

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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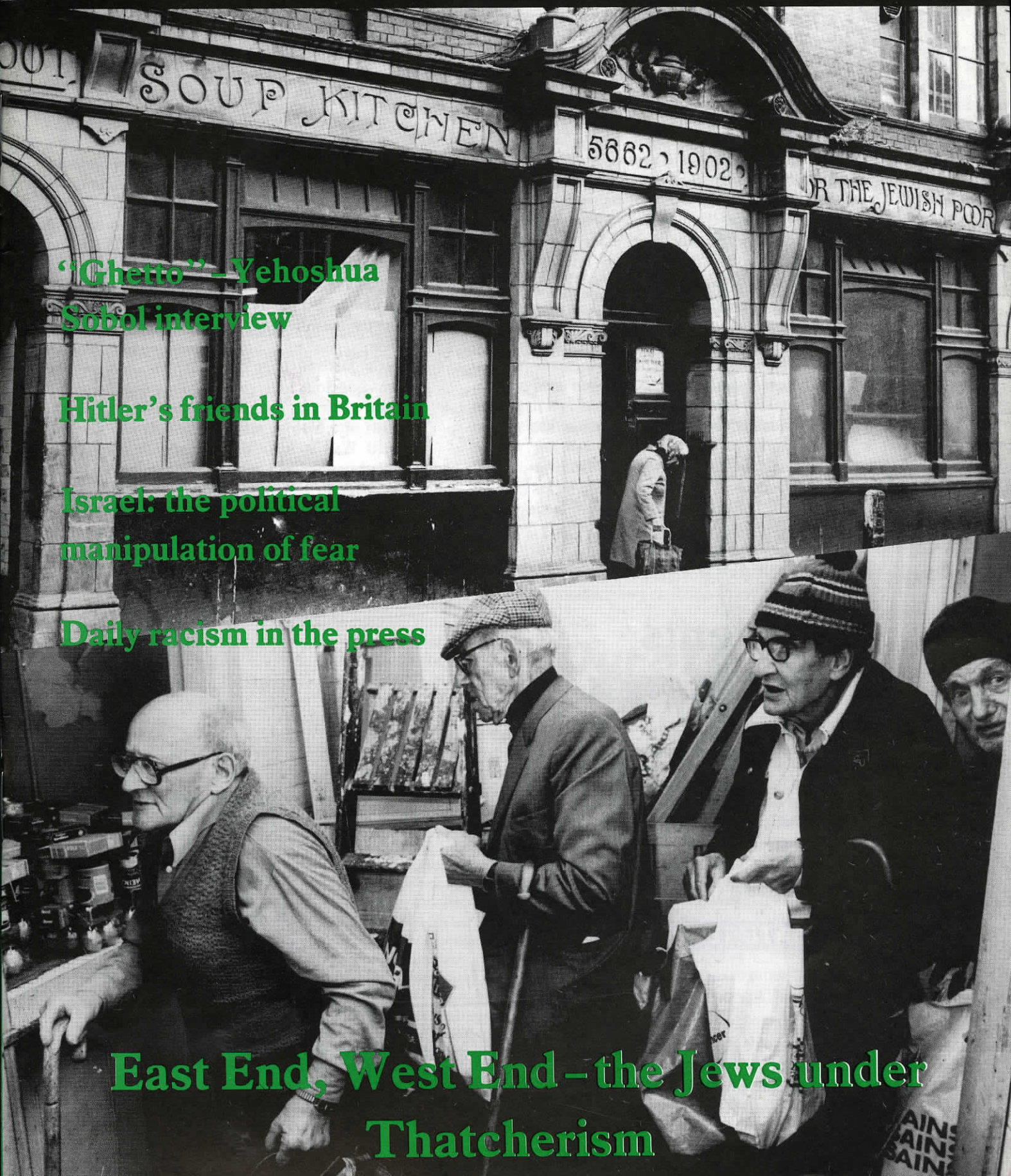
**"Ghetto" – Yehoshua
Sobol interview**

Hitler's friends in Britain

**Israel: the political
manipulation of fear**

Daily racism in the press

**East End, West End – the Jews under
Thatcherism**



On 3 September 1989 we will mark the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War and the horror and trauma which followed. For Jews this cannot but evoke mass slaughter, deportations, and the memories of helpless refugees seeking a place in a world that did not want them.

It is important to remember. It is our duty to understand and to act to prevent such terrible events from being repeated. What lessons have been learned?

Martha Blend (page 24) describes her journey among the last of the child refugees who came to Britain in 1939. She was fortunate enough to satisfy the arbitrary criteria which Britain applied to select some refugees for rescue. Her family was left behind.

How ironic that exactly 50 years later the same crude arguments for "selecting" refugees are repeated — this time in relation to the people of Hong Kong in the wake of thousands of students being slaughtered in Tiananmen Square.

The gruelling details of what happened to those who had no escape route from Nazism have been painfully documented and yet, in the last 15 years, a well-financed international "historical revisionist" movement has grown to trample on the bodies and ashes of the Nazis' victims, to whitewash Hitler and deny the genocide of the Jews. Some years ago an obscure "historian" called David Irving published a book accepting and regretting that this genocide occurred but claiming that Hitler knew little of it and could not be held respon-

sible. Irving has chosen this year to give his backing to a new "report" denying the existence of Nazi gas chambers, and to publicly express his full conversion to "historical revisionism". Meanwhile, far right parties are enjoying renewed electoral success in West Germany. Memories are indeed short.

One way in which such ideas could be fought is by responding urgently and seriously to the revelation that there are mass murderers among us — that suspected Nazi war criminals are living out their days in peace while survivors of their brutality will be traumatised to their dying days. Under sustained pressure the British government is investigating these cases but they are not in a hurry. Their reluctance cannot be put down to indifference alone. There remain many unanswered questions about the British state's attitude to Nazi war criminals immediately after the War and in the formative years of the Cold War. Such attitudes can be gauged partly by exploring the attitudes held by members of the British establishment towards Nazism and Hitler before 1939. Charlie Pottins (page 21) unearths material that their political heirs in the Tory Party today would prefer to lose in the mists of history.

But the history of fascism and the Second World War is also the history of resistance. Yehoshua Sobol's epic homage to cultural resistance in his play *Ghetto* has been widely acclaimed. As our interview with him shows (page 16), the associated themes of nationalism and authoritarianism are not confined to history.

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Cover photographs: Sharon Chazan. Jewish soup kitchen, Whitechapel 1980s. With thanks to Valerie Chazan.

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Selective memory Tribute to activist

A member of the Jewish Socialists' Group was turned away from the annual "official" Holocaust commemoration at Hyde Park in May this year, when a "security" check revealed that he had some copies of *Jewish Socialist* in his bag. He offered to leave the bag containing this dangerous material with the security officers while he attended the memorial service. They refused to take it and told him he wasn't welcome.

The memorial service was organised principally by the Board of Deputies which presents itself as the representative body of Anglo-Jewry. This incident is yet another example of the Board showing who it really represents and who it regards as expendable. The real *chutzpah*, of course, is that

Jewish socialists, historically and currently, have far more reasons than most to remember and celebrate their resistance to anti-semitism and fascism before, during and after the Nazi genocide. Jewish socialists were the backbone of the resistance to Nazism. The historical record in resisting fascism of the bourgeois Jewish establishments, of whom the Board are today's mediocre representatives in Britain, is frankly less principled and less courageous. The fact that they can turn away a Jewish socialist from a Holocaust memorial service makes us wonder whether they understand what they are supposed to be commemorating and why, and if they are really interested in mourning all, or only some, of the Jews murdered by the Nazis.

Anne Frank goes to Nottingham

Nottingham Jewish Lesbian Group has taken the lead in organising a showing of the exhibition Anne Frank in the World planned for October in Nottingham. Working closely with other community groups and interested individuals, they have set up a steering group to organise an ambitious programme of events (speakers, theatre, film, visual arts, etc) to accompany the exhibition. After some initial resistance to the idea of a project of such importance to the Jewish community being organised by lesbians, the Nottingham United Hebrew congregation have also become involved. Steering group meetings have become a form of consciousness raising for everyone involved and a useful dialogue has begun between the different groups. (See page 31 for details of public meetings/events.)



The death of Dennis Rosen at the age of 39 is an incalculable loss for the Trades Union movement, for Hackney teachers, for Hackney kids, for anti-imperialism and, in particular, for the Anti-Apartheid Movement. He died, in all probability, a violent death in suspicious circumstances in Botswana. The first of a series of tributes from his students there occurred spontaneously as they travelled 450 miles to see his body off on the plane.

His patience and intelligence were legendary, but Jews have particular cause to mourn his death. Dennis was a socialist and a Jew who was unambiguously opposed to both capitalism and antisemitism. When others on the left asked him to lose his Jewish identity, he explained patiently why this would be a betrayal not only of Jews, but also of socialism, and he joined the Jewish Socialists' Group a few months before he went to Africa. He understood both the meaning of the word *mentsh* and the nature of liberation.

Behind the demand by some leftists to marginalise Jewish life and culture was an ignorant antisemitism. Dennis was instrumental in checking the open advance of these views, and his role in securing a union policy of opposition to antisemitism was also a personal turning point for many people.

He was also a witty man who, when sitting in a pub, might also be reading a book about physics, describing the intricate beauty of the structure of plants to a friend or helping a student with her GCSE maths.

The autopsy in England revealed the extent of Dennis's injuries, but international law is disgracefully negligent and inquests may take place long after their findings can be of any use. The family have been told that it may be eight months before reports from the Botswana police are complete, and at this end the Home Office appear to be in no great hurry to find out what happened. As the truth sinks in, the tributes to his young life will follow, but we must also try to ensure that a proper inquest brings out the facts of Dennis's death.

He was a crazy, brilliant, lovely man and I will miss him more than I can begin to say.

BRIAN SIMONS

Out of school into jail

The principled opposition to Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank which has led hundreds of Israeli army reservists to refuse service in the Occupied Territories, has now spread to young conscripts. Yesh Gvul, the anti-occupation support group for the refuseniks, report that there have been seven conscripts among more than 70 soldiers jailed for refusal. One of them, 19-year-old Amit Lewenhoff, has just been jailed for 28 days for the fourth time in recent months.

Five days before Lewenhoff went to prison, his

father, Carlos, had just been released from a 35-day sentence for refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories. Carlos is the son of Auschwitz survivors. Amit's mother, Irene, is head nurse in the intensive care unit at a Tel Aviv hospital. Her father was one of the "disappeared" oppositionists during Uruguay's military regime who was believed to have been tortured and killed in a military jail.

Letters of support for Amit and other refuseniks should be sent to Yesh Gvul, PO Box 4172, Tel Aviv 61041, Israel.

DYBBUK'S DIARY

NATION SHALL NOT SPEAK PEACE UNTO NATION

Israel's ambassador at the Hague, Ze'ev Suffot, received an urgent message from deputy Foreign Minister Benyamin Netanyahu in March — to cancel a dinner for former Foreign Minister Abba Eban. Eban had been a bad boy by attending a conference where PLO officials were present.

Netanyahu and his superior, Moshe Arens, have not always been keen on coalition discipline or bipartisan foreign policy. A few years ago, when Labour's Shimon Peres was Prime Minister and proposed an international peace conference, the right wing fanatics of Gush Emunim sent a delegation to the United States to lobby against peace efforts.

Daniella Weiss, the Gush's secretary general, proclaimed: "Middle East peace treaties aren't worth the paper they're printed on," and she warned that if anything came out of Peres' "peace initiative", Gush Emunim would lead a resistance against it. She assured fellow far rightist, Senator Jesse Helms, that the Gush spoke "for half of Israel's electorate".

Doubtful though that may be, she was speaking for half of the Israeli government. Israel's Washington ambassador Meir Rosenne received a telex from the Foreign Ministry — then in Shamir's hands — telling him to put all facilities at Weiss' disposal during her trip.

Her trip was paid for by the Jewish Agency's Aliyah department, headed by Herutnik Haim Aharon, who claimed she was "on a short pro-aliah lecture tour". (Through the Agency, funds raised from diaspora Jewish communities can be

channelled back for the purpose of organising us and telling us what to do.)

The *Jerusalem Post*, whose diarist got hold of the details at the time, also reported: "The anti-peace crusade is being sponsored by a Likud-Tehiya front organisation called Americans for a Secure Israel, which enjoys the patronage of Minister Without Portfolio Moshe Arens and of his protégé, Ambassador to the UN Benyamin Netanyahu" (*Jerusalem Post*, 8 December 1985).

With right wing settlers proclaiming they'll set up a "state" of "Judea and Samaria" (*eyzer shtet!*) if need be, to resist withdrawal, many people are asking: "Suppose the Israeli government wanted to make peace, could it control its extremists?" Looking at what's happened up to now, including Shamir's earlier covert backing for Kahane, others ask more subtly to what extent the Israeli government already does control the "extremists". Will the real Israel please stand up?

DIRTY TRICKS...

Was it really William Waldegrave's knowing wink which the BBC turned into a news story about Russian spies and Labour MPs, and slotted into the nine o'clock news coincidentally on the day those nasty trade figures were released? If it wasn't, who was it? And what was really going on? With the Tories tightening the screws on official secrecy (because what's the use of dirty tricks if everyone knows about them?), it may take more than a change of government for us to find out.

...DIRTY TRADE

Another tasty morsel was dangled briefly before us on BBC TV news on 15 May.

They said a Loyalist terrorist attack in the Ardoyne had been carried out with arms supplied from "South Africa and Israel". An RPG7 rocket launcher was used.

In the next day's *Guardian*, David Hearst reported: "Police believe that about 10 rocket launchers and a number of warheads arrived in the province in the shipment of arms from a Middle East source arranged by Ulster Resistance in January last year." The arms had been shared with the UDA and UVF.

One of Ulster Resistance's original promoters, Peter Robinson, No 2 for Ian Paisley, visited Israel as guest of top security circles a few years ago. He was probably after buying more bibles for the good Reverend to thump. More recently, though, the dog-collars and politics have been trying to distance themselves from Ulster Resistance, after three Ulstermen were caught in a compromising situation in a Paris hotel room with a South African "diplomat" and a Blowpipe missile.

If the story about Israeli arms was true, it's funny none of the law-and-order mob said anything about this foreign support for terrorists during Shamir's visit. If it was a fib (or even if it's true) we'd have expected Israel's vociferous defenders-at-all-costs to be protesting the BBC. But everyone seems *shtum*. I suppose Israel's arms dealings "help pay the mortgage", as a certain entrepreneur might say. And if tomorrow a couple of RPGs fall into the hands of the UDA's "political soldier" friends among English Nazis, well I'm sure Israel knows what's best for us.

BLUE RINSE

The 35s, or Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry, put out literature backing Tory candidate Lord Bethell in the

Euro-election. And they still claim they're "non-political"?

Their man was elected again, but with an 11% drop in his majority. Are we to take this as a gain or loss for Soviet Jewry?

A few years ago, trying one of their well known ploys, the last minute leaflet (put out late, so the other side don't get to reply till after the election), the Tories in Brent in north west London distributed a leaflet to Jewish homes in the Brondesbury ward, headed "A Vote for Labour is a Vote for the PLO!"

As the by-election resulted in a Labour gain on an 11% swing, I suggested at the time that *Palestine Post* should carry the headline "11% Swing to PLO in Jewish neighbourhood". But they didn't want to sink to the same level as the Tories.

BIG LIES

No more pettifoggery about what Hitler knew or didn't know; right-wing historian David Irving has finally come out: "The infamous gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek did not exist," he asserts, introducing a book by gas chamber expert Fred Leuchner, yet another product of the Holocaust denial industry.

Apart from rubbing salt in the wounds of those who suffered and lost families, why do they do it? There's a market, just as for less harmful genres like flat earth and flying saucer books. But devotees of those actually believe the stuff, whereas most of the historical-revisionist clientele complain that Hitler did not "finish the job", and fantasise about how many Jews (and Blacks, gays or Irish) they would gas, given the chance. And I believe them.

Another David, Dr Owen (remember him?), used to deny that the Shah of Iran was the tyrant people claimed. Stories of torture were just malicious rumours

spread by people with ugly scars and missing thumbs, and besides the Shah was buying more modern equipment from Britain's Crown Agents, bringing in Loadsa Money.

