in high office (or low office, for that matter) than to worry about neo-Nazis. You needn't wonder about their beliefs; you only saw in an official context what you already knew from those uncles and aunts and neighbours. . .

The Great Coalition's lack of any working opposition inside parliament led to the development of the *ausserparlamentarische* (extra-parliamentary) opposition — that is the idea of an active and activating opposition from outside, directly from society itself. Ulrike Meinhof was one of those who actively took part in it — but still as a writer and at occasional rallies: against the 1967 martial-law legislation for "emergency" situations; against the Vietnam War and German support for it (a main military computer of the US Air Force was located in Frankfurt; later it became the target of a bomb attack); against West German industrial and commercial support for appallingly cruel dictatorships, such as the regime of the Shah in Iran.

Sweeping statements

As I said, in 1967 the West German left had already arrived at a crisis point. Although fundamentally motivated in their ethics and politics by the shadow of the past, they had somehow left the concreteness and reality of it (and of themselves) behind and linked up with the international student movements. The point of reference shifted markedly away from the Nazi past or the question of the GDR to the exploitation of the Third World.

The key political and ideological events were to be the Vietnam War and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The strictly analytical approach, for which the socialist student organisation (SDS) was particularly notorious, led to questionable sloganising. For the German context it was significant enough to find Auschwitz and Vietnam mentioned in one breath (and was this not ultimately a slightly adapted version of the GDR line — capitalism equals imperialism equals fascism?).

The response demonstrators and protesters usually got from bystanders and political establishment alike was extraordinarily hostile and even brutal. They did not want to hear about any of this absurdity of being likened to the Nazis, and, on the whole, the absence of any substantial moral or political support hardened attitudes. (Shouting of people on the streets ranged from "Geht doch nach drüben!" ("Go to the GDR") to frequent advice to policemen to send those "unwashed elements" to labour camps or even "gas them".)

About what followed, I myself (as yet still at school) read only in the papers: the Vietnam Tribunal in Berlin ('68) and more violent clashes between

demonstrators and police; Rudi Dutschke shot (April '68) by a man who admitted later that he had felt called upon to kill "that bastard" by the *Bild-Zeitung* (Springer tabloid, comparable to the *Sun*; Rudi Dutschke died 10 years later as a result of an epileptic condition he developed after those shots); students trying to block the distribution of Springer newspapers and again experiencing very violent clashes with the police.

While on the surface a considerable swing in policy was finally made, with Willy Brandt as Chancellor (1969-74) of a Social-Liberal Coalition bringing about the Ostpolitik and factual recognition of the GDR, the situation for the radical left nevertheless changed for the worse.

After the first shots they themselves fired (in 1970 in Berlin) the split was made final between militants, who later sometimes found themselves training in guerrilla warfare in PLO camps in Syria, and rigid, rather ridiculous, communist sects who started reading the classics again and hoped for a proletarian revolution. Another very considerable number of people retreated into private and professional life or began "the long march through the institutions", later emerging as the odd "linker" (lefty) teacher, lawyer, professor or doctor.

When I finally took up my studies at university (in 1972 in Marburg, Hesse) I hardly met any "old-fashioned" or reactionary professors any more. But Ulrike Meinhof, who had become one of the major figures of the RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion), better known as the Baader-Meinhof Group, and who had taken up arms against the "system", was already in prison under very hard conditions of solitary confinement. A hysterical witch hunt had swept the country bringing out the worst in the Germans: suspicious of everything and denouncing anyone not looking like a statistical average of its kind. The whole nucleus of the group was soon in prison.

And while as a student of literature I learnt not to read poems or novels any more, but rather what Marx had to say about the position of the intellectuals in class society, the followers of RAF and its splinter groups sat tightlipped, usually dressed in black, in seminars and pubs recruiting for political and sometimes violent campaigns. They themselves soon became the target of a hurriedly extended intelligence service as a result of their campaigns to free the prisoners and society as a whole from fascism — which was what they had made up their minds the current system was.

The prisoners began to die and it was a real shock when Ulrike Meinhof, aged 47, was found dead in her heavily guarded and constantly screened prison cell in 1976. All this culminated in the autumn of 1977 when the chairman of the West German Association of Industrialists, Hanns Martin Schleyer — significantly for "the system" and for the RAF a former SS man — was abducted; an aeroplane full of holidaymakers from Mallorca was hijacked; three "terrorists" in Stammheim prison mysteriously died; and Schleyer was found murdered in the boot of a car.

All the events surrounding and following this are known as the German Herbst (autumn) and they were and still are a trauma for the West German left. At the same time it marked, I think, the end of a consequent analytical and sometimes abstract approach to

'For the German context it was significant enough to find Auschwitz and Vietnam mentioned in one breath.'

politics. What had been developing meanwhile, and now took on a new prominence, were the so-called "social movements". Their school of thought and beliefs stemmed more from the anti-authoritarian and feminist legacy of the 1960s. A main feature of these new and massive movements against the stationing of American cruise missiles, against nuclear power, and against the pollution and destruction of the environment was, in clear contrast to the "old" New Left, emotions as the motivating force for politics.

These new politicians, who came from the grass-roots of politics and merged with old '68ers who still had a soft spot for public life, attempted, or so it appears to me, to make up for all the emotional and personal elements which had been disregarded by the tough militants or rigid communist sects of the early 1970s. Their success — finally as the Green Party, which was voted into parliament — had much to do with the second SPD Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1974-82) who was much more concerned with *Innerer und äußerer Sicherheit* (protection against the enemy within and outside) than with any vision or hope for the increasingly unemployed (from unskilled to academic) and intellectually homeless youth of the country. When he lost a vote of confidence in the Bundestag and the CDU Chancellor Kohl took over (1982) not many of us shed a tear for his government.

The spirit of the times

I find it difficult to sort out the overall *Zeitgeist* of the last 10 years or so in West Germany. There has been a peace movement and a conservative government, both exercising a certain amount of quite artificial nationalism. There has also been a new consciousness about "the past" brought about by a mixture of media events (especially the TV screening of *Holocaust* in 1978), the Lebanon War, a greater outspokenness in public life by the Jewish community (right and left), and a stream of new historical research and its publication along the lines of "oral history", mostly carried out by the younger generation of, mainly left or liberal thinking historians. So what about Bitburg, the current "historians' quarrel", Jenninger, etc?

If I had to vote for an explanation at all, I would choose something along the following lines. That the Kohl-Weizsäcker government has created a mainstream attitude of a nation with "some guilt and some pride"; that the emergence of a phenomenon that in its American version is called "No-Business-like-Shoah-Business" is, in West Germany, the end of any truly radical thought about the social and political significance of the Nazi era; and that another generation of politically active Germans is about to learn, or will fail to learn, the lesson that "the past" is not something "to integrate into our own history" (as the left philosopher Jürgen Habermas suggested) but is a constant challenge for any political and philosophical thought and practice.

But "the inability to mourn" has certainly already left its marks on another generation. The legacy of some 30 RAF prisoners and their current (March/April) hunger strike for better conditions, along with the friendly but powerless response they get from their old and new red-green friends in parliament, are of telling significance.



JS: Could you first talk about the current situation in Israel after Geneva: the political realignments that it is likely to give rise to, and the advantages and opportunities that there are for the Left now.

AK: I think it has had a lot of impact. I have heard from a lot of ordinary people who are not really involved in politics that the sight of Arafat on television saying "I'm recognising the state of Israel and I call upon the leaders of Israel to come here and talk with me", this is something which has impressed many Israelis. There have been years and years of debate in the peace movement, when people who were more left wing were going and meeting with the PLO and coming back with some kind of statement from the PLO which was a good statement in comparison with previous PLO statements. Experts knew what it meant in Palestinian terms but it was always a statement which needed a lot of interpretation and elucidation. After some time it was realised that it was better not to bring such statements back, because you would inevitably be asked "Why do you have to be the interpreters, the lawyers, the defenders of the Palestinians, why can't they make a statement which will stand by itself without any need for explanation?" That was a big handicap. Now we have statements from the PLO which you can just reproduce as they are without adding one word of your own, saying "this is the approved and accepted position of the PLO".

I have been agreeably surprised. There were always a lot of people saying "Why doesn't the PLO say this and why doesn't the PLO say that?" For many years I had the impression that it was just an excuse. They never wanted to talk to the PLO and never would. But now these kind of people, like Ratz (the Citizens Rights Movement) and Mapam; Labour Party doves; Peace Now; they have really changed their position. Of course, the change in the American position also had a lot to do with it, because there are a lot of people in Israel, even in the peace camp, I am afraid, who are willing to accept anything that is done as long as the Americans are willing to back it.

Things which up to half a year ago were dividing the "radical" from the "moderate" Left, or the right

wing of the peace camp from the left wing of the peace camp, now everyone agrees. As for talking to the PLO — anybody who is not in favour of talking with the PLO has nothing to look for in the peace movement.

JS: You've said that Mapam and Ratz and half the Labour Party are now willing to talk to the PLO. We know that people like Yitzhak Rabin aren't. What is this going to mean for the Labour Party? Will there be a Labour Party split?

AK: I don't think there will be a split because the Labour Party is a very bureaucratic party and a careeristic party. The kind of person who goes into the Labour Party, whether they are a hawk or a dove, with very few exceptions, is going to stick there, and nothing will move them. Also, the internal alliances in the Labour Party have nothing to do with hawks and doves; if someone wants to be leader of the Labour Party they have to show they are the leader not of one faction but of the whole Party. They have to have a cross-section. Rabin, or Peres, would say "I am representing the whole Labour Party; I have hawks, I have doves, I have workers, I have industrialists, I have United States politicians, and so on". I don't think there will be a split in the Labour Party, but I think there is a good chance of the whole Labour Party talking to the PLO.

The most important breakthrough in terms of getting into the establishment was Abba Eban. Abba Eban is respected. Where Abba Eban goes, respectability goes. Abba Eban could not do something that is not respectable, that is a contradiction in terms. When he came back from The Hague, where he met with the PLO, he was interviewed by Israeli television. It was very much vintage Abba Eban, with his very characteristic literary way of speaking, but the content of what he was saying was very much what we have been saying for the last 15 years; the Palestinians want a state beside the state of Israel, that we should make peace with them and if you want to make peace with the Palestinian people you have to deal with their representatives, but in his accent.