Now, with Tories like Ivan Stanbrook getting irate against efforts to try Nazi war criminals, Dr Owen has assured a Manchester audience that most people are not interested in such efforts anymore. "Endless recriminations are not the flavour of the Jewish people," he adminishes us. Such an expert!

David Irving, proclaiming the Holocaust a Jewish hoax, says "The Jewish community has to examine their consciences" (quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 June).

Speaking for the Jewish Left, I reckon our consciences are good and healthy these days, and it's time we took a look at our muscle — politically speaking, of course...

CLERICAL ERRORS

They say it's hard being a Jew. Some of our religious leaders are doing their damndest to make it harder. A couple in north west London whose 5-year-old daughter has special needs were impressed by the facilities promised at a local Jewish, grant-aided primary school. There was one small problem: the mother's grandmother was not Jewish. And her mother's *ketuba* (Jewish marriage certificate) was left behind in Germany, along with most of the family.

As a result, a 5-year-old child has been denied a school place because of her great-grandmother. Doesn't that remind you of anything?

Koby Cohen, aged 6, is scarcely more fortunate. He has been allowed to attend the King David Jewish Day School in Newcastle, but is not allowed to participate in

the Jewish assembly, say *brachot* (prayers) with the other children, or even recently to join the other Jewish children when they sang for their parents. Since Koby knows he's Jewish, he finds it not just confusing but upsetting when other children mock him in the playground.

Paula Cohen, his mother, was converted to Judaism nine years ago in Israel. But apparently her conversion papers only apply there — a bit like a driving licence. The Beth Din in London has ruled that her conversion is null and void because her husband, Yossi, as a Cohen (and therefore supposedly the descendant of high priests in biblical times) must not marry a convert. Logically, one might think they were ruling the marriage null and void, but fortunately they've been content to rule Yossi married to a non-Jewess. Paula Cohen, stubbornly clinging to her

Jewish identity, has pointed out that her husband has no ambition to become a high priest, even if the Temple were restored, being content to carry on running a pizza parlour.

Their son, Koby, according to his parents, has become withdrawn. He cries a lot and has developed a stammer.

While I admire people who insist on their Jewish heritage, I'm inclined to think those who mistakenly identify this with religious orthodoxy — and entrust their children to the tender mercies of parchment-brained clerics — deserve what they get. Only, I'd prefer that it was not 5- and 6-year-olds who were having to suffer.

After so many Jewish children perished at the hands of Nazism, you'd think we'd cherish every child. There's something very "un-Jewish" about Jewish orthodoxy.

a demonstration in the Hamadan refugee camp. The bullet damaged half of the boy's brain and he is now in hospital in Jerusalem. His conditions is described as stable and his physician, Dr Amin Talaghi, yesterday predicted that the baby would live, but would probably be totally paralysed.

The injured baby's mother, 23-year-old Samira Bassam Hamadan, says that she was walking home holding the baby against her and her 3-year-old daughter with the other hand at the time of the incident. "There was a clash, and the soldiers started shooting," she says. "Only when I reached home and was about to open my door did I realise that my son had been wounded."

WIFE-BEATING SOLDIERS

Yediot Aharonot, 26 May 1989
"Men who do reserve duty in the territories conclude that it is legitimate to beat

women and children," claims Ruth Resnik, the director of a battered wives' centre in Herzliya. "The *Intifada* has been an important factor in the growth of male violence," said Ms Resnik. She added that "more than one soldier has threatened to kill his wife with the gun issued to him by his unit" and said that there has been a rise in the number of battered women recently requesting police assistance.

DISUNITED FRONT

Ha'aretz, 4 June 1989
The head of America's Jewish organisations who met with Interior Minister Rabbi Arye Daray were surprised to hear him say: "Nablus or Hebron are perhaps more sacred to us than Tel Aviv, but human life is more sacred than any of these. In order to prevent bloodshed on both sides, it is best to adopt a political solution and, however painful this will be to us, we shall have to give up sacred territories."

Inside Israel

WAR AGAINST CHILDREN

Ha'aretz, 4 May 1989
Ran Kislev

"I don't know how many of the *Intifada*'s approximately 400 dead have been children, or whether any distinction between children and adults is made in official statistics. It is probably too complicated.

How, for example, would you define a child for these statistical purposes? Is a 14-year-old, or even a 12-year-old, who throws stones at an Israeli car a child or an adult? If he is a child, why is he held in Ansar 3 or a similar detention centre? Perhaps it is better that there is no statistical distraction for it might not flatter us.

Only last Tuesday a 9-year-old boy from a refugee camp near Tulkarm had died of his injuries. The same day television news announced the serious

wounding of a 7-year-old girl from the Gaza Strip. Such things happen almost daily.

I fear that if someone bothered to analyse the *Intifada* deaths, it would emerge that at least half of them are children. Just imagine: more than 200 children have died of wounds sustained from metal or plastic bullets, from electrocutions while taking down Palestinian flags from electricity pylons, from teargas or under dubious circumstances which it is perhaps better not to go into. It is hard to believe this statistic would please anybody, whatever their political persuasion.

PLASTIC BULLETS AGAINST BABIES

Ha'aretz, 1 June 1989
The IDF is investigating the circumstances in which an 8-month-old baby was shot in the head with a plastic bullet by soldiers dispersing

Maydays

As 27 May approached, it seemed to have all the ingredients of an anti-racist nightmare. Neo-Nazis were flying and ferrying in to join their racially hygienic comrades-in-arms in London for a concert with leading fascist bands. The concert was organised by a young entrepreneur and honorary member of the master race, Andrew Benjamin, formerly, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*, a member of Mill Hill synagogue. Meanwhile, 20,000 Muslims were assembling in the heart of London to protest against... the fascists? the perpetrators of racial violence and terror on their communities? Sadly not. They were there to protest against what they perceived to be a much more deadly threat: a book and its author in hiding. Young Muslim activists facing daily racism and police harassment pitted their energies against the police for the right to attack a progressive author.

However, the fascists, the fundamentalists and the State didn't have it all their own way. Anti-Fascist Action mobilised to give the fascists a run for their money, while Women Against Fundamentalism mounted a street presence to directly oppose the Anti-Rushdie march.

Meanwhile, Mr Benjamin's retailing of neo-Nazi regalia has been halted as his shop has been closed down after a sustained local campaign. Maybe he'll start retailing some other less troublesome *shmutter*s!

27 May was only a partial victory. The events only served to highlight the many different levels on which anti-racists have to wage their fight, and point to the principled basis on which we must seek unity against racism. The real battles lie ahead.

DAVID ROSENBERG

Veil of tears

Women Against Fundamentalism is a network of women from many different backgrounds established in London to challenge the rise of fundamentalism in all religions. It was launched on 6 May 1989, and its first public action was to counter-demonstrate the mass Muslim mobilisation against Salman Rushdie in London on 27 May led by Muslim fundamentalists.

The Salman Rushdie affair has highlighted, as well as reinforced, the strength of Muslim fundamentalism in Britain and outside it. However, the political importance of the fundamentalist issue precedes it by many years and extends beyond Islam. It is linked, on the one hand to a general sense of despair and disorientation in modern society which have brought people from all over the world to go back to religion as a source of solace and even more so as a compass and a solid anchor which gives people sense of stability and meaningful orientation. In the West it is associated with the rise of the Evangelist movement and the New Moral Right.

In the Third World, and among Third World minorities in the West, the rise of fundamentalism is also intimately linked with the failure of nationalist and socialist movements to bring about successful liberation from oppression, exploitation and poverty. Religion has also been seen as an "indigenous" ideology with which to confront racism, imperialism and superpower interventions. This has become particularly powerful since the Iranian revolution, and has affected in turn, not only Muslims in other countries, but also Jews, Sikhs, Hindus and other religions in which fundamentalist movements grew, in addition to the specific local conditions which have given rise to them.

The fundamentalist movements all over the world are basically political movements seeking to harness modern state and media powers to the service of their religious ideology. Fundamentalism aligns itself with different poli-

tical trends in different countries and manifests itself in different religious forms also — sometimes as a form of orthodoxy — a maintenance of "traditional values", and sometimes as a radical phenomenon dismissing "impure" and "corrupt" forms of religion to return to original sources. All fundamentalist movements, however, claim that their version of religion is the only true one and attempt to impose it on all members of their religion.

Women and the patriarchal family are at the heart of all fundamentalist agendas. While some women have been attracted to fundamentalism as the movement where they can find refuge from the sexism and racism of their society and gain some empowerment, this empowerment is within the strict control of the male leaderships of fundamentalist movements, and more and more women's organisations have been created in different countries to fight against them.

In Britain, the rise of fundamentalism has highlighted the fact that a full separation between religion and the state has never taken place. The existence of the blasphemy law and religious state education has created a precedent and a model for fundamentalist demands from various ethnic minorities. As was shown in attitudes towards the Muslim demonstration, this issue has split both the Right and the Left in Britain. Some of the New Right, while deeply racist, believe the cohesive, tightly controlled, industrious family model of "Asian families" is highly conducive to the type of moral system they want to strengthen in the society. Part of the Fascist Right, the National Front, support the Muslim fundamentalists as expressing their inherently different and separate cultural-national essence.

Among the Left, many have seen any attempt to criticise and challenge the authority of fundamentalist leaders as racist, holding as sacred the "autonomy" of the minority "communities" which "multiculturalist" and "anti-racist" policies have taught them to uphold and to view as internally homogenous.

Women Against Fundamentalism aim to:

- study common elements in fundamentalism from all religions and the ways they are linked to sexual, ethnic, class and political divisions in British society;
- look at international links and examples and work in solidarity with similar movements in other countries;
- examine effects of policies, such as pro-familial and multicultural, which deny women an independent existence, and propose alternative ones;
- challenge and organise against the manifestations of fundamentalism.

They call for full separation between religion and the state in Britain as a precondition for defeating fundamentalism. More specifically, they call for:

- the abolition of the blasphemy law in Britain;
- an end to state funding of separate religious schools and the imposition of particular religious education by the state, including the imposition of Christian assemblies within state schools;
- the development of a social policy that addresses the genuine needs of women and which does not attempt to deal with them on the basis of racist and sexist assumptions as to how they are expected to behave according to their particular racial or cultural origin;
- the development of an educational policy which, while not falling into the "multiculturalist trap", will respect the different histories and cultures of the people in Britain and develop a genuine anti-racist strategy.

For further details, write to Women Against Fundamentalism, BM Box 2706, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 571 9595.

NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS

Don't mourn mobilise

Changes in Israel's political climate can be gauged in the responses to a weekly vigil held by Israeli women protesting against the occupation. Spike Pittsberg reports.

Women in Black Against the Occupation has held its weekly vigils since the first months of the *intifada*. In Israel we demonstrate in four separate locations and there are parallel solidarity demonstrations in London, Boston, Rome and other places. In Tel Aviv we stand in a most visible and vulnerable spot, on a traffic island in the middle of the intersection of four major roads at the busiest time of the week, between 1pm and 2pm on Friday.

Because of *Shabbat* (Sabbath), Friday is a half day at work, so everyone is rushing to get home. We get professional soldiers leaving the nearby Army Headquarters (a surprising number of whom give us a "thumbs-up" gesture), students being bussed from religious schools, professionals on their way to Tel Aviv's middle-class suburbs in the north, and labourers heading for the working-class towns in the south. We are on most of the major bus routes. Cabs are thick on these streets and private cars fill up the spaces in between. One of our more mathematically-minded members worked out that our demonstration is seen by 20,000 people each week!

One reason for choosing this location is that there are very few pedestrians. From the first days of the *intifada*, before Women in Black was established, feminist and left-wing women had held a weekly slideshow demonstration in the heart of the busiest shopping district

in Tel Aviv. We gave out leaflets, engaged in debate with hundreds of passers-by, and constantly found ourselves in frightening confrontations.

The Women in Black vigils are different because the circumstances are different. There is no longer any question about what is going on. The population is polarised but positions are clear and the nature of the conflict is understood. Our purpose is to protest, not to argue; to show steadfast solidarity with the Palestinians, and to disrupt normal life in a Tel Aviv so insulated from the Occupied Territories that its residents can close their eyes and pretend to forget.

We have learnt to judge the climate of the country by the reactions we get each week. Before the national elections, for example, there was incredible hostility, including violent counter-demonstrations by the right-wing parties. After the elections, we were virtually ignored. One week the most serious incident was the regular shower of tomatoes and eggs that a bus full of schoolboys generously provides us with. The following week, after a Gaza resident had stabbed five Jerusalem Jews at a bus stop, killing two of them, our demonstration suffered a series of abuses ranging from repeated attempts by drivers to drive up on to the traffic island in an apparent attempt to run us down, to drivers stopping in the middle of the road to swear, push us down and try to tear up our signs.

Although we are often asked by men on the left why we must demonstrate as women "only", our passing drivers seem to understand that implicitly. The same things are yelled at us over and over again,

showing that the right has no trouble making the links between occupation and sexism. "It's Friday! Why aren't you all at home cooking?" is a frequent query. "You and your mother-fucking Arafat." "No wonder you love Arabs, you're all fat and ugly and no Jew would have you!" Men always give us the finger; hostile women make little circles with their finger at their foreheads, indicating that we are crazy. No woman gives us the finger, no man questions our sanity.

We often reminisce about the good old days of Women in Black when, besides the signs with anti-occupation and pro-negotiation slogans, we had huge signs saying, "If you agree with us, honk twice". Before the police forbade these signs as an encouragement to break the law, we saw our hostile observers flipped into an ecstasy of confusion. Israeli men use their horns on the streets like they use rubber bullets in the Occupied Territories: as a reaction to every incident of displeasure, irritation or frustration. Many passing drivers would honk in frantic hatred until they suddenly absorbed the message on our big "Honk with us" signs. Then they wouldn't know what to do, how to take it back, how to silence the symbol of solidarity they had unwittingly already provided.

Perhaps the nicest thing has been the appearance last month of a woman, dressed in black, hurrying down from a bus to cross over to us. Anna told us that for months she had been passing us on that bus, slowly building up a sense of identity, until that same day when she had deliberately gone to work in black clothes. She got down to join us and has been doing so ever since.

A Jewish life in Turkey

Stella Ovadya is a Jewish feminist who was born and brought up in Turkey. Amanda Sebestyen met her in Istanbul.

Stella Ovadya My family came from Spain in 1492 with all the Spanish Jews who had to leave the country then. They were established in Adrianople, which was then the capital, and the Jews lived in different communities depending on their origins: Portuguese, Sicilian, Cordoban... My father's family is supposed to be from the Catalan community. He says they came to Istanbul at the beginning of this century.

Now there are very few Jews left here — only about 5,000 families. They went to Israel, Europe, Australia, Latin America and North America, depending on when they moved and whether they had family abroad. Most left after the First World War.

I spoke French with my parents; they spoke Ladino (a Judaeo-Spanish language spoken by Sephardim whose ancestors left Spain at the time of the Inquisition — JS Ed) with their parents; I speak Turkish with my daughter. That's three languages in three generations. There is a newspaper here published in Turkish Ladino and I have just seen a very interesting newspaper from Israel published by people who went from here.

Amanda Sebestyen When you were in your early 20s you broke with the Jewish community. Why was that?

Stella Ovadya I was engaged to a Jewish man and then I left him and fell in love with a Turkish man. So I changed communities as I changed lovers! After that my whole life was in the Turkish leftist community. It took me 20 years to meet Jews here again.

My family was very much oriented towards Israel and I went there several times. By the '70s I was involved in left wing politics and I was shocked because Israelis were very nationalistic, but during that period, intellectually I was finding out more about what it means to be a Jew. That was in France where I went to live, and where there is a very strong Jewish community. I met Jews who came from Poland and Russia, and we

always found things in common.

The community here is not very intellectual. It's not like in Europe where all the Trotskyists are Jewish! In western Europe there are Jewish people in all the intellectual circles. Here, if you have a critical view you are lost.

In 1974, when I was 30, I became pregnant. I was in Paris at that time and the man I was with was also on the left. He was also Turkish, and was running away from Turkey. He didn't want the baby at all, but I didn't want to have an abortion. He left when my daughter was born.

That was a difficult time for my family because my father is well known in the Jewish community here and had been an important influence on my political consciousness. So my pregnancy was a big problem.

In Paris I had shared a flat with a woman who was left wing and a feminist. She talked to me about feminism but I didn't understand that sexism was a really serious issue.

When I came back to Turkey I started reading the books I'd brought back with me and I started thinking more about what was happening in women's lives. But for a long time I didn't call myself a feminist.

I went back to Paris, after Mitterand was elected, to escape from Istanbul where there was almost a civil war. My home was on the boundary between the leftists and the rightists. Bombs were exploding. I couldn't go out. People would be after me because I read *Cumhuriye* (the Turkish equivalent of the *Guardian*). So I went to Paris and started going to feminist lectures and meetings, and reading feminist books.

When I came back from Paris in 1984 I started a feminist publishing house called *Kadin Cevresi* (The Women's Circle). We all put in some money, and it was the first publishing collective in Turkey.

We organised the first demonstration against the coup which was in support of battered women. Now there is a group of

women who are trying to create a support network for battered women and are campaigning to change the law. But we don't have a place; we don't have a phone...

Amanda Sebestyen Does this experience relate to why you went back to your Jewishness?

Stella Ovadya I went back in the first place because of a specific event. There was an attack on the synagogue and 20 people died. There was no one from the left at the funeral. There were Jews there, of course, and people from the government, political parties and the army, but I had nothing in common with them. Where were my people? This was not a proud moment in my life.

I tried to write something about what being a feminist and being a Jew have in common: the problem of the minority, even though women are *not* a minority. I found I knew minority psychology from the inside. You always have a kind of second culture. Another way of understanding each other when you are Jewish. And I think women have this kind of experience too. For centuries they haven't had the right to speak for themselves, so they had to have underground languages, indirect ways of asking for what they wanted.

It also made me think about assimilation. I think being a woman or a man is a description of your "social place", like being a worker or a capitalist. If you are a woman and you claim a man's social place, then you become a "man-woman". You have changed your gender class, like Margaret Thatcher, for instance. If you are successful you may lose your solidarity with other women because you want to forget the price you have paid to come upstairs.

This is the same with the Jews, and it's a way of not being part of the minority group.

I think there is a continuum between emancipation and assimilation. The Ottoman empire was a multi-national, multi-ethnic empire. Everybody had a role and a community. With the Turkish Republic there is no *fürher* but there is "*ein volk*": we are all Turks in Turkey, so everybody goes to Turkish schools and learns to speak Turkish, and this changes everything for minorities. Jewish people, for instance, have spoken Turkish for two generations now, but as soon as my father opens his mouth you can hear that he is not a Turk. In the Ottoman empire Jews had their own language, their own schools and so on. Assimilation is very new. It is not democratic what has happened to Jews. ■

What we told the President

Michael Heiser was among the group of Jews who met Yassir Arafat in Paris to talk peace

I am in Paris to be received by Arafat, as part of an International Jewish Peace Union (IJPU) delegation. On Monday night, May Day, the eve of Arafat's arrival, I drift down to the Rue des Rosiers, the heart of the historic Jewish quarter of Paris. On the corner outside Goldenberg's restaurant is a demonstration against Arafat's visit. CRIF, which in name claims to be the representative body of French Jewry, has called vigils at the site of terrorist attacks in the past; one of these was outside Goldenberg's. That neither this nor any of the other attacks was actually carried out by Arafat's PLO seems irrelevant.

If CRIF wanted a silent vigil, what is actually taking place is a political rally where the only banners visible are those of Herut (the principal opponent of Israel's governing Likud party) and its youth movement, Betar. Israeli and French flags flutter. A succession of mainstream French right wing politicians declare their support for peace, but not if it means talking to Arafat. The 300-strong crowd roar, "Mitterand treason" and "Arafat assassin". A man in the crowd tries to get others to chant along with him. I munch a falafel as a convenient pretext for silence. Were any of this crowd to know that the very next day I would be meeting with the object of their obloquy I would be lucky to escape unscathed. As I leave I hum the Hymn of the Jewish Partisans to myself to reaffirm the alternative Jewish tradition of justice and peace.

The next day in the Paris offices of IJPU we make our preparations. A communique and press pack is put together, welcoming the PLO's peace offensive and its willingness to arrive at a peaceful two-states solution. Among others who are part of the delegation are Maurice Rajsfus, a prolific writer on Jews in France in the 20th century, whose own parents were deported during the war, and representatives from Perspectives Judeo-Arabs, an Oriental Jewish group based in Paris. We go over to the Institute of the Arab World for the dinner given in

Arafat's honour. A pro-Arafat demonstration passes; all smiles and victory salutes.

Later we go over to the Hotel Crillon, on the Place de la Concorde, where Arafat is staying. Armed service personnel surround the building. Reporters and cameramen descend on all those who come in or out. We are joined by an Israeli delegation. "Vous me foutez la gueule ou quoi?" (are you having me on or what?) is one policeman's reaction when he hears that there are *Israelis* who are going to meet Arafat.

There is an Israeli tourist from Kibbutz Shamir where terrorists killed three children 15 years ago. Waiting to go in, we argue with her that it is useful for Israelis and Jews to meet Arafat, to put pressure on the Israeli government to reach a peaceful settlement with the PLO. She likes the idea of peace but not with the PLO, and is unconvinced when we remind her about the terrorist past of Yitzhak Shamir.

The Hotel Crillon is all gilded ornaments, brocade and flunkeys in the Grand Hotel tradition. If we had to pay for it, a cup of coffee would cost £3. We are taken upstairs and shown into a room with red velvet chairs and a Palestinian flag. By this time it is 12.30am.

Three women are sitting there; they are the widow and daughters of Issam Sartawi, the PLO official who pioneered contacts with the Israeli peace camp and who was killed by the Abu Nidal group in 1983.

A small bustling man comes in. In place of the headdress there is a bald patch and a human, genial scale. We shake hands with the President of the embryonic Palestinian state. One of our delegation whispers to me that he reminds her of her grandfather.

Louis Marton, president of the IJPU in France, is our spokesperson. He particularly notes the fact that we have been received with Sartawi's widow and daughters, saying: "I have only met one or two great men in my life. One was Sartawi." He continues, commenting that Arafat must have noticed that there were demonstrations against him by part of the Jewish community.

"It is democracy," answers Arafat.

"We know we are a minority within the Jewish community," continues Louis, "but nobody 'represents' the Jewish community. You started off as a minority."

Arafat grins. "In the Arab world the minorities become the majority." He talks of his meeting with Mitterand. "He told me he was a friend of Israel. I told him I was a friend of many Israelis too. He is interested in working for peace."

He tells us how he personally gave orders that the Jewish community of Beirut was to be protected during the 1982 siege. But others were less friendly. He notes how Khomeini had made a speech against him and how there had been a demonstration against him in Teheran. Israeli film-maker Simone Bitton notes how the peace camp in Israel was growing all the time. To our surprise, we are asked to come back the following day.

We emerge blinking into the television lights. Louis gives interviews. No, we don't claim to represent the Jewish community, but a significant and growing minority within it which wants to see genuine peace and dialogue between Israel and Palestine.

The next day we are back at the Hotel Crillon. The press is leading on the fact that Arafat used the word "caduc" to describe the PLO Charter. We sit downstairs and swap translations with PLO officials. "No longer current" is probably too weak, and "null and void" too strong. "Obsolete" is preferred.

The Israelis go upstairs to see Arafat. Later we learn they had figured in Arafat's interview with Jean-Pierre Elkabbach (who has similar status in France to David Dimbleby). Elkabbach asked him: "How is your visit going to help you in speaking with Israelis?" Arafat answered: "Here are the Israelis," and the camera panned on them. Another little coup de theatre.

We go off to lunch on a perfect early summer's day. Our brief spell close to the limelight is over. I reflect on the genuine warmth and concern which was the impression I had of Arafat and how to put this across to Israelis and Jews who are all too glad to have their stereotype of a bloodthirsty terrorist reinforced, but find it harder to trust those with whom they must eventually make peace.

But the number of people, both in Israel and in Jewish communities worldwide, who are prepared to talk peace to the PLO is growing. If our delegation can help in its development then it will have been worthwhile. ■

Lawless in Gaza

In March this year "Justice for Palestinians and Israelis" (JPI) — a group of lawyers and others — organised a fact-finding trip to Israel and Palestine to investigate legal issues arising out of the military occupation and the intensified use of legal measures to repress the Palestinians. Teresa Thornhill gives a personal account of their visit.

We were based in Jerusalem throughout our visit, and travelled to different parts of Israel and the Occupied Territories to meet a wide range of lawyers, and human rights and prisoners' organisations. The lawyers included members of the Gaza Bar Association and the Arab Lawyers' Committee, as well as some Israeli civil rights lawyers. The organisations we met included the Palestinian Human Rights Information Centre (East Jerusalem); Al Haq (or "Law in the Service of Man", the leading West Bank legal resource centre which is affiliated to the International Commission of Jurists); the Alternative Information Centre (Jerusalem); the Human Rights Association and the Prisoners' Friends' Association (Nazareth); the Women's Organisation for Political Prisoners (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem); and the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (East Jerusalem).

We spent a morning at Ramallah Military Court. Some of us visited Deheisheh Refugee camp in the West Bank and others visited Jabalya camp in Gaza.

During our week-long visit, we were given a wealth of information and asked to take up a wide range of issues. It was my first visit to Israel and I arrived with only a very rough knowledge of the legal system operating in the Occupied Territories. Like most people who take an interest in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, I had heard about measures such as deportations, house demolitions and detention without trial, but had little understanding of the legal structure which underpins their use. It was fascinating to learn of the legal arguments and sleights of hand which Israel uses to justify its

draconian methods of repression; and how it purports to absolve itself of its obligations under international law. There were frequent echoes of the British use of law as a tool of repression in Northern Ireland.

Before discussing some of the issues which we were asked to publicise and take up in the UK, I shall briefly outline the legal system.

Under international law there are specific provisions as to what an "occupying power" may and may not do, both in terms of its treatment of the population of the territory in question and in terms of interference with the legal system existing at the time of the occupation. The UN and most countries consider Israel to be an "occupying power" in the legal sense. Israel tries to argue, however, that it is not "occupying" the West Bank and Gaza but simply administering them in the absence of a sovereign power. Israel says, therefore, that the IV Geneva Convention of 1949, which contains much of the relevant law and to which Israel is a signatory, is not applicable. It claims voluntarily to respect the "humanitarian" provisions of the Convention, but breaches them routinely and flagrantly.

International law requires that the pre-existing system of law in the occupied land must be respected unless its amendment is necessary for the security of the occupying forces or for the benefit of the local population.

The law in force in the West Bank prior to 1967 was a mixture

of Jordanian law, with elements of Ottoman and British mandate law, and Islamic law. Initially, the Israeli military authorities declared their general intention to allow local law to remain in force, while reserving the power for the Area Commander to legislate by Military Order where necessary. However, in the 22 years since 1967, over 1,000 Military Orders have been issued. Some of these deal with "security-related" measures, but many others deal with a wide range of areas of civil and economic life, with the result that Israeli-made law now regulates such matters as taxation, land, planning, registration of companies and trademarks. Military tribunals have been established, with the power to adjudicate over most important areas of people's daily lives. Such tribunals, unlike military courts, are not permitted under international law. (Islamic and Ecclesiastical courts do, however, continue as before 1967.)

The military courts try all criminal matters considered to be "security-related". In practice, they try not only charges such as stone-throwing and petrol bombing, but any case in which there is felt to be an Israeli interest at stake — eg price-fixing offences. A legally qualified soldier presides, accompanied by two lay soldiers. There is no right of appeal from their decisions.

Since the intifada began, thousands of Palestinian youths have been tried by these courts. When Jewish settlers are prosecuted for security-related offences, they are tried in the Israeli courts inside the green line. In theory they can

be brought before the military courts, but in practice this does not happen.

The other important body of law used by Israel in the Occupied Territories is the British Defence (Emergency) Regulations of 1945. These were introduced during the Mandate to control unrest among both the Arab and the Jewish populations. They give draconian powers, including the use of house demolition as a punishment, deportation and administrative detention (the latter was re-enacted in a Military Order in 1970).

During the Mandate the 1945 Regulations were described by a future Minister of Justice as "unparalleled in any civilised country ... (they) destroy the very foundations of justice in this land". Britain considers that it repealed these Regulations shortly before independence in 1948. They were not used between 1948 and 1967. Israel then revived them, arguing that because the repeal was not advertised in the official legal gazette in Jerusalem on the day of repeal, it was not effective. (The repeal does appear in the British Statute Book.) In reality, Israel prefers to use defunct British law rather than enact such repressive measures in its own name.

The main impression I took away from our morning spent at Ramallah Military Court was of engineered chaos. After an argument with the soldiers at the barbed wire gate, we were allowed in and spent a couple of hours sitting in court. A large crowd of relatives were waiting at another gate when we went in, and most of them were still there when we came out. A few were allowed into court, but the space available was very limited.

Court sat about an hour and a half late. As we waited, soldiers with automatic guns slouched around the court room, dressed in filthy fatigues and smoking cigarettes. As soon as the court sat, I took on board for the first time that everyone involved in the proceedings, bar defence lawyers and defendants, was a member of the military: prosecutor, judges and translator were all in army uniform. This is, of course, against a fundamental principle of natural justice: that the judge should be independent of both the prosecution and the defence.

The proceedings were conducted in Hebrew, with only very casual and haphazard translation into Arabic. Without being able to speak either language, it was clear from the amount that the judge spoke and the little that the translator spoke that much of what was said

was not being communicated to the defendants. By the end of the morning one had the impression that the authorities are not even concerned that justice should be seen to be done.

Defence lawyers we spoke to in Ramallah and elsewhere explained the system to us. On arrest, a detainee may be held for up to 18 days before being brought before a court. Relatives and lawyers are rarely informed of a person's arrest, and often their whereabouts only comes to light when they are brought to court and recognised by chance by a friend or lawyer. Lawyers often spend days searching for missing people at prisons and detention centres. In similar vein, lawyers are often not informed by the courts of the date when their client's case has been adjourned to. This leads to unnecessary delays and/or to the client appearing unrepresented. Since the intifada began, the most commonly prosecuted offence is stone-throwing. The prosecution witness is a soldier. The system is such that defence lawyers now rarely advise their clients to contest such charges. If you plead "not guilty", you are likely to be held on remand awaiting trial much longer than the sentence you would receive if you pleaded

Throughout the first year of the intifada, the lawyers of the Gaza Bar Association boycotted the military courts in Gaza. From 3 January 1989 to 12 March, lawyers who practise in the West Bank undertook a similar boycott. They drew up a list of 21 demands which encompassed the various areas in which they feel that they are encountering deliberate obstruction. These include the withholding of information from lawyers by the courts and prisons, the refusal to follow due process and the treatment of detainees' relatives. In mid-March Mohammed Shadid, a member of the Arab Lawyers' Committee (which presented the demands) was administratively detained. It is thought that this is because of his participation in the boycott.

The West Bank lawyers are now back in court, while they continue to negotiate with the authorities for the implementation of changes. So far they have had little response, and it seems likely that the boycott will be renewed in July.

Since returning from Israel, JPI has been working on a number of issues. A sub-group is looking into the issue of the enforcement of international law as it relates to the West Bank and Gaza; another sub-



Palestinian children, still awaiting justice.

"guilty". Bail applications are very rarely granted. The defence lawyer tries to reach a "satisfactory" plea bargain with the prosecutor, covering both pleas and sentence, which the judge then rubber stamps.

The lawyers we spoke to felt that their role has been reduced to that of social workers. They cannot defend their clients properly, because due legal process is not respected. There is continual debate as to whether lawyers should continue to practise in these courts, since arguably their presence gives a veneer of legitimacy to the system. However, they perform a vital role in maintaining the link between detainees and their families; and they help to keep up their clients' morale.

group is gathering information and resources on administrative measures of repression such as house demolitions, restriction orders and administrative detention; a third sub-group is campaigning against the maltreatment of Palestinian women in detention and working to gather support for the Arab Lawyers' Committee. We hope to organise a fact-finding delegation of senior British lawyers to visit Israel later this year. ■

For further information and/or to join JPI, contact JPI, Box BM JPI, London WC1N 3XX.