Adam Keller is a prominent Israeli peace activist. He is editor of *The Other Israel*, the journal of the Progressive List for Peace. On a recent tour of Britain, he spoke to *Jewish Socialist*.

What he did to perfection was transform the terms of the debate. Until the meeting in The Hague the debate was "should a person go and meet with the PLO?"; after the meeting with Abba Eban the question was "does a person who has met with the PLO deserve a special dinner at the house of the Israeli ambassador?" I really admire him for that.

Even Geula Cohen fell into the trap; she just issued a statement congratulating the Foreign Ministry for taking away the dinner. From her point of view she should have said "he should get a dinner from the Israeli prison authorities, not the ambassador".

JS: How does it feel when the Progressive List for Peace and its predecessors have been saying these things for ten years, and suddenly a large proportion of Israeli political opinion are saying them? How does the Progressive List now see its role?

AK: Actually, for the Progressive List as a party, it is not a very good position. At the beginning of the election campaign, we issued a challenge: we issued a statement saying "our main campaign slogan is going to be 'let's talk to the PLO'; we don't hold the copyright on this slogan; anybody who wants to is invited to come and steal it and use it". We did not really expect anyone to come and take up the challenge, but they did, and I think that caused us to lose quite a lot of support. It is not the only reason, but it is one. Ratz and Mapam are respectable parties, they are part of the "Zionist family", there is no stigma on someone who supports them. The Progressive List is "beyond the Pale", it is seen as suspect. So if Ratz and Mapam are saying very much the same as the Progressive List, that will ensure support for them at the expense of the Progressive List. We already had much stronger support among Arabs than Jews and that has now become more accentuated. We still have a few things which are unique to us. Mapam and Ratz still are not very clear about the '67

borders, they are saying in general we should leave the occupied territories, but they are not saying we should go to the borders of '67, and they are still very vague about Jerusalem. The Ratz programme is now saying something like "Jerusalem should remain unified but consideration should be taken of the cultural and national aspirations of the Palestinians", which is better than what they were saying 10 years ago but still not quite there. When we were having policy debates after the elections, I proposed we should now emphasise the issue of Jerusalem, and make it clear where we stand. But in general it is a bit frustrating that people who are coming to positions which we already had many years ago are now becoming strong and we are in difficulties.

Lova Eliav once made a comparison saying that in the 2nd World War in the British Army, there is one soldier lying down in front — the others are running over him. We in the radical peace camp who have supported the Palestinians since 1975 are like this one soldier. But I am willing to accept this. I am willing to see the day when Peres and Shamir talk with Arafat, and no one will remember there was someone who went before.

JS: To change the subject, people talked a lot in the Israeli elections about the swing to the 'religious parties. What did it look like from there?

AK: It was a very big surprise to everybody as it was not predicted by any of the polls. This shows the polls are not reliable and they are given too much weight. I think it was something that was clearly connected with the ethnic origins and with social class. In prison, I saw clearly how many people, and especially Oriental Jews, are religious, although they are not necessarily very orthodox. There is a sort of popular religion which is very different from formal religion. For example, in formal religion *Shabbat* (the Sabbath) is very important. In popular religion keeping *Shabbat* is

not important. For example, many Oriental Jews go on Saturday morning directly from synagogue to a football match.

JS: So how does this relate to how they voted?

AK: Firstly, it is part of the assertion of the Oriental Jewish, particularly the Moroccan Jewish religious identity; the Abu-Hatzeira family has a very important role in crystallising the Moroccan Jewish identity. For hundreds of years this family was the first family of the Moroccan Jewish community. When the Moroccan Jewish community in Israel was broken down and was pushed down in the social scale, this family managed to keep its aristocratic status.

The first part of this Moroccan Jewish consciousness was the creation of the Tami party, the second part was the creation of the cult of the Baba Sali by another member of the family. That is also traditional. Members of the family have for generations been considered to be holy men, whose graves are places of pilgrimage. After Baba Sali died, he was buried in the town of Netivot in the Negev and within a few years, the town became a centre of pilgrimage for hundreds and thousands of people. This is clearly a Moroccan event, of the "Moroccan diaspora" in Israel and France and the United States. There are Moroccans who charter their own planes. What struck me is that when they showed it on television they showed young people born in Israel wearing the *Tarbush* (a red hat), something you could not imagine a few years ago, only old people who had been born in Morocco would have worn it. Very many people on the Israeli Left are not able to see the social implication of this. They just see it as a very reactionary cult, which cultivates such things as the sale of holy water, and the son of Baba Sali, the Baba Baruch who was sentenced for corruption, who has made a very big business out of it. All this is quite unpleasant to people with a western secular way of thinking. But the process of secularisation was not something which came out of the community itself, but was something which was

imposed upon them and which was crucial in taking away their self-respect and forcing upon them someone else's culture. It is very natural for them to assert their identity as Oriental Jews and particularly as Moroccan Jews (the largest single community), by including a return to religion. It is no accident that the largest of all the religious parties today is Shas (a Sephardi religious party).

There is another element in that it is the first time Lubavitch has directly intervened in Israeli politics, they had always kept politically neutral. They have built up a formidable organisation in Israel. They have "missionaries", working very hard to get people to lay *tefilin* (phylacteries). They have the right to go into army camps. When a soldier is about to go into battle up comes a man who says "I represent the Lubavitcher Rebbe; the Lubavitcher Rebbe is a very powerful man and has a lot of contacts in government"; you need to be a very determined and convinced atheist not to go along with it. They got up to all sorts of really dirty tricks, such as going into maternity hospitals and telling new mothers "If you don't vote Agudat Israel your baby will die within the year; if you do you will have the blessing of the Rebbe and will have a long and happy life". They say to sick people "The Lubavitcher Rebbe has supernatural powers, he knows what you have done" and they make people swear an oath to vote for him.

Many Oriental Jews have become disillusioned with the Likud. The Likud has been in power for 11 years and has not done very much socially for them, and they don't want to go back to the Labour Party (although there are radicals who do) and the Left in Israel has unfortunately not succeeded in making itself attractive to them. The religious parties are the most attractive to them.

As one final element, the *Intifada* (uprising) has posed very difficult questions, very difficult dilemmas, either get out of the occupied territories or adopt a very brutal policy and the religious parties are a way of avoiding that dilemma.

Adam Keller is the author of *Terrible Days* (Cypres, £8.95). He was interviewed for *Jewish Socialist* by Michael Heiser.



This year in Jerusalem

Richard Schwartz recently visited Israel and the occupied territories as part of a delegation from the International Co-ordinating Committee of non-governmental organisations on the question of Palestine. He represents the International Jewish Peace Union on the Committee. He reports on people's hopes and fears.

I spent my first day on a kibbutz on which — in my younger Zionist days — I had once planned to live. All my remaining friends there are thinking of leaving. One couple is moving to town. He'd like to stay. She's bitterly unhappy there. An old schoolfriend is thinking of going back to Zimbabwe. He hasn't had to serve in the occupied territories since the Intifada. As a member of Yesh Gvul he would refuse. But says he doesn't have the energy to go back to prison as he did during the Lebanon debacle.

I dropped in on a third old friend, who was sick. (His son was also supposedly sick and mooched around disobeying half-hearted interdictions.) He felt trapped and thought Israel was getting unbearable. But with four kids, a Hobson's choice of passports (Israel/South Africa) and trained only as a dairy worker, his options, he feels, are limited. He votes Ratz (the Citizens Rights Movement) with no optimism whatsoever.

That evening I took a bus to Jerusalem and from the central bus station found a taxi to take me to the YWCA in East Jerusalem. The driver said lots of taxis are scared to go there.

Work began the next day with meetings in East and West Jerusalem. In the week that followed, we visited Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Jericho as well as crossing back and forth over the very re-established green line that cuts through Jerusalem itself. Opinions and impressions were gathered from

diverse encounters with individuals and NGOs covering the Zionist left to the PFLP (a national component of the PLO). Without exception, the Intifada now forms the staple food of all political diets.

Among the people we met were four lawyers. Felicia Langer stressed the need to campaign around the issue of protection for the Palestinians. "At the moment the Palestinians are protected neither by the laws of war nor by the laws of peace." Jonathan Kuttub — in his office in East Jerusalem — said the biggest task was to help the Israelis understand what was happening. He gave examples of the maze of orders emanating from the occupying authorities. "It is illegal to import into the occupied territories toys that look like guns or cause smoke, fire, etc."

Tamar Peleg, a lawyer with the Association of Civil Rights, said the main problems of prisoners are the difficulty of family visits, the outrageous conditions in which lawyers and clients meet, very mediocre food and no electricity. Only the Red Cross has precise figures of numbers arrested since the beginning of the Intifada. Amnon Zichroni let us take over his office one Friday afternoon to make a few calls and generally unwind.

The meeting room of Zu Haderech has enormous portraits of Marx and Lenin on the walls. The paint is bright but the pictures do not seem recent. Tamar Gozansky of Dai Lakibbush (Stop the Occupation) and Rakach (the Communist Party) explained that

after a meeting in April in Shulamit Aloni's office involving Mapam, Ratz, Yesh Gvul, Ad Kaan, Dai Lakibbush and Peace Now, the three largest reverted to their old framework, though there are cordial relations at a personal level across all these movements. Dai Lakibbush, she said, was not in the mould of traditional Israeli protest movements as it had a definite two state political programme, which nevertheless managed to attract supporters from numerous parties.

The Intifada has reduced the prominence of sectarian wars among left groups in Israel. Among the Israeli public as a whole, the following psychological obstacles to peace were pointed out by more than one activist:

- whether a two-state solution would be final or a "stage";
- a very low level of faith in PLO pronouncements;
- most Israelis would accept talking to the PLO, not necessarily trusting but trying. However, at present only around 20% would accept two states. Shulamit Aloni of Ratz estimates that some 20 MKs would be in favour;
- left Zionists are still wary of working with non-Zionists.

A Saturday visit to a school in Ramallah provided evidence of some of the wilder administrative deliria of the occupation. Part of the school had been welded closed. We witnessed new-state building at a micro level via children dancing and singing. They reminded me of movies of chalutzim. As we drove into town, we saw a burning car at

an intersection — apparently belonging to the local accountant for the occupation administration. There was no way through to our next appointment. The headmaster we were going to see had introduced a home study programme with the co-operation of parents to compensate for the closure of the vast number of schools. We were subsequently told that the authorities had accused him of "preventing normalisation".