Al-Haq may be contacted at their London office: 65 Swinton Street, Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 9NT.



A tent substitutes for a house blown up by the Israeli army in the occupied territories.

Through the looking glass

Israeli policies and practices towards the Palestinians are rationalised and realised only by turning reality on its head, argues Les Levidow.

"With a blood-soaked past like ours, we Jews cannot help but yearn for peace. Yet we would be crazy not to be paranoid about security" — Samuel Pizar (*Jerusalem Post*, 21 March 1989).

So began one of many commentaries on the Solidarity Conference, intended by Prime Minister Shamir to help Israel resist international pressures to negotiate with the PLO. In the article quoted above, the author was urging Israeli accommodation with the Arabs, while expressing concern about how real security for Israel could be guaranteed. Although vague on specific concessions to Palestinian demands, the author spoke in a conciliatory tone. Was his term "paranoid" merely rhetorical exaggeration? Or did it reveal a deeper meaning?

Commenting on Israel's 1982 invasion of the Lebanon, the US writer Fredy Perlman has observed how "perpetrators of a pogrom portray themselves as the victims, in the present case as victims of the Holocaust". To explore the paranoid dimension of security concerns, let us first consider some bizarre military actions, not easily explained in terms of security or even sheer brutality. During the invasion, there were not simply the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) supervised massacres at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, but also the Israeli requirement that "terrorist suspects" wear X-shaped insignias on the back of their clothing. More recently, during the intifada in the Occupied Territories, soldiers have fired CS teargas into refugee camps, even into buildings, and have attacked demonstrators with more dangerous chemicals affecting the central nervous system. Soldiers have also used bulldozers to cover live prisoners with earth. It is as if the IDF actions were saying: we are justified in doing unto you as was done to us, or even that we will do unto you what you of course would do unto us, if we were crazy enough to give you the chance.

Another striking example arose in the television film, *State of Danger* (BBC2, March 1989), made by the Committee for the Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis. The film depicts counter-demonstrators shouting at Jewish opponents of the occupation: "Kill

the Arabs", "Kill the traitors" (meaning Jews who betray their supposed race), and "Send them to the gas chambers". In the face of worldwide condemnation of the occupation, they were responding with desires to purify Israel of Arab contamination, even to purify the *Juden Volk* itself of traitors who sympathised with the Arabs' oppression. As with the military behaviours already described, the counter-demonstrators symbolically invoked past persecution of the Jews, as if to legitimate their own murderous impulses.

Paranoia, in the clinical sense, means treating internal psychic threats (including aggressive impulses) as if they were external threats. Extended to the level of mass psychology, this projected persecution could define a collective unconscious: internal threats are displaced through attacks on an enemy Other and, conversely, the attacks are denied or justified by attributing the persecution to the victimised Other.

It would be comforting to believe that only "iron fist" hardliners indulge in such paranoia, seeing Israel as inherently threatened by Palestinians' presence. I would suggest, however, that such paranoia is normal in Israel, even that it defines a national culture. During the two weeks of my recent (and first) trip there, I repeatedly encountered examples of this mentality, and not only from the military or right-wing Israelis. Moreover, there were close resemblances between actual Israeli persecution of Arabs and fantasised Arab persecution of Jews — almost as if the fantasy served to legitimate the inverse reality.

One morning in (Arab) East Jerusalem, as we approached our rented van, a member of the Border Police reassured us that he had cleared the bottom of the van for bombs and then advised us not to pick up any Arabs, because they were looking for vehicles to hijack. When we replied that we needed no advice on this, he was very offended. Was he being merely alarmist?

It took some reflection to remind myself that such bombings and hijackings by Arabs have been rare in Israel, and certainly non-existent since the intifada began. It took some more reflection to remember having read of such attacks — by

Israeli Jews against Arabs, most notoriously the bombing of West Bank mayors. Indeed, during our visit there were reports of soldiers and settlers hijacking Arabs' cars and throwing explosive devices, especially at children. I later remembered the Border Police advice when, to my surprise, I learned that even militant Jewish opponents of the occupation felt reluctant to enter East Jerusalem, where we were staying.

In Jerusalem I also met an Israeli woman who reassured me that she opposed the occupation but felt that anti-occupation soldiers should not refuse service in the Occupied Territories, as they would act more humanely, for example, by not beating up children when arresting them. I asked her why such "humane" soldiers didn't simply retreat when faced with stone-throwers. She rightly replied that this logic would lead to complete military withdrawal from the territories. And what was wrong with that? Because Israel needs guarantees of its security. And weren't such guarantees now on offer? Without adequate guarantees, she said, "they'll come for us in our beds in Jerusalem".

Perhaps unconsciously, she was invoking the historical memory of the SS knock at the *Juden's* door, as if to displace the IDF knock at the Arab's door. At this time there were regular reports of soldiers snatching "suspects" from their beds, beating them up, imprisoning them, even summarily executing them. Yet somehow it is the victims who must give better guarantees of the persecutors' security.

I wondered whether at least the Peace Now organisation would challenge this mentality. At their 3 April demonstration, on the occasion of Shamir's trip to Washington, counter-demonstrators were singing (in Hebrew) "We shall reclaim Judea and Samaria". Other people held a large map-poster with the caption "There is already a Palestinian state, called Jordan. We don't need another one". Another man, being eagerly interviewed, accused Peace Now of weakening Israel, thus encouraging the PLO to wage a "Jihad war".

Again, I asked myself, was this merely alarmist paranoia, or something deeper? After all, religious settlers justify the occupation as a holy war to reclaim Judea and Samaria. The recent rise of the Islamic Movement notwithstanding, his *Jihad* accusation was again projecting a fantasised persecution onto its actual victims.

In the newspaper ads publicising

the demonstration, Peace Now urged Shamir, "As you depart for Washington, remember whom you represent!" The ad featured the results of a March opinion poll survey: two-thirds of the Jewish Israeli population "support negotiations with the PLO, when that organisation recognises the existence of Israel and ceases terror". As a naive foreigner, apparently I was deluded into believing that the PLO had already satisfied both those conditions.

When I asked one of the Peace Now stewards about the stated conditions, she replied "Some people think that the PLO hasn't been clear enough about these." And when I asked her exactly what Peace Now wanted Shamir to do, she could only say that "Shamir should soften his approach — just a little bit".

It was bad enough that the wording of the opinion poll question denied the significance of the PLO's recent unilateral concessions. Even worse, by uncritically citing the opinion poll results, Peace Now was acting in complicity with this collective denial. Yes, Peace Now has continued to pass the national test for sanity: we would be crazy not to be paranoid. And when Shamir devised yet more ways to evade negotiations with the PLO, he was indeed confidently remembering whom he represents.

The obligation to redress wrongs is similarly reversed as a matter of course in Israel. After troops fired upon worshippers at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem's Old City on 7 April, the government said it was "outraged" that Muslims had used the mosque for a political demonstration. Within its paranoid logic, the Israeli occupation can forbid Palestinians from holding political meetings, shoot them when they do so, and then self-righteously expect an apology, just as it demands more concessionary apologetics from the PLO.

Projected persecution has a long, institutionalised history in Israel. Although its nuclear programme arose to fulfil the nation's regional policing role, nuclear weapons can also be understood as a defence against external pressures — from whatever source — for Israel to reach a political solution to the "Palestinian problem" that its own policies created. By now the most pro-Palestinian Arab countries have been proven impotent in the face of Israeli military power, while the intifada uses the weapons of David against Goliath, yet Israel's nuclear programme still gathers pace. Distrusting Israel's military intentions, the USA has refused

Israel assistance with missile delivery systems; more recently it has even curtailed Israeli access to nuclear scientific information. Despite continuing US loyalty to its Middle East policeman, US strategists seem concerned that Israel may threaten nuclear attacks in revenge for its incapacity to control the intifada, as if symbolically to attribute its troubles to external trouble-makers.

The judicial treatment of Mordechai Vanunu, with the attendant "military secrecy" protecting virtually open secrets, likewise manufactured an atmosphere of mortal threat from traitors and foreigners. Now Vanunu's treatment in prison, where he is slowly being driven mad in social isolation, sets an example of what will happen to anyone who supposedly damages Israel's security. Moreover, his state-induced madness constructs a retrospective explanation for his supposed treason.

What, then, is this "security" all about? In the early years of the Israeli nation, the IDF regularly carried out border raids, not always publicised, though authorised at Cabinet level. Apparently the political aim was to provoke a military confrontation that would justify seizing more territory in the name of securing Israel's borders. Meanwhile, Golda Meir spoke of having "nightmares" about the Palestinians' high birth rate. Thus the political-military strategy, realised so grandly in the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, has strengthened the material basis for nightmares about the threatened Jewish character of Israel.

For some, it is not simply the state's Jewish character under threat, but the Ashkenazi Jewish character. Despite the official military meaning of "security", perhaps it involves a psychic continuum — fears of birth rates, cultural contamination and potential rebellion — all spreading from the Occupied Territories, to Palestinian Israeli citizens within the 1948 borders, and even to Israel's ex-Arab citizens, the Oriental Jews.

From the very start, Israel has denied that the Palestinians were a people, even that the Oriental Jews had a "culture" worthy of the name. Zionist debasement of both has been central to defending Israel's supposed "Jewish character" — really a secular nationalist substitute for an abandoned religious identity. Now Israel is being seen worldwide to abandon any moral basis that it once may have had. We should not be surprised that its Jewish

inhabitants need, more than ever before, a deadly enemy Other — to justify their national existence, to provide a unitary purpose, even to contain anxieties about social identity.

Secular Zionists, and not only in Israel, are particularly prone to treating Palestinian demands as a threat of annihilation (as perceptively described by Akiva Orr in *The UnJewish State*). That is, for those lacking a truly religious identity, Jews' very existence becomes psychically dependent upon sustaining Israel's coloniser role. This is done, of course, in the name of various historical myths, such as "A land without people for a people without land".

For Israel simply to negotiate with the PLO, in whatever form, would be to acknowledge that Israel stole the land from a people. It would be to recognise Palestinian national sovereignty. And, in the paranoid logic of Israel's national culture, Israeli Jews have only two options: either to remain the region's colonial power, or else be reduced to potential victims of a new holocaust.

Does this national psychopathology make Israeli culture unique? Certainly the modern nations of our "rational-scientific" world thrive on a pervasive racism, whereby people unconsciously project unwanted parts of themselves on to a group stigmatised as Other. In the case of Israel's normal paranoia, however, the persecution is enacted through systematic brutal repression, in the name of national survival. And this enactment necessitates the fantasised persecution, both as ideological justification and as psychic containment. In this situation, we will be brought little forward out of the paranoid impasse by simply describing the psychodynamic process, as this article has attempted to do. What would it take to challenge the ruling definitions of security and sanity?

These definitions will continue to rule for as long as Israel can sustain its present political-economic basis, whereby Israel's \$3 billion aid per year from the USA is balanced by its major export, moral blackmail. That basis can be undermined, both economically and psychologically, only through some external pressure supplementing the intifada's internal pressure. Of course, initially this would intensify Israeli paranoia, as is already happening. Yet only such an effective threat can ultimately force Israel to stop the persecution that it projects, and make real concessions to Palestinian national rights. ■

The people of the book?

Michael Safier looks at the state of the Jewish community after 10 years of Thatcher

The Club: The Jews of modern Britain, Stephen Brook, Constable, £15.95 (Hbk)

What has the "Thatcher decade" meant for the Jewish community in Britain? What are the conditions and trends that shape our community at the end of the 1980s? The tenure of the Thatcher regime, combined with the continuous onslaught of its political power and cultural propaganda, has created not only a real situation, but also an image which has come to be taken at face value. The extent to which it has transformed our economy, society, institutions and values has been repeatedly stressed and celebrated. Across broad sections of the left and the labour movement this image is given further credibility by a readiness to recognise and try to respond to these "new times", whatever their character is presumed to be.

The radical restructuring of British society that has been attempted under the precepts of "Thatcherism" has shifted the balance of economic and political power in thoroughly regressive and reactionary directions. The terms of recognised social responsibility and popular culture have moved further to the radical right. The current era of "conservative modernisation" only extends that central combination favoured by capitalist economies and bourgeois societies — a free(r) market based on private(ised) property, plus an authoritarian and centralised state.

What is distinctive, and has been powerfully persuasive, about the Thatcher regime is its intention to construct a comprehensive "project" of political economy which undercuts any other attempts to deal with this country's economic and social problems by the inclusive claim that "there is no alternative". This project embraces every facet of society: the generation and distribution of income and wealth; the provision of welfare; the fashioning of an enterprise culture; the redefinition of national identity; the status of women and the family; and the reconstitution of dominant moral values.

Drifting to the right

In the midst of all this, or on its margins, what of the Jews of Britain? Four years ago (JS2) I pointed to three significant shifts to the right that seemed then and still seem to be occurring in our community, expressed as an increasingly powerful religious orthodoxy, an increasingly aggressive Zionism and an increasingly conservative communal leadership. The two that have accelerated most over this decade are little directly to do with the "new times"; nor are they consistent with their dominant political project. On the one hand the resurgence of an exclusivist religious orthodoxy parallels both other assertions of religious fundamentalism and coercion in which a messianic zeal to impose theological legitimacy confronts more diverse definitions of belief within secular societies. On the other hand, active support for Israeli governments, whose policies have embodied an increasingly aggressive and expansionist Zionism, has emerged more strongly in reaction to the need to defend, at an escalating cost, the nature of the Israeli state and its political "project". After the invasion of Lebanon, and particularly since the *intifada*, the increasingly indefensible logic of internal colonialism as an enforced "solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has produced ever more desperate efforts to promote support in our community for Israel and deflect criticism.

The force and significance of these extremes of religious orthodoxy and Zionist intransigence are magnified by a third and longer-term shift to the right, reinforced by the wider climate of British politics during the 1980s. For at least the last 20 years, individuals and institutions represented as the leaders and establishment of our community have presented an

image intended to draw Jews in Britain into an increasingly conservative mould — politically, socially and culturally — both within the community and in our relations with the non-Jewish world. These efforts have found echoes in the wider community which are connected with long-term demographic, socio-economic and geographic changes — ageing, affluence, self-employment and suburbanisation. These material and ideological shifts have been strongly reinforced during the Thatcher regime.

Rhetoric and reality

For ourselves as Jews it is even more important to take notice of a crucial distinction which the Thatcher governments have tried hard to dissolve — the differences between the material realities and everyday experience of different sections of our community, and the ideological rhetoric that seeks to fit reality and experience into a radical right-wing straitjacket. Accepting the ideological conformities of this establishment conservatism is, and remains, a threat to the very identity and vitality of our community in present-day Britain. The threat is composed of two elements. Political conservatism is compatible with the definitions of Jewish identity provided by both an increasingly extreme religious orthodoxy and the Zionist movement: that Jews in Britain are a religious group, or a dependency of an Israelocentric archipelago. Otherwise, they are nothing — nothing worth acknowledging apart from as lapsed, assimilated, self-hating, and so on. These criteria of Jewishness literally, as well as figuratively, diminish our community both in quality and in numbers.

Political conservatism, happily self-regarding in the light of Thatcherite policies and values, is also interwoven with a pervasive weakness, mediocrity and repressive intolerance in all spheres of communal life — in our (un)representative communal institutions, in our social, educational and welfare provisions, in our responses to antisemitism and racism and sexism, in our intellectual, cultural and artistic creativity. The result is a strongly running current of alienation among a significant proportion of Jews in Britain who can find no point of connection with a community so constructed and defined, nor have they any need or reason to do so. It is conceivable that the best and brightest of our people, and in particular our young people, are no longer counted among us — and if this is so, our dismal demographic decline might turn out to be of our own deliberate creation. The stakes are very high.

Counteraction

Of course, the 1980s have also seen a progressive response to these trends. Assertive religious orthodoxy has been countered by a growing strength and self-confidence in liberal, reform and progressive Judaism. Support for Zionist intransigence and expansionism has been contested by a growing, and vocal, opposition to Israeli government actions, and a peace movement insistent that a negotiated settlement, recognition of the PLO and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank are in the best interests of Israeli and diaspora Jews alike. Even more crucial, attempts to redefine our political, social, economic and moral positions in line with those of the Thatcher "project" have met articulate opposition. This has applied to the strictures of the Board of Deputies on the "ethnic politics" and anti-racism of the GLC, to the homilies of the Chief Rabbi on the "genuine" Jewish response to the needs of newer immigrant communities, as suggested in the Church of England's report, *Faith in the City*, or the repeated attempts to declare socialist politics, yiddish culture and secular identity no longer

legitimate (or even possible). In all these cases, and many others, the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG), along with a growing number of new political, cultural, educational, feminist and internationalist groups, has played a distinctive and leading role in reversing the rightward drift.

Clichés and stereotypes

Which brings me to Stephen Brook and his *Club*. This is the first book-length treatment of the state of the Jewish community for 20 years (450 pages, *nokh*), and is a work of considerable significance in the context of my argument. It has been widely reviewed, and shows every sign of being a minor best seller. Its coverage is comprehensive and detailed, full of information and opinion. It is written from a standpoint which superficially appears quite close to those presented in *Jewish Socialist*, and the author's judgements on various institutions, groups and movements carry the same critical overtones as have been common currency in the Jewish Socialists' Group over many years. A close reading of the book, however, confirms the promise of its title. This is a very bad book, not in any particular, but definitively bad. So much so, that I would recommend it as required reading among Jewish socialists as the characteristic product of a decade and a generation whose negative influence on our community is, I believe, with a little help from us, nearly a spent force. (In line with the values represented by the book, I recommend waiting until it appears in paperback or, better still, becomes reissued, ensuring you get (some) value for your money.)

Mr Brook sets out to present to us, and to non-Jews interested in us, a community consisting of, firstly, half a dozen varieties of mutually incompatible and fractious religious affiliation (150 pages); secondly, the establishment of Chief Rabbi, Board of Deputies and the interlocking directorates of educational and charitable institutions (60 pages); thirdly, a *pot-pourri* of groups, and especially individuals, that represent our ways of making a living, our artistic and intellectual production, our ways of dealing with our roots as refugees and our current political concerns, particularly Israel and Zionism, Soviet Jewry and antisemitism (100 pages). There are excursions into the East End and provincial centres, and a final summing up on the identity and the future of Jews in Britain.

Mr Brook is not very impressed with anything on offer in Britain's Jewish community today, and keeps his distance from the various fragments, follies, mediocrities and mendacities he notes in passing. Well, Jewish socialists have been known to make some pretty disparaging comments on many of the same things, so what's the problem?

The problem is that Mr Brook's *Club of Jews* is a strictly ideological creation, and a badly caricatured one at that, which takes at face value the positions and pronouncements of those who would like to make it their own image, then use that image as a straitjacket into which members will be forced. Every cliché and stereotype about Jews in Britain, according to the precepts of an "enterprise culture" and "Victorian values" is trotted out. In the first place, *The Club* fails to address vast areas of the lived experience and material circumstances of most of its "ordinary" members, ignoring them in favour of those who have "made it". Indeed, the *Club* itself, as presented by Mr Brook, is a perfect synonym for that narrow definition which excludes many of our community who do not fit into any of its pigeonholes. This account would justifiably confirm them in keeping their distance from its portals.

The problem is produced largely by the construction of the book, which parallels the community it

purports to survey, and reflects the times in which it is written. The book, like the leading spokesmen for its Club, claims to be an authoritative and embracing guide, but is in fact parochial, unenlightening, mediocre and uninspired — indeed it is a thoroughly hack job. *The Club* is a picture of the Jewish community which emerges not from investigative journalism but by crossing media hype with the gossip column to produce a 450-page edition of the *Jewish Chronicle Colour Supplement*.

How was this achieved? In the way of the "new times", of course. The book is built on the basis of interview with nearly 100 "prominent" people in our community. This is the "great men" theory of current affairs (very few "great women" get a look in). The book is written on the "bucket" theory of knowledge: collect enough information, empty it out bit by bit and you have discovered something significant about the object of your enquiry. The size and shape of the bucket, of course, has no bearing on what you put in it or how it falls out. This means that all the important questions about *why* the community is in its present shape, what forces shape it and which issues divide it, what are the sources and self-understanding of its members' identity, and how does it react to the wider context of contemporary British society, can be ruled out of account in favour of the exciting controversies and opinionated disputes that we all love to read about. This is a bad book about Jews and a bad book for Jews, from any standpoint other than those of crude market forces and dominant ideologies.

Time for change

There is now good reason to hope that the Thatcher era, just at the apogee of its self-proclaimed success, is about to enter a swift decline. The attempt to meet difficult economic, social, political and cultural issues by denying that there is any alternative to the present Thatcherite "project", thus claiming people must change rather than policies or government, is now being shown up for what it is. More and more people, on the basis of their own experience, are demanding new ways of dealing with economic regeneration, social welfare, unequal opportunities and discrimination, taxation, urban renovation, the quality of our environment, our place in Europe, and so on. People are resisting a free market, an authoritarian state and an enterprise culture on grounds of democratic accountability, social responsibility and moral justice. As yet a new synthesis, a new comprehensive and comprehensible "project" for shaping turn of the century British society is barely in evidence. But the Thatcherite dream (or nightmare) is unlikely to last.

In the Jewish community, too, the decade's prevailing influences will come under increased pressure. *The Club* will remain as a testimonial to times past. We too need a new "project" for the reconstitution of Jewish life in Britain — and the JSG has already accumulated, in action and thought, a rich source of inspiration for such a project. *The Club* offers us an immediate point of departure. We need, for ourselves as socialists and for our community as Jews, to produce our own account of contemporary times; a "history from below", a people's history illuminated by a materialist and humanist analysis. Many short articles in recent issues of *Jewish Socialist* and *Jewish Quarterly* provide more enlightenment about our condition and community than long books like *The Club*.

What we need now is a book that would do justice to the position and prospects of Jewish life in Britain, and contribute to revitalising our community and placing our own tradition firmly as part of its future. Any offers? ■

'The book is written on the "bucket" theory of knowledge: collect enough information, empty it out bit by bit and you have discovered something significant about the object of your enquiry.'

Playing with fire

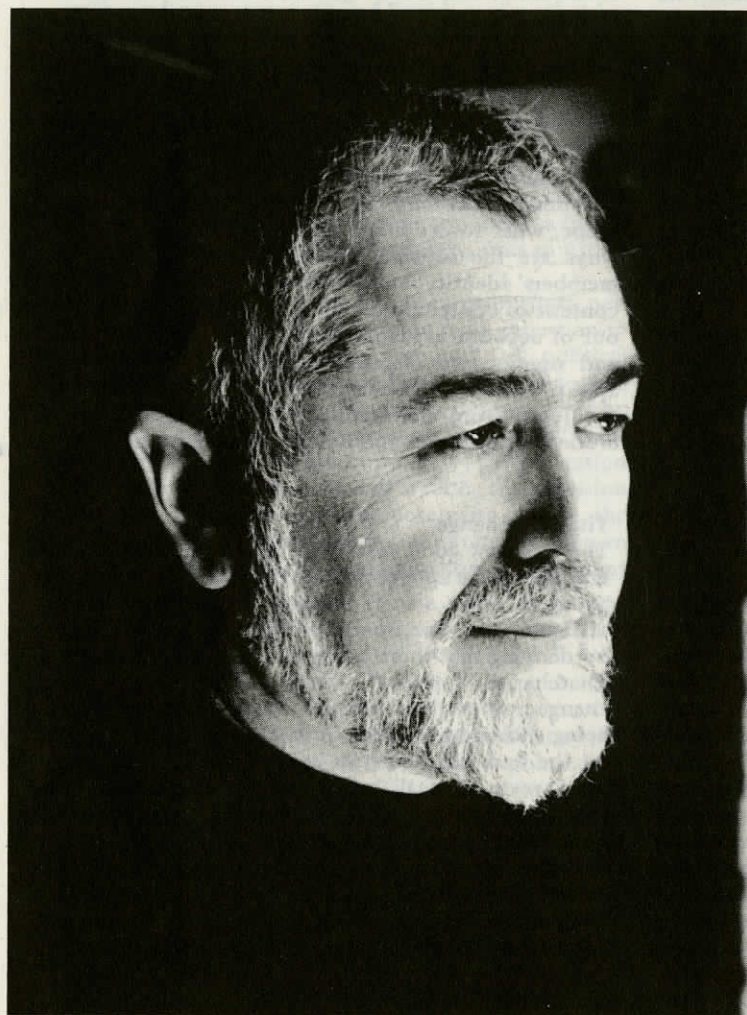


Photo: Clive Barda

Yehoshua Sobol, author of the challenging play, *Ghetto*, has been provoking and angering the Israeli establishment for many years. Barry Davis and Michael Heiser talked to him.

BD Do you see yourself primarily as a political writer?

YS I became one. I started as a documentary playwright at the beginning of the 1970s and my first work was *Coming of Age in Israel* which centred on old people. It was more a kind of social poetical documentary than political documentary. Through this documentary drama my work was labelled as more and more political; by opponents mainly.

In the mid-1970s I was mainly concerned with bringing to the stage voices which had not been heard before on the Israeli stage — what we call the “second Israel” — the people who lived in small towns in the north and south of the country, most of whom were new immigrants from Arab countries and from the Mahgreb.

When the Likud came to power in '77 it was a shock for many people; for a few years I wrote a number of political satires which were very outspokenly and openly political, taking a very clear position against the rise of the right wing in Israel and the growing influence of the religious parties and religious ideology.

BD How long were you writing before you came to Haifa?

YS I started writing in the sixties when I was a member of a Kibbutz in the north of the country. I wrote mainly long short stories which were published in literary reviews. Then I left the Kibbutz and went to Paris; I studied philosophy. I was in Paris during the glorious days of May '68. At that time I was writing novels and short stories. When I came back to Israel in 1970 I switched totally to writing plays.

BD Why was that?

YS I felt a very strong need to communicate immediately with a large audience, to share feelings and

opinions about what was happening in Israeli society, to open it up and to get a kind of immediate reaction. My involvement in Paris in May '68 probably influenced me.

BD Perhaps you could talk about your experience in Haifa.

YS In Haifa we were a group of playwrights and actors and directors. In the seventies we wanted to create a new authentic Israeli drama which didn't really exist before that. Everyone worked according to their personal taste or style. As we were dealing with all kinds of problems in Israeli society, we tried to get actors from various groups in Israeli society. So we had Ashkenazis and Sephardis and then Arab actors too; that's how it started. I don't know if it did Israeli society any good but the theatre became very dynamic because of this mixture of people.

Later, when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict became the most important issue in Israeli life, the fact that we had Arab actors influenced us to give them expression; to start to put on plays in Arabic and to attract an Arab audience to the theatre alongside the Israeli Hebrew repertoire. This reached its climax in the mid-1980s when the Israeli theatre became very, very political. We were trying to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to reach an Arab audience that was not used to going to the theatre. We had to put on plays which could easily be brought to Arab villages. During these years the theatre became very militant.

BD Was this the source of the conflict between you and the Haifa municipality?

YS Yes. The first clash was about a documentary I had written in 1972, called *Status Quo*, which dealt with religious coercion in Israel. It raised such a scandal it was even brought up in the Knesset. Members of the parliament from religious parties intervened to get the Board of Directors of the theatre to stop the play being staged. They couldn't stop it and the play went on.

Then *Nefesh Yehudi* (The Soul of a Jew) ran into trouble when the play was invited to the official

Edinburgh Festival in 1983. Right-wing journalists and politicians said it was an antisemitic, self-hating play and that exporting it to Europe is exporting antisemitism. We had more problems when another play of mine, *Shooting Magda*, was invited to tour Belgium, Holland and Germany. The Jewish community in Dusseldorf interfered. The Chairman of the Jewish Council wrote a telegram to the Mayor of Haifa saying “How can you allow this play to be performed in Germany?” and asked him to forbid us to perform it in Dusseldorf. We tried to convince everyone on the municipality that it was not an antisemitic play; that it had already been put on by German theatres and that reactions had not been at all antisemitic. But the Mayor of Haifa vetoed the performance in Dusseldorf.

BD These conflicts seem to be about presenting internal conflicts to the outside world, the diaspora complex of what will the goyim think? But what about within Israel?

YS We also had incidents in the theatre with *Palestinian Girl*. Right-wingers from the Tehiya party came organised in Tel Aviv and interrupted the performance once or twice by shouting and screaming and making noises in the auditorium. They demonstrated outside the theatre, calling on the audience to boycott the play. But then they started an organised fight against the theatre. It was quite serious. The struggle against the Haifa theatre went on for four or five years until they got rid of us, Gedalia Besser, me and the General Manager of the theatre.

The climax came with *The Jerusalem Syndrome*. We opened it in the Haifa theatre in December 1987 and presented it on 10 January — three weeks after the Intifada started and also at the beginning of Israel's 40th anniversary festivities. Every theatre in Israel was invited to present a play; ours was *The Jerusalem Syndrome*. There was a campaign of right-wing members of parliament against the theatre, which culminated in a huge riot in the theatre when we opened in the

Habimah theatre in Tel Aviv. They stood up and screamed and shouted and it came to physical fighting in the audience. There were semi-hostile criticisms in the newspapers; some of the critics did like the play; some did not at all. We said the theatre was in terrible danger; the Board of Directors and the politicians were going to liquidate the theatre. We asked for help and I said that I considered it to be a cultural struggle. People didn't take it seriously; liberals and ex-left-wing journalists didn't take it seriously. Eventually we couldn't go on because the municipality stopped financing the theatre. It was clear to us what they were going to do. So we decided not to give them this present; we wanted the theatre to continue because there was a company of some 30 actors who had a commitment to the same line — Jews and Arabs together. So Gedalia Besser and myself decided to resign in January 1988.

BD When I was in Jerusalem I saw a production of *Nefesh Yehudi*. It struck me as an unusual play.

YS *Nefesh Yehudi* deals with the historical figure of Otto Weininger who was 23 years old when he committed suicide. He was a young philosopher in Vienna, in 1903.

The play is mainly focused on the problem of a Jew having to deal with antisemitism and being, in a way, torn between his identification with the culture in which he grew up, which was the Germanic culture, and his Jewish background, which he tries to deny and repudiate but which he cannot get rid of. His psyche or his whole mental structure is shattered by this conflict and at the end he doesn't manage to come to terms with himself or with the conflict which destroys him. His character intrigued me because he grew up in the same Vienna where both Hitler and Herzl grew up, at a time when Austrian antisemitism became very ferocious and very dangerous. Turn-of-the-century Vienna was the cradle of Zionism. I wanted to see what was the soil out of which Zionism grew; what was the climate; what was the mental set-up of young Jewish intellectuals.

I wrote the play during the war in Lebanon. Weininger was a great admirer of what he believed was the Aryan-mentality versus the Jewish mentality which he despised deeply. Aryan masculinity versus Jewish femininity. Curiously enough when I was re-reading Weininger I started to have this ironic feeling that had he lived today he might have admired Arik Sharon ... this is the Teutonic Jew ... the ultimate incarnation of the Teutonic ideal. I felt that Weininger probably expressed, in his tormented way, a need which finished up at the end of the day by bringing out Arik Sharon, and these types we have in Israel.

BD It is a very erotic play — designed to shock. The eroticism, the cross-dressing, which is quite cleverly done, seem quite important for the Weininger character. What about the way in which political ideas became somehow confused in sexual ideas?

YS They are. I think this concern with virility, wanting to be more virile in a culture turning to virility; this has happened to Israeli culture. Judaism at the time was symbolised by the Jewish mother who has an important part in the play — plucking the chicken and talking and talking and talking all the time, and the father who cannot cope with her and runs away all the time. In the play there is almost no virility, except for a Christian teacher. In Israel in the earlier part of the century there was great admiration of the virility of the Beduins, of the goyim generally, which led to the ideal of a healthy savage sabra. You have AB Yehoshua, an Israeli contemporary writer, speaking about normality as an ideal. I think that all this business about trying to be normal is very abnormal and very sick.

BD But other cultures don't question their own values, whereas the Jews are always uncertain of themselves.