Tel Aviv. Professor Avishai Erlich of Ad Kaan explained the workings of this campus-based organisation. He says the left-of-centre image of Israeli academics is greatly exaggerated. Ad Kaan's affiliated student group acts as an umbrella organisation for student groups on the left including Arab Students Committee, Campus, Ratz, Mapam and some Labour members. There are people active in both Ad Kaan and Peace Now. Peace Now, however, believes it must never be more than half a step ahead of public opinion. Consequently members of Peace Now tend to wear different hats for bolder initiatives or statements.

Erlich described a discussion he sat in on with three of his postgraduate students and explained why two of them refused to serve in the occupied territories. All were officers. One argued that you had to go to prevent excesses by the other soldiers. One of those who had already served once said that faced with the same conditions it was difficult not to react in the same way as other soldiers and he refused to be put in that position.

A visit to the Union of Palestine Medical Relief Committees in East Jerusalem was one of the most informative of the week. A trip to the Jericho area and the mobile clinics in surrounding villages showed up the number of gratuitous obstacles placed in the way of a grassroots organisation of health care. Water, as regards both drinking and irrigation, is a major issue. One village has been applying for seven years to be allowed to install a system of closed water piping. No joy so far. Parallel to the open and infected channel is a pipe which supplies a settlement. And so the desert blooms.

On the day before I left we spent the afternoon at the Knesset. Dedi Zucker of Ratz said the minimum requirements for Israel were recognition and security. The minimum terms for the Palestinians were self-determination and an independent state. Not irreconcilable. It seems obvious really.

Henry Stewart

reports

from Nablus

Nablus is the largest town on the West Bank, and the one that has suffered the heaviest casualties in the intifada. It is also the most traditional town, with strong fundamentalist support. But attitudes are changing and women are playing a role that would not have seemed possible ten years ago. A Working Women's Committee was established in 1981 and since the beginning of the intifada has been particularly important. The activities are varied. They include securing blood donations and staging demonstrations. The women have started kindergarten in two villages and a refugee camp, organised popular education classes when the schools were closed and trained hundreds in first aid.

"It is the first time that women here have challenged face to face," explained one of the organisers. "On 8 March 1,000 women demonstrated in Nablus. Our aim is to struggle side by side with men to achieve the Palestinian state. Men now respect us more than before. Even if they don't support us, they keep silent. They don't oppose our taking part." The mood here was one of conciliation. "We have fought for a long time. We want our land. But there is a problem. There are people, families on that land. We do not want them to suffer like we have."

The women also talk of the state of the children. Some have become more aggressive, others more depressed. One doctor talks of stress-related diseases in children as young as five. Another tells of a young girl who approached an Israeli soldier. "She held out an apple and said, 'If I give you this, will you bring my daddy back?'" The women complain that the soldiers arrest children to take fines from their parents. The common fine for stone-throwing is 250 Jordanian dinars, about four months' wages. If the parents can't pay they arrest the father and can threaten to demolish the family's house.

The economic pressure receives less attention. But the Israelis have imposed a range of "intifada taxes". These include a vehicle tax that averages £250, a £70 fee for travel to Jordan and stepped-up collection of income and property taxes. Naturally the Palestinians are not

keen to pay for the costs of the occupation and the Unified Leadership have called for a boycott of all Israeli levies. The Israelis have responded by making a range of certificates, such as driver's licences and approval to travel abroad, conditional upon tax payment. Palestinians cannot even register the birth of a new baby unless they are fully up-to-date with their payments. Palestinians I met did not drive outside their town or village for fear that their car would be confiscated on the spot at a roadblock for out-of-date tax. Curfews are imposed on areas for collection of taxes. Televisions and other valuables are seized if payment is not forthcoming.

Radical elements now talk of "disconnection", of severing as far as possible the links between Israel and the West Bank. That means boycotting Israeli goods, leaving Israeli employment and creating jobs in the occupied territories. There used to be 160,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza working over the green line. This is now said to be down to 90,000.

Arafat's Fatah group is the most popular among West Bank Palestinians, but only just. An opinion poll the day before the PNC meeting last November gave Fatah 28.5% of West Bank support against Habash's (PFLP) 25.5%. (There followed Ahmed Jibril with 8%, DFLP with 6%, Abu Musa with 5.5% and the Communist Party with 5%. The fundamentalist groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, scored only 4% and 3% respectively.)

Back in Jerusalem Seri Nesseyeh, of Bir Zeit University, explained the development of the Palestinian position. "It has been a gradual change, from the realisation in 1967 that Israel was here to stay. There are two problems, the problem of land and the problem of identity. In the past we thought that only by getting the whole land back could we restore our identity. Even that the land was more important than identity." He continued, "In the West Bank and Gaza the issue of national identity was crystallising. By 1982 it had become so prominent that the PNC was able to accept the Brezhnev proposal and the Fez agreement, both of which proposed two states. From 1982 it was legitimate within the PLO to talk of two states. We don't ask the Israelis to fall in love with Arafat. But we do need to know from Israelis to what extent they are ready to recognise us as a nation, to allow us our dignity and our self-determination."

Are equal opportunities policies succeeding or failing?

Bernard Misrahi looks at how they operate in his workplace.

Look at the job ads in any national newspaper. Almost every public body, and quite a few public companies, now proclaim their commitment to "equal opportunities". I'm afraid it makes me a bit cynical.

I don't doubt the sincerity of some of these organisations. Some Labour councils are seriously striving to end discrimination. But I wonder if they always realise how complex the process is.

I'd like to relate my own experience as a worker in a London day nursery. When I first arrived four years ago the staff group was very well balanced with many staff of Caribbean origin — either born in the UK or over there, a West African, a South African, a Greek and a Turkish Cypriot, an Asian, an Irishwoman and a Jew, and several more from England.

This could have been proof of successful implementation of the Equal Opportunities Employment Policy (EOEP), except it was achieved before the EOEP was established. Since then, as workers have left for other jobs or further education, their places have been taken mainly by white graduates (like myself). The West African worker has been promoted, several Caribbeans have entered further or vocational education and another worker is planning to return to her home country.

The EOEP cannot be blamed for workers leaving, except in one instance. Special courses have been arranged to attract black staff without academic qualifications to train as social workers. This is good for those going off to study and for the profession they will be entering. Unfortunately, under the new policy, the balance seems to be changing. Why?

As selection procedures have become more formal it is even more important for job candidates to express themselves well on paper and then give the "right" answer to questions at the interview. This naturally favours the more articulate

who may, or may not, be as good at the practical aspects of the job they are going for. This is not to criticise the white graduates, who are good at their job, but to suggest something is wrong with the recruitment procedure.

One black colleague was unsuccessful in her promotion interview and was angry because she felt she did not have the opportunity in her interview to show how her experience qualified her for the job. Possibly, someone who had more experience of interviews could turn the questions round in their favour. But then, that would test skill at interviews and not necessarily good judgment on the job.

When racism keeps black workers out of management or highly sought-after male manual jobs, it is understandable that an anti-racist council would abolish recruitment by "word of mouth" and root out other subjective practices that discriminate directly, or indirectly, against ethnic minorities. However, when they install bureaucratic procedures in a section which already has a good mix they might fail.

These councils train their managers to be aware of racism when they are interviewing candidates. It seems their role is sometimes reduced to invigilators of oral exams. They ask set questions, mark the answers and add up the score. Could they not be trusted to use some of their own judgments in probing for all the qualities an interviewee has?

Ironically, when it comes to selecting children who attend places at these nurseries it seems quite a different system operates. Those who know how the system works are far more likely to get a place for their child than those who don't. This favours parents who have had previous children looked after at the nursery, it favours their relatives who have learnt about the nursery and their friends.

The first rule is to apply for a place as soon as possible after the child is born. Better still, apply while pregnant. Of course, you don't want a place then but by the time your name comes up on the waiting list — one or two years later

— you will. If you wait until you are ready to work before you apply, your child might almost reach school age before a place is offered.

The result of this system in this borough is that the majority of the children are of African or Caribbean origin but very few are Asian, Greek or Turkish, even though these other communities are well represented in this part of London. (The council knows this because the figures from their own survey confirmed what was apparent, but have taken no action.) There is another reason for this disparity.

It is widely believed that only unmarried mothers can get their children into a day nursery. In the past this may have been true but, contrary to what some parents might still be told, this is not so. Of course, there are more than a few mothers in stable permanent relationships with the fathers of their children who insist to the allocations officer (under fives worker) that they are unmarried. (Under fives workers are often slightly sceptical about these declarations.) Anyway, once they've got the place, they don't lose it when Dad comes to collect the children from nursery.

However, many Asian and Cypriot mothers believe they have no chance because they are wives. They don't apply. They try to operate a home-worker's sewing machine with children at their feet.

If Afro-Caribbean families seem to be benefiting it seems to be because there are some rather dubious assumptions around, usually unspoken. They are in greater need of help in looking after their young children. As for Asian and Cypriot mothers, they don't go out to work anyway, and even if they do, they have an extended family to call on. The truth is this isn't always so, and Afro-Caribbeans often have an extended family around themselves.

The conclusion is fairly obvious. Good intentions are never enough. Councillors, and race relations advisors, should spend more time examining how their policies are working in practice. If they did, more of that they might improve their chances, in these difficult times, of staying in their jobs. ■

children living in areas with small ethnic minority populations. What is it we are trying to do? How do we do it? Is doing something always better than doing nothing — or does it sometimes merely contribute to existing stereotypes? Where the dominant culture is so strong, so unquestioned and so deeply and subtly integrated into every area of life, how can it be challenged? Should it be?

Since my experience in the school I have been responsible for the development of a children's facility in the area of central Scotland where I live. This is a Shoppers' Creche serving children throughout the town and outlying areas. Children between the ages of 18 months and 12 years may use it for a maximum of two hours a day. An average Creche population will therefore consist of a mixture of age ranges, and a mixture of casual and regular users. As a project initiated by the Women's Committee of a local authority which has a commitment to an equal opportunities policy, anti-racist and multi-cultural work has always been a part of Creche policy.