YS But that's what I think is unique and typical of us, so why get rid of it? *Nefesh Yehudi* was to do with trying to embrace the figure of Otto Weininger and saying: "He's one of us." This is a normal Jewish individual asking the questions which torment us all and we don't have to reject him or treat him as a psychotic. For me the play was not to make the audience love or identify with this figure but to feel that he is an important part of themselves. I think this did happen with our audience in Israel. The Haifa theatre were not very keen to put it on. They put it on in an

experimental stage in the theatre. After two or three performances it became an event. Everyone crowded to see it and, surprisingly, it attracted young audiences. Then we had open debates with the audience.

BD There is a connection between *Ghetto* and what you seem to be doing in this play — the bleak personality who tells the truth about the Jewish people. In some ways the Weininger figure is represented not so much by Gens, the leader of the Jewish Council, who is more optimistic, but by the Nazi in the bleak truth he tells them.

YS I know I wrote Kittel, this Nazi officer, from my inner depths. He existed, but the character in the play has nothing to do with the real Kittel. Weininger was clever. I think he envisioned dead ends wherever he turned. One of the dead ends is when he says: "Zionism is doomed." It will be swallowed by Judaism.

MH If, in *Ghetto*, Kittel is the figure from the outside who tells the truth, how would you fit Kruk in?

YS There are many levels of truth; various kinds of truth. Kruk is very much involved. He is not objective. He cares about the community and what happens to it, that's why he becomes a terrible antagonist to Gens: because he's trying to fight for what he thinks is the dignity of this community. At the end when Gens doesn't want the theatre any more, Kruk in a way takes it over and makes of it a kind of theatre of protest, a militant theatre. But Kittel is not involved at all. He is an outsider looking on with total indifference.

MH How did you come to write *Ghetto*?

YS I did not intend — I was not inclined — to write about the Holocaust. It just happened, but I believe things happen because they become inevitable at some point. I try to avoid things because I feel they are inevitable and I am afraid of them.

One day I read about the theatre that was functioning in the Vilna Ghetto and from that moment on I tried to find material about it; that's how I found out about Kruk's diary. Then I met the man who was artistic director of the theatre in the Ghetto, Israel Segal, who was still alive and living in Tel Aviv when I was doing my research.

MH The play turns a lot on how you see the character of Gens. Some people were critical because they thought you had made Gens too likeable, or perhaps too understandable.

YS I hope I did make him understandable. You can divide the Jewish reactions to the Nazis into two groups. A very negligible minority collaborated intentionally and became Gestapo agents. All the other Jewish reactions to the Nazis were doomed to failure because the Nazis had overwhelming power. The Jewish community in an isolated ghetto did not have the power to confront it, to struggle against it. They couldn't do anything practical. So, starting from this point, there were all sorts of attitudes, like the underground movement who said: "Let's collect weapons and wait for the day when it is clear that they are going to exterminate us, then we will openly revolt."

The attitude of the majority was to survive by any means and not get involved in anything. In every ghetto, there were a few personalities who believed they could deal with the Germans and help their own community. I take Gens for one of these people. After all I have read about him and having thought a lot about it I don't believe he was a collaborator. His original intention was to serve his community and to do that he knew he had to deal with the Germans. So he tried to establish a logical policy. He believed that if the ghetto became industrious and productive it would enhance its chances of survival. He knew the Germans wanted to exterminate all the Jews but he believed one could play for time. His analysis went so far as to say: "The Russians will enter Vilna one day; the question is when? If I can meet them with as many people as possible I will have done my historical job." At some point Gens made a clear choice: not to think about the dead; only about the living. This is a very difficult choice. I don't know if it is a moral one or if it is morally defensible. I think it is not, because it means being ready all the time to sacrifice some people in order to save others and to make others go on living.

In the universe of the ghetto everyone was forced to practise selection one way or another. Like the young doctor in the play, who has the problem of insulin; she is faced with the problem of selection. You can just cop out of it and not deal with the problem. But what should this doctor do? She decides to practise selection among patients.

Then there is the story of Nazis taking every third child. You see the family with three children. Who will decide which child should go? They leave it to Gens to decide. Gens picks out the child and takes him away. They curse him, they shout, but they remain with the

two children. This terrible story really happened in Lodz.

I spoke with survivors and most of them were very frank and open. They admitted that they are tormented to this day by the knowledge that they survived by making at some point a clear choice to separate from an older mother or sick brother and go to the right while the other one was taken to the left. It is more comfortable to find a scapegoat and say "He is the one who is carrying all our sins" (I mean Gens). Firstly I don't believe it and because it is not true it is probably not sane either, to get rid of a problem. That is the problem of the Jewish people after the Holocaust. We have to examine what happened to us.

MH In the play you seem to suggest Gens' reactions relate to his being a Zionist.

YS He was a revisionist Zionist.

BD How extreme a revisionist? Some revisionists actually welcomed the destruction of the Jewish people, or the prospect of destruction, because they said "at last our point will be made".

YS Before the war he was almost assimilated. He was married to a non-Jewish woman. He was an officer of the Lithuanian army. When the Nazis came in he felt he could do something and he volunteered to go into the ghetto. His wife stayed outside and she survived. I met his daughter in the United States and his granddaughter too. His daughter says that when he realised he was helpless he broke down. In a way he committed suicide, because when he was summoned to the Gestapo knowing that they were going to kill him he went there and didn't try to escape.

BD You have suggested that Israelis are comfortable with these myths about heroes, rather than facing the truth.

YS When the State of Israel was founded, there was this need for heroes and a very strong aversion to the Holocaust. There was a feeling that this is a chapter we cannot include in our history unless we simply say: "never again", a phrase which would justify everything. It was an authentic feeling that first of all you have to fight, to be strong. There were also very strong feelings of resentment towards the rest of the world and revenge too. So all these other people who "just survived" did not fit into this pattern unless they tried to reform themselves. If they were young enough, some became officers in the Israeli army. Those who were

unfit became kind of shadows. The story of their survival became something, not exactly shameful, but it was something one couldn't be proud of and one couldn't even tell because no one wanted to listen.

BD Sort of non-persons?

YS Yes. After the performance in Haifa opened we invited survivors from the Vilna Ghetto. They were sitting on the stage and there was a television crew. Some of them were ex-partisans.

One of the survivors said: "Where are the partisans, the fighters?" I said: "I am writing another play which will deal with the partisans" (which I have now done). There was another lady on the stage, a survivor, and she became very violent and said to the partisan: "We have had enough of you 'first class survivors'. It is time to speak of us second and third class survivors." I was as shocked as everyone else, hearing this term. She became very passionate, speaking about the myth of saving Jewish dignity. She described the scene that took place in the Vilna Ghetto when the ghetto was finally liquidated and everyone marched out to the final selection and some went to the right and some to the left. She described the scene where they took all the babies and small children away from their parents and piled them up in a corner. Some of them were crying loudly. All of a sudden a young German soldier came with a girl of three or four on his arms and she was crying. This young soldier was shocked. He was carrying the girl and he said "where is the mother?" The lady telling the story said: "I knew the mother and she just ran away, she just turned towards the survivors." After a while the soldier just put the girl there with the other children. Then she said "well what are you talking about dignity?" Of what kind of value is dignity in such a situation?

When she told the story everyone on the panel and the television crew started to cry. I then realised that *Ghetto* probably dealt with these people who hadn't had a voice for many years.

BD There are also a lot of myths here. Because people are so ignorant.

YS A play cannot replace an entire cultural activity which must take place on many levels.

MH But it can be a spur.

YS Absolutely. I believe it is part of an entire movement which needs an effort of thousands of scholars, playwrights, writers, poets, teachers...

MH You counterpose the strategies of Gens and Kruk: "survival at all costs" or "try and keep alive the cultural *geist* of the community". Do you find Kruk more admirable?

YS I owe Kruk a lot. Without his diary I would not have the insight that I have into the story of *Ghetto* but I try not to forget that Kruk did not have to make the life and death decisions. I imply in the play that there is a connection between Kruk and the underground, with the resistance. But in the play there is no situation where Kruk has to



Photo: Clive Barak

make a decision as to who should survive and who should die. Kruk has a difficult moment when he has to say ugly things about the Jewish community. His heart bleeds but he tells the truth. That is where my sympathy goes with Kruk. He will tell the truth and he will not try to embellish it.

There is one point when he is offered power in the ghetto and he says "I will take nothing from the Nazis." He is ready to pay with his life. ■

Collaborate or resist?

Ghetto
by Yehoshua Sobol
(National Theatre)

One of the ghastly facts of the Nazi period is that there seems to be no end to its ability to throw up yet more curious and grotesque stories. I found myself in a bookshop recently reading a summary of the Nuremberg Trials in order to try and glean some meaning from horror out of the reactions of the Nazi defendants. As I read the account I found myself willing the accused to explain to me what they thought they were doing. They didn't. I read the testimonies of victims. I get to understand the experience but does it explain anything? I doubt it.

Now, an Israeli playwright, Yehoshua Sobol, has written a play around events during the last days of the Vilna ghetto, which has at its core a horrifying but bizarre episode. The SS officer in charge of the ghetto was an artist and a singer. He played the saxophone and was only 20 in 1942. Quoted in the programme notes but not included in the play is this observation: "During the liquidation of the ghetto Kittel (the SS officer) ordered a piano to be brought out and he began to play. At that moment a hiding place was discovered and a young man hauled out. When he saw Kittel at the piano he threw himself down and begged for mercy. Without stopping playing with one hand. Kittel used the other to get out his gun and shoot the prisoner."

This mutation of human behaviour was mirrored by something no less contorted: in the ghetto the Yiddish theatre went on putting on shows right up to the last minute. "Every time we put on a show — sold out three weeks in advance! People who knew next day they'd be on a train to the camps, the night before they'd put on their finery, come to the play." Sobol has brought these two ideas, the artistic Nazi and the terrorised theatre troupe, together as a play. The result is an explosion of themes, some better resolved than others.

A variety of Jewish types act out the dilemmas of that time: the tailoring boss, Weiskopf, who is so adaptable that he offers to get his workers repairing German army uniforms or laying on a dinner-dance for Kittel and his cronies; Gens, head of the ghetto, involved in administering the Jewish ghetto police and at the same time negotiating over how many and what kind of Jew could be taken; there are the actors and musicians

themselves; and there's Kruk, the ghetto librarian, diarist-narrator and member of the Bund. A series of awful demands are put to this set of Jews by Kittel: he wants to be entertained, he wants the third born of every family to be handed over, he wants Weiskopf's workers to work harder.

The play reveals these actions with an alternating sequence of spectacle and debate. One moment we are watching the performance of a Yiddish song (translated into English) and the next an argument between, say, the Bundist and the head of the ghetto. The spectacles are riven with irony because, though they are manifestations of Jewish spirit in terrible times, they are applauded by the ghastly Kittel. He enjoys Jewish singing and dancing, asks for more, asks for anti-German jokes and laughs at them. This made for a kind of horror in which several feelings are rushed into conflict with each other: anger with Kittel for having the power to demand performances from starving actors; sorrow at the content of the songs themselves; amazement that a Nazi could admire the culture but still want to eliminate it; pleasure that the human spirit in general and the Jewish spirit in particular could go on thinking and creating in such times.

However, the debates between the characters have problems. The tailoring boss and the ghetto chief have clear material reasons for acting the way they do. The first is an opportunist who is going to survive, he believes, by making himself necessary to everyone, anyone, even the SS. The second, from his position of power in the ghetto, is a dealer, claiming to save lives by trading others away. Arguing against these two positions but, within the context of the play, on rather thin grounds, is the Bundist. He is a lonely figure, sitting in his library, very good on theory but not able to deliver anything in practice. His arguments are shown to carry little weight in the face of the other two characters' practicality.

As we know, Bundists were not all academics. A playwright could choose to have Jewish socialist arguments coming from the mouth of a seamstress or a presser and they would not be so easy to dismiss. People who see Israel as Zion might be mildly disturbed by the portrayal of the ghetto chief hanging criminal Jews and negotiating with the SS. On the other hand, his arguments are never seriously challenged. In one sequence, he is shown saving a third-born by putting him with a couple who have only one child.



Photo: Clive Barba

The tailoring boss, the ghetto chief and the Bundist all die. What survives? The songs, the diaries, the memories and the will to survive itself? This is symbolised by a painful and beautiful dance by a ventriloquist's dummy in the final show by the theatrical troupe.

Moved as I was by many of the scenes (it was sufficient just to see a pile of children's clothes or the SS officer enjoying a piece of *khola* to bring tears to my eyes), I was left with some uneasy questions: is this notion of "survival of the spirit" enough? Or is it really a kind of romantic bullshit? Did ghetto chiefs really save lives by trading others? Or were they just collaborators, smoothing the way for genocide? Did entrepreneurs save their own skins, or was their activity collusion too? Were all the choices impossible ones? The one act of resistance in the conventional sense is shown as irresponsible because it results in a massacre we see on stage.

What we all know is impossible to measure is to what extent could things have been different if Jews had behaved in different ways. One argument with those who point the finger at insufficient or even immoral Jewish behaviour in ghettos and camps says: "In the face of genocide people don't behave too good — so? Neither did Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt, and they had more room for manoeuvre."

The play seems to be saying that it didn't matter what a Jew thought or did in those circumstances, the SS would get you in the end; in the face of that, all that mattered was that you lived your life fully to the last. As a marxist, I find that unacceptable. As someone born in England in 1946, perhaps I ought to shut up about it, but that wouldn't make these terrible questions disappear. ■

MICHAEL ROSEN

Class of '39

Charlie Pottins looks at British support for Hitler before the Second World War

One still hears the argument every so often, "We made the mistake of underestimating Hitler. We must not be deceived again." Margaret Thatcher, evoking Churchillian daydreams, admonishes peace-seekers sternly, blaming them for pre-war appeasement and encouraging aggression.

Saloon-bar (or synagogue-hall) wiseacres, claiming superior knowledge by virtue merely of having lived longer, attempt to silence the young by conjuring-up the cliché of Neville Chamberlain back from Munich, promising "Peace in our Time". "We must not be fooled again," they say with a superior smile. But whoever "We" are (and it apparently includes the prime minister, armed service chiefs, captains of industry, intelligence chiefs and the person on the bar stool addressing you, all with an assumed common interest and shared knowledge) rest assured, "We" are the goodies, ever the innocent and injured party. Our political leaders may be fools occasionally, misled by the wily foreigner, but never (except possibly when putting up taxes) knaves or the villains of the piece.

The picture of Chamberlain being duped by Hitler, due to his sincere quest for peace in our time, is a myth. If the British government was duped, it was because it wanted to be. (How it systematically duped the British public, with the help of the Tory media, is another matter.) In February 1938, Chamberlain

rejected a US approach for one from Mussolini, got rid of Eden, and effectively connived at the Nazi Anschluss in Austria the following month. By May (six months before the Munich agreement) British Foreign Office officials were talking of how the Czechs must concede territory to the Reich. Nazi emissaries, including the Sudetan fuhrer, Konrad Heinrein, were warmly received in London while the Czechs and their republic were roundly abused in ruling circles.

On 3 March 1939, dissident German officers tipped off British intelligence that invasion of Czechoslovakia was imminent. Chamberlain encouraged Sir Samuel Hoare to make a speech on 10 March anticipating a "Golden Age of peace and prosperity, the end of the armaments race, and future co-operation between nations". The Nazi tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia five days later.

A wisecrack that went around Prague at the time of the Russian invasion in 1968, when the Kremlin claimed it was forestalling "fascist aggression", was that the Soviet army had arrived a little late. The same could be said of the British Tories' new-found concern, 30 years after Munich, for Czech sovereignty and freedom. "...Czechoslovakia, a tumour in the heart of Europe ruled by the Communist Benes, which required a surgical operation to prevent it poisoning the lifestream of Europe," wrote Professor A P Laurie of the pro-Nazi organisation, the Link, in its *Anglo-German Review*, December 1938.

Headed by Admiral Sir Barry Domville, a former Director of Naval Intelligence, the Link was just part of a chain of groups and prominent individuals in Britain who wanted an alliance between this country and Hitler. Its council included Lord Redesdale, father of Unity Mitford and father-in-law of Sir Oswald Mosley. Just before the war it was joined by the Duke of Westminster, one of the richest landowners in England and friend of the Duke of Windsor.

The Pro-Nazi Lobby

Sir Barry Domville was involved with Mosley, the fanatically antisemitic Tory MP Captain Archibald Maule Ramsay, and others in a series of conspiratorial secret meetings from 1939 to 1940 which were brought to a close by their internment. Some writers believe that a pro-Nazi coup was being hatched and go so far as to link Rudolf Hess's flight to Britain with this, as well as the Duke of Windsor's possible role as a figurehead. (It is said the reason Anthony Blunt enjoyed protection in later years was his inside knowledge gained from wartime work in MI5, and his willingness to recover embarrassing documents for the royal family.)

The Windsors and the Mosleys remained on friendly social terms in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s. Sir Barry Domville had his memoirs, blaming a Jewish freemason for his being pensioned off from Naval Intelligence, published by the Britons Publishing Society. (They

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also published the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and had among their post-war directors Sir Archibald Maule Ramsay.) In 1967, Domville was a founder and honorary president of the National Front.

The discussions which Admiral Domville, Lord Lymington, Lord Tavistock (later Duke of Bedford) and Mosley had between March and the end of May 1940, concerning a negotiated peace with Germany, had parallels at a more official level as Holland, Belgium and Norway fell. On 29 May, in Cabinet, Lord Halifax proposed suing for peace. Lord Biddle, a friend of the Duke of Windsor, had been urging peace with Hitler, as had the Duke of Westminster. Sir Samuel Hoare at the Foreign Office was reputed to be in favour. Indeed, his permanent secretary, Sir Alexander Cadogan, remarked, perhaps unfairly: "He'll be the Quisling of England when Germany conquers us..." (He was made ambassador to Franco instead.)

The pre-war pro-Nazi lobby in Britain was not confined to a few convinced fascists or antisemitic eccentrics. Nor was it a matter of "peace at any price", as the Nazis conquered Europe. Even before Hitler attained power in Germany he had powerful backers abroad, such as Sir Henri Deterding of Royal Dutch Shell. Some researchers probing the prehistory of the Nazi Party, among the right-wing Freikorps and the antisemitic, aristocratic Thule Society, say evidence points to some British "godfathers" being around when Nazism was still in its cradle. Then, it was a matter of combating Bolshevism in Germany. Later, the Nazi reich was seen as both good for business, through rearmament and crushing trade unions, and an ally in the war against communism.

"Liberal ideas and public freedom of thought and speech are to some extent luxuries..." merchant banker Ernest Tennant told an audience at Ashridge Conservative College, explaining the Nazis' rise to power. Germany had endured economic chaos, a grim struggle for survival, and the threat of communism, he said. "When accusing the Nazis of wanton brutality, it must be remembered that the alternative — a Communist revolution — might have been worse." Tennant led a British trade delegation to Germany in 1934 and was pleased to see how impressed members were. "It was decided on returning to London to form and finance the start of the Anglo-German Fellowship." Richard Griffiths, in *Fellow Travellers of the Right*, suggests the real source of the idea may have been Ribbentrop.

An earlier Anglo-German Association, aiming to promote friendship between the two peoples and including such people as Wells and Galsworthy, had been dissolved when Hitler came to power. There was little doubt of the mutual approval which existed between the Fellowship and the Nazis. Among speakers who were guests of the Anglo-German Fellowship were Ribbentrop (on several occasions), General Tholens of the German Labour Service, Hitler Youth leaders, and Freiherr von Hadeln, SS Adjutant to Himmler.

Ribbentrop was nicknamed the "Londonderry Herr" by some wags, being a frequent guest of the Marquess of Londonderry at his seat in County Down. The Marquess, Minister of Air from 1931 to 1935, was invited to Goering's summer residence along with Mussolini after the 1937 German army manoeuvres.

'Liberal ideas and public freedom of thought and speech are to some extent luxuries'

'The pre-war pro-Nazi lobby was not confined to a few convinced fascists or antisemitic eccentrics'

He had already met Hitler the year before and was keen for him to succeed, although he mildly cautioned Ribbentrop on taking antisemitism too far: "As I told you, I have no great affection for the Jews. It is possible to trace their participation in most of these international disturbances which have created so much havoc in different countries, but on the other hand one can find many Jews strongly ranged on the other side."

Influence in High Places

In 1936, the secretary of the Anglo-German Fellowship told a reporter: "It isn't numbers that matter. We want 'Names', otherwise how can we have any influence with the government or the Foreign Office." If "names" were what was needed, the Fellowship must have gained plenty of influence! Along with Sir Barry Domville, Professor Laurie and Lord Redesdale (who turn up again in the Link), the Anglo-German Fellowship had about 27 Conservative MPs as members and at least 30 members of the House of Lords, such as the Marquess of Londonderry, Viscount Esher, the Earl of Glasgow and the Duke of Wellington.

Lieutenant Colonel Sir Thomas Moore, one of three Tory MPs on the Fellowship council, had written an interesting article in the *Daily Mail* on 25 April 1934, entitled:

The Blackshirts have what the Conservatives Need. "What is there in a black shirt which gives apparent dignity and intelligence to its wearer?" he said, describing a fascist rally at the Albert Hall. "All seemingly filled with the same emotions, pride of race, love of country, loyalty, hope... As I listened to the vibrant tones of Sir Oswald Mosley ... I got my answer. There was little if any of the policy which could not be accepted by the most loyal follower of our present Conservative leaders... Why, therefore, the Blackshirts? The answer lies in the one word — Action!"

Having satisfied himself that the Mosley movement was "largely derived from the Conservative Party" and shared the same "instincts" — "loyalty to the throne and love of country", Sir Thomas urged an alliance between his own party and "this new and virile offshoot". In another article that year, entitled *Give Hitler a Chance*, he told readers, "I am satisfied that Herr Hitler is absolutely honest and sincere."

An interesting feature of the Anglo-German Fellowship, noted in Simon Haxey's classic work *Tory MP*, 1939, but left unexamined in more recent books, was its corporate membership (as perhaps befitted supporters of the corporate state!). Companies which had corporate membership of this pro-Nazi propaganda body, indicating that their Board of Directors approved, included Guinness, Mahon & Co, Lazard Bros, and J Henry Shroder in City banking; Firth-Vickers in the steel industry; and, among other firms, Dunlop, McDougalls, and the giant Unilever corporation.

Individual members of the Anglo-German Fellowship included 21 bank directors, including the Governor of the Bank of Scotland, Lord Lothian; and Deputy-Governor, Sir Donald Cameron. Three directors of the Bank of England were members; one of them, F C Tiarks, on the Anglo-German Fellowship Council. Lord McGowan, chairman of ICI and director

of Midland Bank; Andrew Agnew, managing director of Shell; and Sir Leonard Lyle, president of Tate and Lyle; are a few more names on the Anglo-German Fellowship's list.

Material Support

It is well known that British industry was shipping strategic materials to Germany right up to the outbreak of war. A third of Britain's 50,000-ton stock of rubber was on its way in mid-August 1939. What is perhaps not so well known is that the British government and the Bank of England facilitated credit and exchange for the Nazi war build-up. Montague Norman at the bank also saw to it that Czechoslovakia's gold was handed over to the Nazis.

While, according to its secretary, the Fellowship was a club for Tory peers and "distinguished representatives of Big Business", the Link, set up by Admiral Domville, formed local branches for local bigwigs: city aldermen, country squires, magistrates, vicars, councillors (some of them Labour) and retired military and naval officers who were probably attracted by the Admiral. It grew in the outer London suburbs, the Midlands, southern services towns and Ulster.

There were garden parties and socials, as well as propaganda. Ilford branch had a "Bierabend" in March 1939, at which local MP Geoffrey Hutchinson praised the work of the Link. Croydon branch had sent Alderman Mrs Bessie Roberts and her daughter to the 1938 Nuremberg rally: "an unforgettable experience," she enthused. "Herr Hitler himself is very keen on the movement," Admiral Domville assured reporters (*The Observer*, 28 November 1937).

The president of the Anglo-German Fellowship, and also chairman of the Anti-Socialist Union, was former Tory MP and Transport Minister Lord Mount-Temple. "If another war comes," he told the Fellowship's annual dinner in 1936, "well, I must not say what I was going to say — I hope the partners will be changed." He met Hitler that year. At a reception for the German ambassador on 19 October 1938, proposing the toast, Mount-Temple said, "Never, since the Anglo-German Fellowship started have we met under fairer auspices."

After Kristallnacht

On 19 November, following the Kristallnacht pogroms and Nazi anti-Jewish decrees, the London *Evening Standard* reported Lord Mount-Temple's resignation from the chairmanship of the Fellowship "as a protest against the treatment of the Jews by the German government." Perhaps it had taken a while for him to notice. Mount-Temple's first wife, the mother of Lady Mountbatten, had been of Jewish descent, the *Evening Standard* pointed out. If he had been a German subject "this non-Aryan connection would be enough to make him ineligible for chairmanship of the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft in Berlin". Although resigning his post, Mount-Temple did not quit the Fellowship.

Only 20 of the Anglo-German Fellowship's 900 members decided to leave after Kristallnacht. As for the Link, although its *Anglo-German Review* received a few letters protesting the antisemitic outrages in Germany, membership continued to grow: from 2,600 in September 1938 to 3,500 by the end of the year, and more than 4,300 by June 1939. The Link's

'It is clear that Nazi antisemitism was embraced with enthusiasm by many of them and regarded as acceptable by most of the rest'

'Had the Nazis ever occupied this country they would have enjoyed the same collaboration as they found elsewhere in Europe'

Central London branch, launched at the beginning of 1939, soon had 400 members. In June 1939, Captain Ramsay addressed them on "Secret Forces Working for War". It's a fair guess that he was not talking about Krupp or IG Farben. Ramsay, Tory MP for Peebles, was a devotee of the *Protocols*. In August 1939, the subject was "The Hidden Hand in European Affairs", with their vice-chairman, Richard Finlay, describing "the influence exerted by the Jews in Europe as an evil one," the *Anglo-German Review* reported.

People may have joined the Link for a variety of reasons, from naive views on peace to social climbing, and not all were hardline Nazis. However, it is clear that Nazi antisemitism was embraced with enthusiasm by most of the rest. When we picture, ranged behind these respectable suburbanites, the powerful barons of the Anglo-German Fellowship, and in front of them the lumpen organised by Mosley, it is not difficult to imagine that had the Nazis ever occupied this country they would have enjoyed the same collaboration from the same social forces as they found elsewhere in Europe.

Without in any way justifying the Communist Party's contortions — before, during and after the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact — one can understand left-wing hostility and distrust of the motives behind rearmament. As it happened, the conflict between Axis ambitions and British interests overcame the tendency of right-wing rulers to ally. It was Labour, which had opposed the betrayal of Czechoslovakia, whose backing during the May 1940 crisis enabled Churchill to take over government. The man who had used artillery against a few anarchists and sent in troops against the miners, who had told Mussolini in 1927: "Had I been an Italian, I would have been with you from the start", became the defender of democracy.

"The use of recriminating about the past is to enforce effective action at the present," Churchill said on another occasion. Today, when a decayed British imperialism attempts to restore its youthful vigour via Thatcherism, the danger to peace may be not from the appeasement of some foreign power, but the belligerence of our own bomb-happy Tories. It is essential to tear down myths about the past and counter those engaged in recreating facades of virtue for our rulers in order to find the way again for our future. ■

Some useful reading

The Impact of Hitler by Maurice Cowling (University of Chicago)

Fellow Travellers of the Right by Richard Griffiths (Constable)

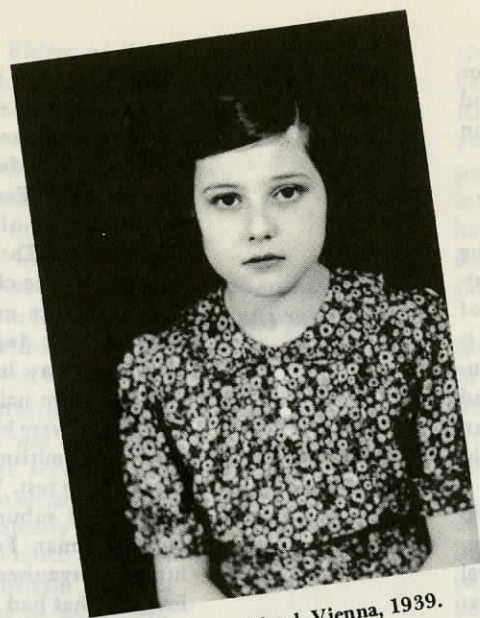
Tory MP by Simon Haxey (Gollancz 1939). Look out for it in second-hand bookshops or on older friends' shelves.

Wallis by Charles Higham (Sidgwick and Jackson). American biographer's blockbuster exposé of the Duchess of Windsor.

The Traitor Class by Ivor Montague (Lawrence and Wishart 1940). Best-selling Stalinist tract, now rarer than Haxey, historic bit of demagoguery, with some useful facts.

Peace for Our Time by Robert Rothschild (Brassey's)

Fascism in Britain by Richard Thurlow (Basil Blackwell 1987)



Martha Blend, Vienna, 1939.

The last train

Martha Blend left Austria in 1939. Here she tells the story of the unforgettable journey.

A review of a recent book by a well known author moved me deeply. The novel is about two people who were brought out of Nazi Germany as children and parted from their parents forever. The book is fictional but my experience was real. I was one of the children who said goodbye to parents I was never to see again. I was nine years old. I have recently been told that my contingent may have been the last to reach this country and that the next one was turned back by the Nazis.

Why did my parents send me away alone at such a tender age? It is hard for people who have not lived through it to imagine what it felt like to be a Jew in Nazi Austria; the gradual build-up of hate and terror. At first humiliation; women being forced to scrub the streets, then the attacks on Jewish shops, the burning of synagogues and the dreaded sound of heavy jackboots stomping up the stairs to your flat to arrest your father who had committed no crime. At the school I had been happily attending for three years I was suddenly told that I was not fit to mix with "Aryan" children and moved to another part of the building which was set aside for Jewish children. Then the dreaded words "Dachau" and "Buchenwald" (notorious concentration camps) began to be on people's lips. My parents did their best to shield me from these horrors but I picked up a good deal from the anxious whispers of friends and neighbours. Some men who

had been arrested never returned and their relatives were asked to pay money to receive their ashes. Others, guessing what was in store for them, committed suicide.

It was too late then for my parents to leave the country, for the regime had us in a double bind. Newspaper articles, caricatures and radio propaganda depicted Jews as a curse and a nuisance and yet they would not let us leave. In any case, immigration laws were strict then as now and affidavits for entry to the USA were like gold dust. Unfortunately, my father had amassed no gold, so my parents decided that at least I was to be rescued from this atmosphere of fear and hate.

They had heard of a scheme for bringing children out of Austria, to be looked after by foster parents in England. Our family doctor, who had the address of one such couple, passed it on to us. When my parents first broached this subject to me I was devastated and remember bursting into hysterical sobs at the mere thought. I was an only child, the apple of their eye, and had never been parted from them before. Then the persuasion began. It was to be a holiday; just a year apart and then we would all be reunited in Palestine. My father had a sister out there. There was little joy for me in those reassuring words as I began to realise the inevitability of the parting, but I hoped it wouldn't happen just yet.

We then began to get letters from my intended foster parents. These were a comfort. The couple seemed genuinely kind and my mother was overcome with gratitude for their willingness to give me a home in England. One day an official letter arrived asking me to

attend for a medical examination. I remember we were all told to strip to the waist, children like me alongside developed teenagers. There was no room for modesty or sensitivity. I must have passed that medical test because before long another letter arrived giving the date of my departure. The thing I had most dreaded was about to happen and there was nothing I could do to prevent it.

By then my father had been rounded up in another wave of arrests. My last view of him was of a sad and bearded man flanked by two prison officers. As I said goodbye to him he embraced me tenderly for what was to be the last time.

As for the actual departure, we were given instructions about the time (quite late in the evening), the place (one of the Viennese railway stations) and that there were to be no emotional farewells. As Jews we were not to be allowed the luxury of feelings. When my mother and I arrived, we stood in a large waiting-room crowded with other families saying their goodbyes. To my surprise one mother and her daughter hung about each other's necks crying, but my mother and I kept to the rules: not a tear was shed.

Suddenly doors were flung open and before I had expected it the train was in sight and we were ushered into it. With a light suitcase, a heavy heart and a silly red hat that kept dropping over my eyes, I entered the compartment full of other children of varying ages. Then suddenly there was an outcry; some of the parents had burst through the barriers to wave a last goodbye to their children. I scanned the figures on the platform anxiously for my mother, but she wasn't there.