Accurate figures of ethnic minority populations for the area we serve are not available. Extrapolation from the 1981 Census and from more recent Scottish Office figures suggest an ethnic minority population of slightly under 1% of a total population of 81,000. Until recently, there has been a comfortable and erroneous belief that Scotland is not racist, a belief destroyed by the publication in recent years of various reports and surveys. Such evidence also challenges the assumptions prevalent among many of those working with very young children, that they are "colour-blind", or that if there is the odd case of racist abuse from a three-year-old, this has drifted in from "the home" and is nothing to do with the childcare establishment.

In the Creche we know, because we have heard them, that young children occasionally call others "Paki bastard" and "Jew", and that such epithets are intended as abuse. We are aware that ethnic minority adults and children in this area, as everywhere else, suffer racial harassment in their homes, at work, at school, and at play. We are also aware that many people living in this area, including Creche staff, have little or no contact of any kind with ethnic minority people. These issues have been tackled in three ways in the Creche; in terms of attracting ethnic minority children, by the way in which the specific incidents are dealt with, and by the general environment and activities offered.

Efforts are made to ensure that ethnic minority children and parents

know about the Creche and that they are welcome. It quickly became obvious that general publicity, although extensive, was not achieving this end. Ensuring that at least two batches of publicity a year are translated into Urdu and Chinese, and targeting that publicity effectively, has been unsuccessful in attracting Chinese children but successful in attracting Pakistani children and the children of overseas students at the university. Just how successful we don't know. Our evidence is impressionistic as we do not specifically monitor ethnic minority use. Should we?

Specific incidents of racial abuse are fairly rare but always confronted when they occur, and strong support for the victim is demonstrated. We have found that even very young children can absorb and respond to proper explanations of, for example, what is wrong with calling someone a "Paki bastard". They can also understand why the word "Paki" is not acceptable even when not intended as a term of abuse. We also discuss any incidents with the carers of children who have been the victims of abuse so that they can let us know their strategies, and the strategies they encourage their child to use to deal with racism.

Creche play equipment includes a chapati pan and a wok in the home corner, various "ethnic" dressing-up clothes and books in translation. Fifty per cent of the doll population, markedly unlike that of the Creche itself, is of ethnic minority origin! The African doll also has a penis; no wonder he looks solemn, carrying all those anti-sexist and anti-racist messages. A variety of festivals and events are celebrated in the Creche, including many of the Jewish festivals, Chinese New Year, Divali, as well as Christmas, Easter, Burns Night, Up Helly-aa, St Patrick's Day, etc. Cookery from different cultures is a frequent and popular activity. On many occasions, people of the cultures concerned come into the Creche to have an input into such activities.

All this is undeniably fun to do and the kids enjoy it but I do often wonder just what it all means to them. The nature of the Creche means that only rarely can activities be followed through with children on a long-term basis, with an exploration of feelings and attitudes. Individual Creche experiences are necessarily superficial although they may, in the case of regular Creche users, be cumulative. What does a child learn from playing with a wok, particularly if there is not a Chinese child in sight? It worries me that what we do often feels like the rape of other cultures for those aspects, and those aspects only,

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that can be easily simplified and used as activities for children. If children's only or principal experience of another culture is as an interesting craft activity, or cooking and eating "different" food, does this in fact add to existing stereotypes?

We are somehow on stronger ground with our own indigenous sectarianism. We *know* it is not acceptable for children to screen-print "King Billy" tee-shirts, to have their faces painted with the tricolour, or write "Fuck the Pope" on the blackboard. The Flute Band



This is the picture the local press used to show a Chinese event at the creche. Asian children "made do" and the paper didn't bother to spell their names right.

Racism is not confined to areas with large ethnic minority populations, and three-year-olds can be as abusive as adults. Sue Gutteridge takes a troubled look at how people working with children challenge racism and cultural bias

My daughter is the only Jewish child in her primary school. Several years ago, I organised a series of activities in the school based on *Purim* (Feast of Esther), *Chanukah* (Festival of Light) and *Pesach* (Passover). The school staff were enthusiastic and helpful. Both I and the children greatly enjoyed the venture which culminated in the

organisation of a *Seder* (Passover service). The day after this I attended the school's Easter service at which the minister declaimed that Christ had been killed by the Jews.

The issues raised by this have continued both to trouble me and to make me continually question the purpose and nature of anti-racist and multi-cultural work with

going past the window is not a jolly ethnic spectacle, and children are not encouraged to see it as such. As far as other cultures are concerned, what subtleties are we missing through our own ignorance and lack of emotional involvement?

Something of this ambivalence was captured for me in the photograph taken for the local paper at our most recent Chinese New Year celebration. The photographer, failing to find Chinese children, instead made do with two Pakistanis, both of whose names appeared in print spelt wrongly. ■

The antisemitism of some of English literature's most respected poets must be challenged, and not ignored, explained away or justified, says Michael Rosen

Jews of a sensitive disposition, read no further. What follows is unpleasant and may cause you to have misgivings about English High Culture, poetry, or civilisation itself.

I did "English Literature" at university, and in tutorials, lectures and informal conversations I picked up the idea that learning the skill of criticism was a way of becoming a better human being. By reading loads of "literature", reading loads of literary criticism and spending hours and hours gassing with people about books, I thought maybe I was living the most civilised life possible. Quite how I got this particular kind of bullshit into my head I'm not sure, and I'm unwilling simply to blame my university Eng Lit department. Some of it must have come from my attitude to my parents. They were brought up in the Jewish East End, became communists, educationists and literature freaks. I think I got it into my head that because my parents were "right" about everything, and "good people", some of this was down to the enormous number of literature-type books in our front room — not that either of them was into the "great-art-makes-you-great" thesis. In fact, one of my favourite anecdotes that my father tells takes place in Germany in 1946. He is billeted in a house owned by a Nazi officer, presumed dead. He describes how the man's photo album showed him as a young man at university before the Nazi take-over, then later joining Nazi organisations and finally standing in his officer's uniform. All his bookshelves were there untouched; his editions of Goethe, Schiller and other great German writers were sitting alongside *Mein Kampf* and its like. Clearly, reading great literature doesn't stop you being a Nazi.

Since university, I've been involved in English Literature in a different way: I'm English and I write literature. For some reason, this means that I seem to spend an enormous amount of time buying and reading poetry books. And here it is that I've bumped into that only-sometimes-visible smear, English upper-class antisemitism. Let's start with *The Comic and Humorous Reciter*, by Ernest Pertwee. "Reciters" were late Victorian and Edwardian collections of poems, sketches and monologues that people bought for "drawing room" amusement, amateur theatricals, after dinner speeches, elocution exams, end-of-term parties and other fun moments in the middle class calendar. They provide a window into the minds of turn-of-the-century middle class people (mostly men). Here we can find the butts of their humour: the working class "poet" who can't spell and screws up his words; the Irish idiot; the German immigrant into America trying to be as American as apple pie; sexy French teachers; naughty precocious children; married women who have a secret soft spot for a "visitor"; the "common man" trying to appreciate classical music; Chinese names; Dutch accents; idiot and drunk black servants; uppity women; stutterers; the deaf; Arab story-tellers and so on and so on. A prize of one complete hole out of a fresh bagel to the first person to guess who I've left off the list.

We come first in a sketch in the form of the money-grubbing merchant blinded from recognising his "own kind" by his pathological need to trade. But our star appearance is in *The White Squall* by William

Thackeray, writer of the great classic *Vanity Fair* and the breathtakingly funny poem about a "Chinese sage" who (wait for it) couldn't reach his "pig-tail" — a poem I had to learn by heart when I was about seven. In *The White Squall*, instead of the money-grubbing merchant Jew, or the Briton-oppressing banker Jew, we get the dirty, greasy, chicken-rearing Jew. On board ship,

*We'd a hundred Jews to larboard;
Unwashed, uncombed, unbarbered —
Jews black, and brown and grey;
With terror it would seize ye,
And make your souls uneasy,
To see those Rabbis greasy
Who did nought but scratch and pray:
Their dirty children puking —
Their dirty saucepans cooking —
Their dirty fingers hooking
Their swarming fleas away.*

Later when the squall comes:

*Then all the fleas in Jewry
Jumped up and bit like fury;
And the progeny of Jacob
Did on the maindeck wake up
(I wot those greasy Rabbis
Would never pay for cabins);
And each man moaned and jabbered in
His filthy Jewish gaberdine...*

For good measure there's a few groaning Greeks and cursing Turks thrown in too. I can't get out of my mind the idea that nice chaps in Chelsea and Chesham had a real rollicking good time bellowing out this stuff in the early part of this century while Frank Isakofsky (my mother's father) or Joseph Chipke (my father's grandfather) were some of these "dirty children puking".

But this is just light verse, I hear an Eng Lit heavy telling me. Great art isn't sullied with this stuff. Well, we all know about Shylock. My own eccentric position on him is that Shakespeare uses Shylock and Jews as his yardstick of beastly bourgeois ways and then shows how all the civilised and decent non-Jews around all behave as badly or worse. In this process, he gives all the really powerful and moving lines to the Jew. Three hundred years later things aren't so ambivalent. T S Eliot, Hilaire Belloc, G K Chesterton, W S Gilbert (Sullivan's other half) and Rudyard Kipling all clearly thought Jews were a rich, exploitative, smug, lying set of bastards. Much of this has been documented even if it is buried in boring academic biographies. What interests me is how, in 1989, are these outbursts of antisemitism handled? And I don't mean handled within the coterie of lit crit but in school textbooks and popular editions of poetry.

Let's start with T S Eliot, thought by some to be the father of modern English poetry. He peppers his poems with snide little references to people with Jewish names. "And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner, / Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp..." (an estaminet being a smoky cafe). Or "Rachel née Rabinovitch / Tears at the grapes with murderous paws." So how does George Macbeth explain to school students what T S Eliot thought he was up to with this sort of thing? Referring to the first of these two examples, he says: "The apparent antisemitism of the passage about the Jew has been used to accuse Eliot of latent emotional Fascism, but in fact this kind of reference is frequent and casual in the writing of the period and no more significant or dishonourable than similar ones in *The Merchant of Venice*" (from *Poetry 1900 to 1965* by George Macbeth, Longmans). Note the cunning method of

argument here: misrepresent your opponent's argument and then shoot it down. Of course, we don't claim that a civilised antisemite necessarily makes a "Fascist", and for George Macbeth to go on and justify Eliot with the idea that antisemitic snipes were simply common usage at the time is absurd: firstly, some writers weren't antisemitic — old Robert Browning and George Eliot were both Jew lovers if anything, Browning writing a poem about the Pope's barbaric herding of Jews into St Peter's Square to be preached to; secondly, some writers were Jews(!); and thirdly, some writers were anti-antisemites. I was inclined to give George Macbeth the benefit of the doubt about all this, thinking of him as more drunk on the Great Literature thesis — never mind the ideology just feel the quality — than actively antisemitic. However, I heard recently that at Oxford he belonged to a select little right-wing club that produced a magazine called *Right*(!).

But how about this? In Kenneth Baker's anthology, *I Have No Gun But I Can Spit*, Kipling's *Gehazi* is included, with the apology: "In this piece of sustained vituperation Kipling combines his latent antisemitism with hatred of the slippery politician and the financial speculator." (Sir Rufus Isaacs, a minister in the Lloyd George government, was guilty of graft.) Well, at least Baker has been reasonable enough to point out where Kipling was at, though, of course, he could have left it out of the anthology altogether if he was bothered about it (unless it's a piece of Baker self-preening, proving just how decent a Tory minister he really is). However, in a Faber collection, the ludicrously named *Political Verse*, the poet Tom Paulin includes the very same poem with no explanation, no footnote, nothing. Perhaps only a sin of omission rather than commission here, but how insensitive!

Finally, Stevie Smith. I've always been keen on her nutty stuff and so went out and bought her collected poems (Penguin). On page 280 we come across "A Jew is Angry with his Friend who does not Believe in Circumcision". Here, the Jew gets cross with the friend and says:

*I'll dock you of your foreskin and something
else that will end
All hope of posterity, no little Sadducees will
you beget
When I've finished with you, but sir in a
eunochy fret
Waiting for death to relieve you of a hated life
You look a little pale
What ho, a knife, a knife.*

What an interesting little number! How did she think that one up? I'm not in favour of circumcision myself but I don't remember stories of Jews castrating and/or excising uncircumcised willies. Puts a whole new interpretation on the phrase "blood libel", doesn't it?

Obviously, Penguin can't produce something called "collected works" and leave things out. However, the book has one of those nauseating glowing introductions where some fan slavers about the great artist for five pages. Needless to say, there is no mention here of the extraordinary, knife-wielding Jew of page 280, so I have written inside the back cover:

What fun it is to be a critic
reading poems that are antisemitic.
Eliot, Chesterton, Thackeray too
loved to write of the hateful Jew.
And good old Gilbert of Sullivan fame
pitched in against the hateful same.
Cuddly Stevie Smith, as well
wanted us to go to hell.
Our lives are very much the richer
for reading English Literature.

The Black Book

Charlie Pottins discovered some chilling parallels when he researched the anti-homosexual conspiracy theories propagated by the Right during the First World War

By the winter of 1917 the British Army had lost more than a quarter of a million men in a few months of hell in the shell-ravaged quagmire of Passchendaele. On 10 February 1918 a small ad appeared in the *Sunday Times*, announcing two private performances of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* at the Prince of Wales Theatre, starring the dancer Maud Allan.

One might be hard put to make a connection between these events other than on a surrealist canvas. But the conspiracy theorists could; and though Wilde's depiction of bloody sadism from lust might resonate strangely with the slaughter for greed in Flanders, that wasn't the connection made, or wanted. If the war wasn't going well, someone must be blamed.

The politicians could blame the generals. The generals blamed the politicians. But people like Arnold White, Marie Corelli, Pemberton Billing MP, Hamilton Beamish and Harold Spencer concocted a much more ingenious theory. There was a Hidden Hand at work undermining Britain. It was the Jews. Them and the urnings. The urnings?

Pemberton Billing had set up a paper called *The Imperialist* with financial help, it is said, from Beaver-

brook. When the wily Canadian press lord joined Lloyd George's government and his right-wing Tory allies felt cheated, *The Imperialist* became *The Vigilante*, and carried on campaigning; Beaverbrook joined its foes.

Arnold White was an antisemite, who had campaigned against Jewish immigration (albeit not averse to taking Jewish money to explore other places for Jews to settle — as far from these shores as possible). Now he was concerned about prominent Jews in government circles. But an article by him in the right-wing *English Review* at the end of 1917, reproduced in *The Vigilante*, raised another danger. Entitled "Efficiency and Vice", it claimed that most German men were homosexuals. As evidence, White cited a book by Otto Weininger extolling love between men, and the campaign to repeal Clause 175 of the German Penal Code which made sexual acts between men an offence. "How does all this German garbage, which I am forced to quote, affect the course of the war?" asked White, as well he might. Not that he was in any real doubt. Not only were the German troops raping women, as every English newspaper reader knew, but they were out to spread homosexuality among Englishmen, to undermine national efficiency.

But if homosexuality so sapped a nation's spirit, how come all those homosexuals — urnings was the German expression White borrowed to show his erudition — hadn't already weakened Germany itself? Don't get logical now; we have entered the strange realm of conspiracy theory! "The English conception of their national life is that the home is the unit of the nation..." White explained, "but if the conception of home life is replaced by the *Kultur* of the urnings, the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon world wilts and perishes..."

If the 70-year-old White's fear of wilting wasn't enough, he went on to warn of "the systematic seduction of young British soldiers by the German urnings and their agents..." and "a great cancer, made in Germany" eating at the heart of civilisation. "Every father and mother in the British Empire should know" that legalisation of homosexuality was one of the aims of the German Empire, to restore Sodom and Gomorrah, and "infect clean nations with the Hunnish erotomania".

"When the blond beast is an urning, he commands the urnings in other lands. They are moles. They burrow. They plot. They are hardest at work when they are most silent. Britain is only safe when her statesmen are family men..."

White made one serious mistake. He suggested that even the Kaiser's family and the other great German houses were "tainted with the inherent vices of the Huns...". Moutbatten (Battenburg) had been treated as a suspect alien; Margot Asquith might be whispered about as an alleged lesbian; but attributing a tainted inheritance to the relatives of the British Royal Family was going too far.

The Black Book

On 26 January 1918, however, *The Imperialist* had carried another sensational tale: "The First 47,000", written by Captain Harold Spencer, which began: "There exists in the cabinet noire of a certain German prince a book compiled by the Secret Service from the reports of German agents who have infested this

country for the past 20 years, agents so vile and spreading debauchery of such a lasciviousness as only German minds could conceive and German bodies execute."

This "Black Book", he claimed, contained instructions for "the propagation of evils which all decent men thought had perished in Sodom and Lesbia". But the book also listed, according to Spencer, "the names of 47,000 English men and women... Privy Councillors, youths of the chorus, wives of Cabinet Ministers, dancing girls, even Cabinet Ministers themselves, while diplomats, poets, bankers, editors, newspaper proprietors and members of His Majesty's household follow each other with no order of precedence..."

This veritable London phone book, however, also contained details "of the unnatural defloration of children who were drawn to the parks by the summer evening concerts..." German bands, perhaps? And if the worthy readers of *The Imperialist* weren't already salivating, there was more: "Wives of men in supreme positions were entangled. In lesbian ecstasy the most sacred secrets of State were betrayed." One can just imagine it, that insistent throaty whisper at the height of passion: "Cynthia, about the secret clauses of the Sykes-Picot agreement concerning the Dardanelles..."

Well, perhaps romantic novelist Marie Corelli could swallow it, being an antisemite and devotee of conspiracy theory. On 10 February, seeing the advertisement for Maud Allan's performance, Miss Corelli promptly clipped it and sent it to the office of *The Vigilante*, as Pemberton Billing's paper had just been re-named. She enclosed a note:

Dear Mr Billing,

I think it would be well to secure a list of subscribers to this new "upholding" of the Wilde "cult" among the 47,000.

Yours sincerely

Marie Corelli.

PS Why "private" performances?

The reason they were private was simple, as Corelli should have known. The Lord Chamberlain had banned public performances of *Salome*.

Captain Spencer was first to see Marie Corelli's billet doux, and although *The Vigilante* was about to go to press, he felt inspired to include the following little item:

The Cult of the Clitoris

To be a member of Maud Allan's private performances in Oscar Wilde's *Salome* one had only to apply to a Miss Valetta, of 9 Duke Street, Adelphi, WC. If Scotland Yard were to seize the list of these members, I have no doubt they would secure the names of several thousand of the first 47,000.

On trial

Encouraged by her producer, Jack Grein, Maud Allan decided to sue Pemberton Billing for "obscene libel", treating his headline as an allegation of lesbianism. The trial, which opened on 29 May 1918, must rank as one of the most bizarre in British legal history, with strange witnesses for the defence, attempts to drag in the names of the famous, and the most jumbled pseudo-expertise on "sexual perversions" interspersed with readings of Wilde's purple prose, like "thy mouth like the vermilion that the Moabites find".

Curiously, as David Rose discovered ("Secrets of a Closed Society", *Guardian Weekend* 7 January 1989), there is still a file in the Public Record Office at Kew listed as "The Black Book mentioned in the criminal libel action against Mr Pemberton Billing MP". It's in "HO (for Home Office) 144/364780, 1918. And it is "closed for 100 years".

Pemberton Billing's mode of defence was to step up his attack, making little distinction between Maud Allan and the character she portrayed on stage, and imputing lesbianism, sadism and necrophilia, as well as reminding the court that *Salome* was under age! He argued that unless Maud Allan had a medical education, the fact that she understood the word "clitoris" was itself proof of her immorality! And he was allowed to bring up the little known, and irrelevant, fact that a brother of Maud Allan had been hanged for murder in Canada, declaring that this showed a hereditary evil in her family.

Turning his attack to the play's producer, Jack Grein (who, besides being a foreigner and a Jew, was a protégé of the now hated Beaverbrook), Billing now brought up the "Black Book" and the famous 47,000. He called as witness a Mrs Eileen Villiers-Stuart, who claimed to have been shown the Book by two officers, now unfortunately killed in action in Palestine. But that wasn't all. She had seen some of the names in it. "Is Mrs Asquith's name in the book?" (The former prime minister's wife had already been mentioned for having invited Maud Allan to tea at Downing Street before the war.) Both Mr and Mrs Asquith were listed, claimed Mrs Villiers-Stuart. "And Lord Haldane?" Him too. And, to put the final cherry on the cake, the witness was able to testify that Mr Justice Darling, who was hearing the case, was in the "Black Book" too!

Special witnesses

A former mistress of Neil Primrose, government Chief Whip and son of Lord Roseberry, who was one of the officers killed in Palestine, Villiers-Stuart implied both that he had let the "Black Book" get back to Germany, and that he had been killed for what he knew. Nothing if not patriotic, she had since married first one, then another, soldier, and was later to face charges of bigamy. At the time of the trial, she was claiming to have been employed as a secret agent to discredit Pemberton Billing, but to have switched to his side.

Captain Harold Spencer, who claimed to have seen the "Black Book" while on special service in Albania, said he had been warned by senior officers in military intelligence that to publicise it "would undermine the whole fabric of the government". He had come to fear that "the Germans had such a grip on our affairs that nothing could be done". But then, through meeting Henry Hamilton Beamish at a meeting of the National Party, he had been introduced to Pemberton Billing. Besides giving details of German plots and naming some names, the author of "The First 47,000" was able to enlighten the court on such matters as sadism, and the meaning of "orgasm", explaining also that he'd obtained the word "clitoris" from his village doctor. What Captain Spencer was less forthcoming about was his own medical discharge from the forces on grounds of "delusional insanity".



"The hidden hand" theme which so excited antisemites and other reactionaries, also featured in this New Year card sent out by MI5. The antisemitic Britons society formed by H H Beamish published a magazine called *The Hidden Hand* in the 1920s, as well as the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

A Dr Cooke, Tuberculosis Officer for Lambeth, was brought in as an authority on Kraft-Ebbing and sexuality to testify that, in his belief, Jack Grein must be a sadist and a "sodomist"; that anyone connected with Oscar Wilde's play must have "a perverted mind"; and that the phrase, "The Cult of the Clitoris", was legitimate as a heading.

While judge and jury were struggling to swallow, if not digest, all this erudite information, a character from an earlier case was brought in for a touch of class — none other than Lord Alfred Douglas, once Oscar Wilde's friend "Bosie", now ready to call Wilde "the greatest force for evil that has appeared in Europe during the last 350 years ... the agent of the devil in every possible way". Regretting his part in translating *Salome*, "a most pernicious and abominable piece of work", he agreed that it could only appeal to perverts — and Germans. "Bosie" was cheered from the public gallery when the case ended — with Pemberton Billing's acquittal and a homily from Justice Darling against Wilde's play and Maud Allan's immodest costume on stage.

This trial, in which the editor of *The Vigilante* was able to turn the plaintiffs into the accused, and make the court a platform for his campaign demagoguery and fanaticism, puts on show the ignorant bigotry and political corruption of its period. But more than that: the evidence suggests that Maud Allan was targeted so viciously simply because she had innocently strayed on to the battlefield of a dirty political war. There was indeed a "Hidden Hand": that of a powerful right-wing faction among the ruling class, backing, using and protecting the fanatical Pemberton Billing and his crew.

Jingoism and bigotry

In March 1914, just months before world war broke out, the British government had faced revolt. The Ulster Unionists armed against Home Rule, the British Army officers staged their "Mutiny at the Curragh" (telling the King they would refuse orders to march against Ulster), and the mighty in the land gathered at country houses to cheer right-wing rebellion. At Westminster the prime minister was shouted down: Margot Asquith commented that she had "never known the Tories so vile". The ever-patriotic *Daily Express* said the PM deserved "neither respect nor a hearing". The government backed down.

The war brought no respite from internal conflict. In 1916, the Right hoped Asquith's fall would bring the Ulster Unionist, Carson, and imperialist, Lord Milner, into office. Disappointed, they had turned on Lloyd George and Beaverbrook. Now, in 1918, with rumours that the Hague negotiations on prisoners of war might lead to peace moves, it was the military and the extreme Right who backed Pemberton Billing, crusading against "traitors".

Mixing patriotic hysteria with sexual anxiety, jingoism and bigotry, moral panic and paranoia, Pemberton Billing and his associates stirred a potent and poisonous brew. But it was not their only weapon. Hatred of the "alien" and, specifically, the Jew, was a persistent theme with them.

On 23 March 1918 as a German counteroffensive drove the British back in Flanders, *The Vigilante* "explained" that the Germans and "the Ashkenazim" had

"complete control of the White Slave Traffic"; and blamed Jewish-controlled prostitutes for deliberately spreading disease among the British troops.

Earlier, an article thought to be by H H Beamish had suggested that Beaverbrook's family name, Aitken, might be "derived from an original name of Isaacs. If this is true, he belongs to the same tribe as out Lord Chief Justice..."

As for another paper saying that the writing was on the wall for Germany because revolution loomed, Beamish warned: "The real writing on the wall is in German but the characters are Hebrew and the deceptive whole is known to the world as Yiddish, the camouflaged tongue of the Bolsheviks."

The last issue of *The Vigilante* appeared on 9 February 1919. A few months later, Henry Hamilton Beamish founded the Britons society, which was joined by Lord Sydenham of Coombe and others including Victor Marsden, *Morning Post* correspondent and translator of the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The "Britons" became publishers of the *Protocols* and Beamish became a strong Nazi sympathiser in later years.

Between 1920 and 1923 Lord Alfred Douglas and Captain Harold Spencer ran a weekly called *Plain English*. Their pet theory was that Jews had contrived the death of Lord Kitchener when his ship went down in 1916, and had also profited in some way from the Battle of Jutland, with the help of Winston Churchill.

It all seems so long ago and far away, and yet... And yet in 1988, seventy years after Pemberton Billing presented homosexuality as a conspiracy, the Conservative government inserted a clause in its Local Government Act outlawing the "promotion" of lesbianism and homosexuality. In the autumn of that year, *Choice*, published by the Dowager Lady Birdwood, featured Victor Marsden's version of the infamous *Protocols* as a genuine document.

And, as though to prove that nobody learns anything from history, a Jew, Sir Alfred Sherman, consorts with the French fascist leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who thought the gas chambers "a mere detail", then writes in the *Jewish Chronicle* (23 December 1988) attacking left-wingers, not least fellow Jews, for "the promotion of unnatural vice"; blames "disaffected ethnic minorities who abuse our tolerance" and "sexual perverts" of being alike part of a conspiracy to overturn "ordered society".

From his defence of "order" to conspiracy theory, from his espousal of "Christian values" to indignation against disaffected minorities; what a pity a mere detail of ancestry must inhibit the next logical step of endorsing some edition of the *Protocols*. And how the Pemberton Billings and Beamishes must be laughing, somewhere in hell.

Further reading

Sex Scandals by Keeler and Meadley (Xanadu, 1985)
Salome's Last Veil by Michael Kettle (Granada, 1977). This gives a full account of the trial and background.
British Fascism edited by Lunn and Thurlow (Croom Helm, 1980). Particularly important is the chapter by Gisela C Lebselter on Beamish.
Fascism in Britain by Richard Thurlow (Basil Blackwell, 1987).

What's in a word?

David Rosenberg argues that the word used to describe the Nazi extermination process reveals the ideologies currently dominating Jewish life.

Recent issues of *Jewish Socialist* have carried a lively debate on the use of "Holocaust analogies" in political rhetoric. Tara Kaufmann's article (JS14) unearthed some of the dubious motives at work here while James Baaden's article (JS15) pointed to the lack of precision and care which characterises much of this rhetoric. He argued that this shows little respect for those who perished and does not offer a clear basis for relevant political analysis today.

Any number of distant political battles are being waged with reference to the extermination of European Jewry. A more directly relevant struggle is being waged over the naming of this process of extermination, with important implications for the Jewish world.

James Baaden criticised the use of the term "Holocaust", as coined by Elie Wiesel 30 years ago, as a vague and ubiquitous historical shorthand with mystical overtones. In its original Greek use, he says, it applied to religious ritual sacrifices. Now, however, the term "Holocaust" is on its way out, superseded by *Shoah* (catastrophe) — a Hebrew term. Claude Lanzmann added considerable weight to this renaming through his epic film of the same name, but the change was already in process as the term was already being popularised by a number of academics engaged in "Holocaust studies", no doubt soon to be called "*Shoah* studies". Now it is used as the preferred term not only by these academics but by a range of Jewish bodies. Left of centre cultural magazines like the *Jewish Quarterly* regularly refer to the *Shoah*. A recent conference on the reaction of the British state and society to the Nazi genocide of Jewry talked in its promotional

material about bringing the *Shoah* into British historical discussions.

To some, the debate over words may seem trivial or pedantic. To others it may seem in very bad taste to even entertain this discussion — the terrible events that occurred cannot be mitigated by playing with words, but words can be used consciously or unconsciously to exploit that suffering for very distasteful political ends.

This is what is happening today. And the battle over how to describe the past is being waged with an eye not on the past but on the present and the future. In essence, it is part of an ongoing ideological struggle to maintain Zionist hegemony in Jewish life — an outlook which holds that the extermination of European Jewry and the subsequent creation of Israel should be seen as one organic event. This historical view is particularly important to those who seek to fend off legitimate attacks on current Israeli policy.

In this deterministic analysis, the genocide becomes part of *Israeli* history. And for Zionist ideologues, *Israeli* history is interchangeable with *Jewish* history. Israel sees itself not as one outcome of a major episode in Jewish history but as the guardian of that history, with the right to define it and convey it on behalf of the Jewish people.

As Jewish historical events come to be described in an Israelocentric context, so Israel draws lessons from them which, it claims, apply to the Jewish people as a whole. From Israel's point of view, the message from the genocide of European Jewry is not the evil of nationalism but its merit; not the dangers of the military fortress state but its necessity.

These positions on history must be seen in the context of Israel's negation of the diaspora. The term *Shoah* is not casually used as one among others, but selected instead of others — most significantly instead of *khurbn* (destruction) — the Yiddish word, derived from classical Hebrew, used by the survivors to describe the event in their common language. When the

Jews of Europe were decimated, so was their language and culture of Yiddish. For its own specific nationalist political reasons, Israel has reinforced the destruction of Yiddish culture since the Nazi genocide, when it was in a position to do otherwise, and it has helped deprive Jews of the means to describe their experiences in their common language.

Given that *Khurbn* is itself a classical Hebrew word, there are no reasons apart from ideological choices why Israeli scholars today should substitute another Hebrew term. They have *Khurbn*, a perfectly good Hebrew word, still in common usage. There is even less excuse for the term *Shoah* to be the preferred usage among diaspora communities, especially among those people within them who know better. It is one more case — but a particularly poignant one — of the Hebraisation and Zionisation of diaspora Jewish life.

The use of *Shoah* instead of *Khurbn* or other terms from the national languages where Jews live is also very important in terms of understanding the event in its historical and political context. While *Shoah* is a catastrophe without precedent in Jewish history — a uniquely terrible event, *Khurbn* is also referred to as the *dritter khurbn* (third destruction) — seeing it as an event that has links and parallels with previous Jewish experience, in this case the destruction of the first and second temple. Those who insist on *Shoah* are denying parallels or points of comparison either in Jewish history or in the history of other peoples. It becomes instead an ahistorical and inexplicable event, and the use of a Hebrew term to describe it emphasises that it is seen as an essentially Jewish event.

The extermination of Europe's Jews took place within the very specific context of fascism in power. And when in power, fascism claimed millions of lives. The Jews perished within a systematic programme of extermination. Although on a smaller scale, Gypsies and homosexuals also were destroyed by the same machinery of mass murder. Those who are engaged in combating racism and fascism today — Jews and non-Jews — need a language that can delineate the specific experiences endured by particular communities as well as describing the common experiences and common fate they shared with other communities at the hands of fascism, rather than words that principally serve the ideological needs of a narrow Jewish state nationalism.

Stage left

The Second Time as Farce
by David Edgar
(Lawrence & Wishart, £12.95)

David Edgar's credentials as a political essayist and cultural observer are unique. His career spans commitment to political theatre and entertainment in Bradford in the late '60s through long-term and dedicated work for the anti-fascist movement on the magazine, *Searchlight*, plays for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Court and National theatres and a later return to a form of community theatre in Dorchester. His book, *The Second Time as Farce*, brings together diverse yet thematically linked writings on culture and politics. Not surprisingly, as the articles were written for a variety of publications, they are uneven in depth of analysis and scope. The tone is personal and experiential — at once a strength and a weakness — and the essays as a group provide some fascinating insights into a complex and disturbing period of cultural and political change.

They cover a remarkable range charting developments in the performing arts in the light of such factors as the rise of Thatcherism as a radically reactionary force in the context of the right here and in the US; and the problems, achievements and challenges on the left and in the Labour movement since the '60s. For Edgar, the '60s are a touchstone for the left and the progressive forces. For the right, they are a threat, the memory of which is to be obliterated at all costs. He returns to this theme repeatedly and makes a clear case for the view that the alternative organisational, cultural and political forms discovered and developed by the women's, gay, black, peace and other movements in the '60s are still a vital force today and remain a resource which the established left has failed to acknowledge but the right has not. Much of this has been argued by others, but Edgar comes at the material from an angle of his own. There is considerable dexterity in the way he extracts aspects of

this paradox from the political and cultural scene. In *Why Live Aid came Alive* he argues that the Tory government was struck dumb by this hugely successful and enterprising charitable event which challenged outright a demonology in which Rock'n'Roll and the Youth Culture are inextricably linked with the supposedly degenerate, hooligan-producing '60s.

Oddly, however, the writings on the performing arts are the least satisfactory parts of the book. It is here that the personal tone becomes a source of weakness. Whereas the political/cultural writings are founded on a broadly-based theory and knowledge, Edgar seems unable to bring the same breadth of vision to his own experience as a writer. The essays provide space for an inside view of a poorly-documented area of theatre. This view reflects the experience of a writer/activist and his colleagues within an arts structure which is fundamentally at odds with them. It is of value and of interest but too often Edgar fails to place the issues and debates in their historical context. Within his generally well-informed arguments these failures stand out.

Consequently, *Thoughts for a Third Term* contains a useful critique of the permeation by entrepreneurial values of the policies of the Royal Shakespeare Company and an account of the political processes by which this happened. In *Public Theatre in a Private Age*, on the other hand, the theoretical basis for the debate on agitprop/naturalism/social realism is unclear and produces a host of contentious generalisations about socialist and community theatre. This suggests that Edgar's recent interventions in this field are from a position of relative isolation.

An underlying weakness here is a failure to investigate and define the relationship of socialist, or indeed any theatre with its audience. What reciprocity exists? Precisely who is informing whom in the relationship and how? Edgar's tacit assumptions about these issues remain unexamined. In *Festivals of the Oppressed* there is the sense that all the dedicated and well-informed

thinking which Edgar the writer is putting into consideration of what new forms might best suit our present purposes, is taking place outside the spheres of existence of those very audiences for whom they are intended. This is not to say that thinking is not to be welcomed. As Edgar points out, there is not nearly enough of it on the left.

It is in the political writings, particularly those on the Conservative Party and the New Right, where the essays are at their most authoritative and where the combination of theoretical understanding and personal experience are most effective, convincing and useful. In *Racism, Fascism and the National Front*, Edgar thoroughly and concisely outlines the theoretical basis of Fascism, described by Fest as "a politically organised contempt for the mind". He surveys its counter-revolutionary objectives, its class base and its retrogressive, nostalgic radicalism which brings it into apparent conflict with aspects of Capital itself through opposition to the internationalised economy. In particular, he points out that German National Socialism saw the internationalisation of both bourgeoisie and proletariat in terms of a radical conspiracy theory "which served to combine in one theoretical model the wide varieties of enemy that faced the potential support groups of the Nazi party". The alliance posited between the international banker and monopolist and the international Marxist was racialised. "As Hitler said, 'Only an anti-semitic is a true anti-communist'."

Edgar then traces the links between this form of antisemitism and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and relates these to present National Front antisemitism and anti-black racism. He distinguishes between the two racisms and posits that the second arises out of the Nazis' working up of the fear of miscegenation, manipulated for the ends of the destruction of the white races by the Jews whose racial purity is the one thing about them that is not in doubt! In the Nazis' view, this is supposed to achieve for the

Jews (whom they see as simultaneously Marxist revolutionaries and international capitalists) the establishment of a world government.

He argues that while there is no doubt that many National Front supporters blame the blacks for unemployment, housing problems, etc, the NF as classic Nazis, hierarchical to the core, at root blame the Jews for the blacks, seeing black people as passive and racially inferior victims of the international Jewish conspiracy. This provides a useful theoretical world-view on which to base their bids for power. The failure of the NF to capitalise thoroughly on the issue of immigration is attributed both to this inherent weakness for the full-blown Nazi ideology and to the alacrity with which both the

and control their militancy, the fascists fear and hate them as a passive instrument of an international conspiracy. The defeat of state racism, therefore, will not remove the threat of fascism, but on the contrary will increase the danger. The reverse is also true.

Edgar readily admits that for some years he had crucially underestimated the reactionary capacity of the Conservative party to respond to the challenges of the '80s and to draw support away from the fascist parties. However, the distinctions drawn and the marshalling of material are impressive in a short article and form a useful working introduction to the issues. The same can be said for the other articles in this section. *The Free or the Good* delineates the main features of the New Right and describes how the currents of the New and Old Rights flow into Liberal and Authoritarian Conservatism and with what consequences. *Dreams of the Volk* deals with the assaults on anti-racism and multi-culturalism by *The Salisbury Review* and proceeds to a discussion of the "socialising" of economic and industrial issues. *Let Them Eat Dirt* neatly relates the views on class of columnist Auberon Waugh to the revival of the "kind of blatant, rancorous class contempt unseen in most of our lifetimes" which followed the unsuccessful early endeavours of the Thatcher government to change the working class's conception of itself using "a strange refraction of the doctrine of false consciousness". It concludes by thanking Waugh for consistently reminding us that Conservatism is not just about unleashing entrepreneurialism but is also about the reassertion of "the most crude and atavistic of class hatreds".

This is a stimulating collection. It is full of insights and illuminations which arise from Edgar's special understandings as a cultural worker. Some of its difficulties derive from the problems of creating a practical, personal and flexible language of the left with which to talk about theatre in a situation where such writing is the province of critics

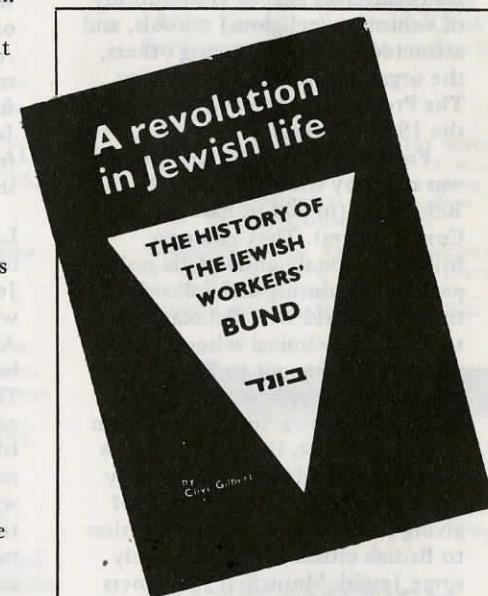
rather than of practitioners who, on the whole, remain silent. Other difficulties can be attributed to the disarray and unresolved divisions in the field of left theatre following upon the decay of the movement of the '60s and '70s and the draining away of its funding and human resources. That a practitioner should have achieved the credibility to speak with authority is to be welcomed and should encourage others to follow suit, cheered, perhaps, by the vein of optimism and affirmation that runs through the book. Whatever reservations I might hold about some of Edgar's views, I certainly welcome his re-opening of the debate.

FRANCES RIFKIN



main political parties have responded to popular racist demands in the form of successive pieces of legislation over the years, thus attracting support which would have gone to the fascist parties.

Edgar coherently distinguishes between the strategies of the NF, the state and the political parties in relation to racism. He points out that fascist strategy is an *alternative* to that of the state, not a continuation of it. Whereas the state accepts the presence of black people and seeks to limit their numbers



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Jewish interest in the capital

London Jewry and
London Politics 1889-1986
by Geoffrey Alderman
(Routledge, £25)

London had an elected authority from 1889 to 1986. Its existence saw London Jewry evolve from a largely immigrant and proletarian minority to (with some notable exceptions) a predominantly middle class and suburban population. This book traces the relationship between London Jewry and London's elected authorities, first the London County Council and, from 1965, the Greater London Council. From 1889 to 1907 the Council was controlled by the Progressives (an alliance of Liberals and Fabians). A number of measures of benefit to Jews in London were passed during this period. New houses were built, thus alleviating overcrowding. There was regulation of the sweated industries in which large numbers of Jews worked. However, the Progressives set themselves against state subsidy of voluntary (religious) schools, and attracted the ire of, among others, the organised Jewish community. The Progressives were defeated in the 1907 election.

From 1907 to 1934 the Council was ruled by the Municipal Reformers (in all but name Conservatives). They came to follow an openly antisemitic policy, particularly during and following the First World War. Scholarships to Council technical schools were not awarded except to British born children of a British born parent and "alien contractors" were taken off the LCC list. During the 1920s the Council had an explicit policy of not employing "aliens" and of giving priority in housing allocation to British citizens. Unfortunately some Jewish Municipal Reformers were prepared to go along with this. Alderman quotes Isadore Salmon as comparing the LCC to a testator "entitled to think of his own sons before providing for his more distant relations or friends".

From 1934 until its abolition in 1965, the LCC was under the majority control of the Labour Party. However, even with Lewis Silkin chairing the Housing Committee, the anti-alien policy regarding both housing and employment remained intact.

Alderman ascribes this to the fear of fascism in the 1930s, particularly given the presence of German-Jewish refugees. Among both the Board of

Deputies and Jewish councillors there was a feeling that the Jewish community and Jewish issues should not take too high a profile.

As a reaction to this "softly softly" approach, the 1930s were the heyday of Communist influence among East End Jews and the Party reaped its electoral reward in 1946 when it won 10 seats on Stepney Borough Council and Jack Gaster was returned as Communist LCC member for Mile End. However, his tenure lasted only three years.

During the late 1940s and 1950s many Jews moved out of the LCC area to districts such as Golders Green and Ilford. Alderman chronicles what he calls a "gradual Jewish disinvestment in the affairs of the LCC" even though the number of Jewish LCC councillors was at its highest from 1958 (there were 20 Jewish councillors of whom 16 were Labour members). When the Greater London Council was established in 1965, it contained within its boundaries the majority of British Jewry. However, Alderman notes that Jewish representation continued to come from inner city areas, which many Jews had moved out of, rather than from the suburbs where they now lived.

It was during the period of the Labour administration from 1981 to 1986 that relations between the Jewish community and the GLC were to become most strained. Alderman charts the course of what he describes as a "descent into war". The new Labour administration adopted a high-profile approach towards meeting ethnic minority needs. Anglo Jewry's establishment was unsure as to whether it wished to be categorised as an ethnic minority, particularly if this meant, in the words of Henry Morris, who chaired the Board's Defence Committee, that "sections of the community were prepared to accept money from politicians whose views on Israel were suspect". Nonetheless, sections of the Jewish community who did not accept the Board of Deputies' fiat on such matters did apply for, and receive, grants from the GLC. These ranged from the ultra-orthodox Agudas Israel to the Jewish Social Responsibility Council and the Jewish Employment Action Group.

However, when, against Board of Deputies advice, the Council's Ethnic Minority's Committee voted to award over £22,000 to the

Jewish Socialists' Group for its Jewish Cultural and Anti-racist Project the Board of Deputies thought it appropriate to suspend participation in the work of the Ethnic Minority Unit. Alderman characterises JCARP as "an imaginative programme of events and exhibitions designed to provide a high-profile, explicitly Jewish, input into the movement to combat racial discrimination and foster better Black-Jewish relations". As opposed to this, he notes that Dr Gerwitz (the senior Board of Deputies defence committee official) "seemed unable to separate out his devotion to Zionism from his desire to meet and make friends with the Black community".

Most points of contention between the Board of Deputies and the GLC came to concern the Middle East. Alderman chronicles these faithfully. Unfortunately he fails to mention those GLC actions which met with a more favourable response among Jews, such as in 1986 the sponsoring of the Anne Frank exhibition. Alderman's conclusions are that despite the involvement of distinguished Jewish politicians in the affairs of both the LCC and GLC they, with very few exceptions, did not advance the interests of Jews "as a community". This is, says Alderman, because the leaders of Anglo Jewry have preferred the "pursuit of quiet, sometimes secret, diplomacy" feeling that "all publicity is bad publicity". Alderman's book provides a service through showing how "Jewish needs" have frequently been defined by Jewish representative bodies as relating primarily to religious needs and latterly to Zionism.

As an elected councillor in a London borough since 1986 I am aware that there is a debate to be had on the social, cultural and educational needs of Jews as a diverse community, and on their security from fascist attacks. This debate should centre on how far these needs are met by existing Jewish community institutions and what could properly be asked of local authorities.

In a London where a number of local authorities are more aware that council services should be provided in an appropriate manner to meet the needs of the communities they serve, such a debate is, among Jews, long overdue.

MICHAEL HEISER

This is a free listings service for radical events, projects, initiatives, organisations, etc. The copy date for listings (max 50 words) in the next issue of *Jewish Socialist* is 23 June.

Manchester Jewish Socialists meet regularly. Contact Adrienne 0204 591460.

Red Ruach meets next in Manchester on 24/25 June. Contact Adrienne 0204 591460.

East Midlands Jewish Group meets monthly. Contact Myra or Joy, c/o *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

"Was the Holocaust unique? The Gypsy experience" London branch JSG meeting with Donald Kenrick (Holocaust historian and activist for Gypsy rights). 7.45pm Sunday 14 May, Friends International Centre, Byng Place, Torrington Place, London WC1.

Israeli Mirror — a monthly digest of news translated from the mainstream Hebrew press. Information from 21 Collingham Road, London SW5.

Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline gives information, advice and referrals. Write to BM Jewish Helpline, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 01-706 3123. The line is open on Mondays and Thursdays 7-10pm.

Hineinu, an independent group, is holding a residential conference in Worcester on 28-30 April. Veggie food. £20 inclusive. Open to Jewish lesbian and gay people aged 26 and under and their partners (non-Jewish partners welcome). Phone Hineinu c/o 01-706 3123 for details.

Haringey Jewish Policy Forum was formed in 1987 by a group of people who felt that the council's response to antisemitism was inadequate and that there was a need for a progressive Jewish politics which could be part of Haringey's antiracist, multicultural movement. We are planning a campaign against the religious education changes and welcome involvement from anyone interested. More information from Davina Caooper on 01-340 7136.

British Friends of Peace Now (BFPN) Following the highly successful February meeting, BFPN will be holding their AGM early in May, when a prominent member of the Israeli Labour Party will be sharing a platform with a PLO representative. See press for details. For further information telephone 01-794 4568 or 01-625 6835.

Royte Klezmores, the all-women klezmer band, plays music for benefits, barmitzvahs and barn dances — or any other happy/socialist/feminist occasion or worthwhile cause. For details contact Julia on 01-482 2940.

Jewish Teachers' Forum We are a group of youth workers and teachers (primary, secondary and tertiary). Currently we are discussing antisemitism in the context of intervening in the debate on antiracist education. Contact Ralph on 01-359 2995 (home); Debbie on 01-226 1415 (home) or 01-859 2843 (school); Clive on 01-519 3943 (home); Pauline on 01-444 6256 (home).

Jews Against Apartheid (JAA) aims to oppose apartheid by

- education in the Jewish community
- involvement of Jews in local and national campaigns
- making links with similar groups in South Africa, Israel, America and Europe.

JAA is affiliated to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Contact 01-586 0971 (after 7pm).

Esther Kahns Jewish Dance Palace are available to DJ at weddings, barmitzvahs (hetero or no) and all kinds of party. We play klezmer to salsa to house to RAI. Contact c/o *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

Jewish Women Support the Palestinian Struggle meets regularly to inform ourselves and organise activities in support of the intifada. We invite speakers, including Palestinian women and Israelis opposed to the occupation, and hold frequent benefits. We welcome any Jewish woman who wants to participate. Contact us at Box 42, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

Bristol Jewish Socialist Society This group has met with members of the Bristol Palestinian Solidarity Group and has had meetings to discuss Antisemitism on the Left and Why Jews should be Socialists, as well as holding social and cultural events. Contact Madge (between 6 and 9pm) on Bristol 249903 for details.

Jews Against the Clause Formed in early 1988 to combat Clause/Section 28, the law against "the promotion of homosexuality" — subsequently enacted in amended form and so far not invoked in the courts. Since enactment of the Section, JATC's brief has expanded to take in more general work within Jewish context against homophobia and heterosexism. Current efforts include production of a publication and formation of new Jewish resource network concentrating on sexual politics. Details from JATC, PO Box 175, London N4 2UN.

Jew Left Review

"Ruach" Children of Refugees Group Formed at Ruach gathering in May '88. Has membership of about one dozen, more women than men: all offspring of Jewish refugees who fled Germany and Austria in 1930s. Explores common ground (personal experiences, cultural heritage, political outlook) shared by refugees' children. Has links with other groups dealing with Jewish and central European history and culture. Further information from James on 01-359 2128.

If you happen to be in Vienna and want to get in touch with progressive Jewish or Middle East peace activists, contact Israel-Palastina-Komitee, c/o John Bunzl, Biberstr 8/20, 1010 Wien, Tel 513 6783.

The London Museum of Jewish Life The Sternberg Centre, 80 East End Road, London N3 (nearest tube Finchley Central). Tel 01-346 2288/349 1143. Permanent exhibition traces the history of London Jewry, with reconstruction of tailoring workshop, an immigrant home and East End bakery. Open Mon-Thurs 10.30am-5.00pm, Sundays 10.30am-4.00pm. Closed Jewish Festivals, Public Holidays and Bank Holiday weekends.

STOP PRESS

Friends of Yesh Gvul organises meetings and activities in support of Israeli army reservists who refuse to serve in occupied territories. Details from FOYGL, BM 6174 London WC1N 3XX

Nottingham Jewish Lesbian Group has been meeting regularly for two years. Also celebrates the main festivals. New lesbians welcome. Phone 0602-622604

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Jewish Socialist is published quarterly by Jewish Socialist Ltd, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

This issue was produced by an editorial committee consisting of Julia Bard, Michael Heiser, Ruth Lukom, Rosy Massil, David Rosenberg and Marian Shapiro.

Typeset by Nancy White, and Boldface, London EC1. Printed by Aldgate Press, London E1. Tel: 01-247 3015.