All in black and white

Racism in the newspapers is becoming increasingly blatant and increasingly sophisticated, says David Rosenberg

"The time has come to make a stand in favour of racialism. People have become so brainwashed, so drugged by the race relations industry ... that they do not merely recoil with abject terror from the label 'racist' or the charge of 'racial discrimination', they also throw logic and plain English to the winds."

So proclaimed Andrew Alexander, political correspondent of the *Daily Mail* on 9 November 1981. This article set the tone for press coverage of race issues through the 1980s — a decade during which race stories have moved from the inside pages on to the front page — the sustained object of inflated, lurid headlines, scare stories and heated controversy. It is a decade in which the New Right has been flexing its muscles and extending its influence, using the daily press as a particularly reliable outlet to set the agenda for the discussion of race issues.

The impact of press racism on popular consciousness should not be underestimated. Britain is a newspaper-reading society — second only to Japan in newspapers sold per head of population. Attitudes and opinions of white people and white society towards and about Black people cannot but be affected and shaped by what those papers present.

Racism in the British press is, of course, nothing new. Immigration

scars, negative stereotyping, the criminalisation of minorities, were all part of the lived experience of Jews in Britain earlier this century. "Refugees get jobs, Britons get dole" sounds like a standard National Front slogan, but it was actually dreamed up some three decades before the National Front existed, as a headline in the mainstream *Sunday Pictorial* in 1938 as it warned its readers of the dangers of a large influx of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany and Austria.

But racism can operate just as effectively when it is subtle and coded as when it is blatant and brazen. While issues concerning ethnic minorities in Britain have, historically, on occasion been the subject of frenzied coverage, their needs and concerns have been consistently marginalised as the press has placed immigrant ethnic minorities and their British-born children on the periphery, outside mainstream society. On the occasions in the 1960s and 1970s when the press did deal with issues affecting Black minorities in Britain — and sometimes such occasions would last days and even weeks — it was largely concerned with immigration. In reality, immigration was mainly confined to the 1950s (from the Caribbean) and the 1960s (from the Indian subcontinent) but British society continued to relate to all Black people of all generations in Britain as *immigrants* until the end of the 1970s.

The inner city uprisings of 1981 carried the message that Black

people in Britain were no longer immigrants but a settled community suffering and challenging racism and discrimination in all spheres of life, creating their contemporary cultural world in Britain, every bit a part of the society as that society would permit. The uprisings thrust the full range of Black concerns on to the national agenda — education, housing, employment, policing and so on. They could no longer be ignored, marginalised, trivialised or patronised.

Recognition of this also spread to local government where a new generation of Black political activists was finding its feet in the face of continuing institutionalised racism. Following the example of the GLC, many local authorities developed policies aimed at actively combating racism. Political "anti-racism" was born and, despite the demise of the GLC and the stringent policing of local authority functions and resources, anti-racism remains a major issue in the press.

As newspapers give more coverage to the full range of race issues so the question of racism is dealt with more openly and in some ways more honestly. The characteristic way they report and discuss Black people is a problem — needless to say, a problem for *white* society. They have been portrayed as an immigration problem: "Bogus refugees must go" (*Daily Mail*), "Asian flood swamps airport" (*Daily Express*), "Visa plan to beat immigrant cheats" (*Daily Star*); as a law and order problem: "The Yard blames black muggers" (*Sun*), "London's streets of fear" (*Daily Mirror*), "Black crime: the alarming figures" (*Daily Mail*); and as a social policy problem: "Scandal of £600 a week immigrants" (*Sun*), "Asians start new housing crisis" (*Daily Mail*).

Of course, the newspaper industry has encountered changes in the last decade. Newspapers and their proprietors have come and gone (*News on Sunday*, *London Daily News*...) and there has been a greater concentration of ownership and a narrowing of editorial perspectives mainly stressing loyalty to Thatcherism and Thatcherite values. The liberal press has expanded with the innovation of the *Independent*, but the circulation of the liberal end of the quality press spectrum remains heavily outweighed by the established right wing *Times* and

EXPRESS
Police injured in clash with demo blacks
RAMPAGE OF A MOB

SCANDAL OF THE BRIDES FOR SALE

IMMIGRANTS PARALYSE HEATHROW

RACE SPIES SHOCK

Telegraph; and the "quality" press as a whole sells a fraction of that of the overwhelmingly right wing tabloids led by the *Sun*.

It is widely held that the tabloids are the driving force of racism in the press, with their crude headlines, scapegoating and playing on "popular" fears. But if, in recent years, the tabloid press has plumbed depths uncharted outside of the fascist newspapers, there has undoubtedly been a growth in the more sophisticated racism of the "quality" press. The tabloids will falsely sensationalise and, where they feel necessary, invent stories to discredit anti-racism, but it is the New Right ideologues — Ronald Butt, Roger Scruton, Peregrine Worsthorne — who, through their regular columns in the *Times* and *Sunday Telegraph* respectively, have questioned the concept of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society; who have sought to redefine conventional views what of racism is, who have provided stereotyped portrayals of minority communities, who have characterised anti-racists as "totalitarians", "barbarians", "demons", the "new inquisition", "poisoners of wells" and "witch-hunters" seeking to undermine British society and culture, and provide privileged treatment for Blacks at the expense of whites.

Perhaps the real success of the New Right is that by taking the initiative in aggressively condemning anti-racism and anti-racists, they have diverted newspaper readers' attention well away from the core issues of racism, discrimination and racial violence that persist in Britain — that Black people are twice as likely as whites to be out of work; that they remain largely confined to the poorest jobs and run-down

housing; that they are subject to violence on an unprecedented scale in Britain's recent history; that racism is perpetuated by a range of institutions in society.

Underlying their thoroughly inadequate reporting and discussion of race issues is the failure of the press to come to terms with the multi-ethnic, pluralist nature of British society. While newspapers are staffed, with few exceptions, with white personnel, the same could not be said for its readers who reflect Britain's multi-racial reality. Yet the writers of editorial and comment columns carry on as if they are writing for a monolithic white audience sharing a common "white" interest.

There are few other images presented of Black people other than as problems. Certainly the range of "positive images" is extremely narrow. Black sports stars are written about, as are Black musicians and Asian millionaires. All of these role models are well beyond the experience of most ordinary Black people. There is also an ulterior motive discernible in such "positive" coverage. For example, the *Sun* wrote a feature article on "Buppies" — black yuppies — who are "hungry for success and ... don't allow colour prejudice to slow down their life in the fast lane". One interviewee was quoted saying: "You will see colour prejudice if you want to see it, but I don't let it affect me," while another thought the police were "only doing their job" when they wondered if the expensive car he was driving had been stolen.

Supposedly flattering stereotypes are cynically used. The *Daily Mail* recently devoted a series of features to examining Britain's Asian millionaires, claiming that they were following in the footsteps of Jews who had gone from rags to riches. Apart from stereotyping both the Asian and Jewish communities, the real purpose of this series was to show that ethnic minorities in Britain can "succeed"; that "discrimination" is not a barrier but an excuse, used principally by the real targets of these articles, the missing minority that has not "made it" on these commercial criteria — the Afro-Caribbean community. Asians and Jews are lavished with the *Daily Mail's* praise, only to be used as a stick to beat Afro-Caribbeans. The ignorant comments of the

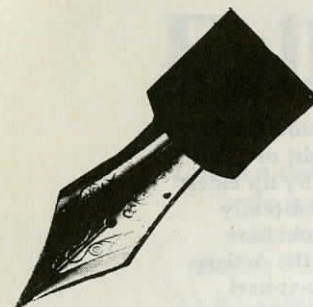
Chief Rabbi and his acolytes, such as in response to *Faith in the City*, backed up by the usual *Jewish Chronicle* *Colour Supplement* images of the Jewish community (Stanmore style) provide a basis on which such stereotyping can flourish.

There are also signs that more straightforward forms of anti-semitism are resurfacing in the mainstream press. Around the time of Leon Brittan's resignation there was much innuendo about his Jewish origins, including an atrocious cartoon in the *Evening Standard*. The *Standard* again used graphics in a telling way later in an article about the places where various categories of professional and business people lived in London. Using a roadsign graphic, one sign led towards Mayfair, home, it stated, of "Jewish property developers". None of the other categories was ethnically identified.

The current economic, social and political climate is one in which racism can flourish. But it can be challenged. A Black press has emerged in the last two decades with a very different set of priorities from those expressed in the "white" mainstream press. A number of ad hoc campaigns by Black and anti-racist groups have been formed at various times in response to the worst excesses of press hostility, misrepresentation and inflammatory lies. Recent years have also seen the growth of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, working around long-term demands for a more democratic, diverse and accountable press, and more immediate demands for an adequate "right of reply".

The power of the press cannot be separated from its structural position within British capitalism. That power cannot be challenged simply. Partly, though, it can be eroded through cultural struggle to expose its role and practices and their implications for the readers, and to encourage the most critical approach by newspaper readers to the daily "justifications" for society's inequalities and the daily racism the press purveys and reinforces. ■

David Rosenberg is co-author of *Daily Racism: the press and black people in Britain*, available from the Runnymede Trust, 11 Princelet Street, London E1 6QH, price £3.50 plus 40p p&p.



SOPHISTICATION!

One of your members has done me the great favour of sending me copies of a few recent issues of your magazine. I somehow feel foolish, not having discovered it earlier, since it is something I won't want to miss again. In trips I have made to London and the United States over the past dozen years in which I have been active in Israeli feminist and anti-occupation politics, I have spoken before many groups of concerned Jews about our struggle here. Nowhere abroad have I found the level of political sophistication regarding the conflict that I find now in your publication.

Moreover, the range of articles is fascinating. The piece by Uta Ruge on the German Left since the war was really stimulating and full of insight, and it was only one article among many which I read with great interest. Congratulations on a fine magazine. I will pass it around my English-speaking friends here in the movement.

Spike Pittsberg
Tel Aviv
Israel

MAZELTOV!

I am writing to congratulate you on the latest edition of the magazine (Spring 1989). As usual I read it from cover to cover but focused on the front cover a little longer than usual! The new format now aptly reflects the varied and refreshing contents. A pleasure to read!

I would like to express special thanks to Majer Bogdanski for his moving and inspirational account of the courage and defiance to which he bore witness.

Francesca Klug
London E8

NO CONCESSIONS TO RACISM

Regarding the Sheffield mural (JS14 and 16), of course it's still anti-semitic!

Of all the possible symbolic representatives of American imperialism, all the US Presidents and Secretaries of State, why did they pick Kissinger, the only one who is Jewish?

Israel may well be a symbol of imperialism, but it's also a symbol of liberation from fascism, so the symbolism is hardly clear-cut. And why choose the retired Begin? Could it just be that he's the Israeli politician who looks most stereotypically Jewish?

And what for that matter of Hitler? Is he really best known as a symbol of imperialism, as distinct from fascism and genocide? Or is the political analysis so crude that it doesn't matter if these concepts are all rolled up together?

The context of the mural makes no difference. The characterisation of Hitler and Jews (not even Zionists this time, *Jews!*) as having imperialism as a common cause, is anti-semitic racism.

The mural's history is similarly irrelevant. So what if an obvious stereotype has been replaced by a slightly more subtle one? Are we supposed to acknowledge that as a genuine concession? Does the removal of a few public signposts in South Africa mean that apartheid has gone?

Racism is racism, even when it comes from the left, even when it's dressed up in anti-imperialist slogans. And it's still racism even if some well-meant negotiations have produced a "compromise" that leaves the essential message intact.

Nigel Siederer
London SW9

FIRST OF THE BRAVE?

I was most pleased to see the article on circumcision. Brave, brave *Jewish Socialist* for speaking out about one of the most backward customs in modern-day civilisation. Boy, will this cause some heart attacks amongst our Jewish fundamentalists!

One more point: the magazine is, of course, *Jewish "Socialist"* yet it seldom discusses the present-day problems of Britain's road to socialism. There is so much new

thinking — Charter 88, Samizdat, New Times, electoral pacts or alliances, proportional representation, that I would have thought that a page or two of *Jewish Socialist* should be given over to this discussion.

Barney Lewis
Northampton

A SMALL PRICE

I'm not convinced by Julia Bard (JS16) that circumcision must do emotional damage to the child, if the operation is done well. My experience is more mixed. I attended the *brit-milah* of my cousin who went back to sleep thirty minutes after being relieved of his foreskin.

Almost my first thoughts on seeing my own son born were, "Blimey! It's a boy! My dad will want him circumcised!" I was mildly in favour. If the boy wanted to identify as Jewish when he was older he would find it easier to do so without a foreskin. His mother wasn't opposed but as she wasn't Jewish, and therefore, according to the law, nor was my son, the Orthodox *mohel* refused to do it. By the time we found a Liberal *mohel* who would I was no longer keen enough to pay £50 on the operation. It wasn't done. I sometimes wish it had been.

I was born in Malta and a *mohel* had to be imported from Italy who, my mother told me, made a balls-up of the job. Perhaps I still bear the emotional scars?

If parents really want their sons to have this sign of belonging to the Jewish people then the operation, done well, is a small price to pay. If the parents feel pressured and aren't sure then the problem and anguish belongs to them rather than to their babies.

Bernard Misrahi
London N17

PEACE OFFERING

We apologise for wrongly describing *The Other Israel* as the magazine of the Progressive List for Peace ("Israel: a state of change", JS16). It is, in fact, the journal of the Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace which is not a party political organisation.

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Mixed blessings

Shalom Salaam, BBC 2

Reviewers have been generally enthusiastic about Gareth Jones's five-part series *Shalom Salaam*. Billed as a modern day Romeo and Juliet, *Shalom Salaam* featured a Muslim girl, Mumtaz (Mamta Kaash), and a Jewish boy, Adam (Toby Rolt), as the star-crossed lovers. Despite the exciting sequence repeated at the beginning of each episode, where the two extended families march towards each other across the wasteland of a disused factory, this tale of the Sattar and the Astler clans is not quite comparable to that of the Montagues and Capulets.

For a start, this is a three-cornered romance involving not only Adam and Mumtaz, but also Jackie, a girl of indeterminate English-Irish origins, whose ghastly domestic circumstances and screwball behaviour identify her as a symbol of modern rootlessness. And the story ends, not with a double death, but with the merger of the rival families' two clothing firms — hardly the same poetic resonance of world-weary flesh, but we are talking Leicester here, not fair Verona. Besides, there is the clear implication that Adam and Mumtaz too will eventually merge, overcoming what must have struck both viewers and kinsfolk as insuperable obstacles.

Comparisons have long been made between the Asian and Jewish immigrant experience in Britain, but Gareth Jones is the first to have chosen this as a central dramatic theme. How well has he addressed it?

One of Gareth Jones's main intentions is to celebrate the cohesiveness and warmth of Asian family life whilst not flinching from what he would see as its more repressive aspects — a tricky business at the best of times, and particularly so since the Rushdie affair. Jones should not be castigated for causing controversy but does he realise that Mumtaz's surrender to Adam (in Jackie's bed) has, according to one Muslim friend, "got a lot of Muslim mothers very worried about letting their daughters go to college". It seems a shame that the one Muslim girl shown to succeed in combining devotion to Islam and intellectual pursuits should have to end up in a *menage à trois*.

However, Jones does offer a wide range of roles to Asian actors

which at times transcend the one-dimensional stereotypes usually on offer. Zia Mohyeddin, playing Mumtaz's father, gives a subtle performance as the cultured refugee from Kampala reduced to cab driving as his philistine brother (Madhav Sharma) grows bumptiously rich. Sadiq Sattar champions his daughter's education against the pressure of the local Imam and most of his extended family.

Sattar's wife (Shanaz Pakravan), whose intriguing characterisation recalls both Grunwick leader Jayaben Desai and Lady Macbeth, leaves her job at Astler's clothing firm after a racist incident and starts her own factory with capital borrowed from the awful brother-in-law. Mumtaz's brothers are preposterously disparate characters; the kindly computer-obsessed Hafiz and the beer-swilling, porn-watching Rashid, a real barrow boy baddie if ever there was one.

Mamta Kaash is particularly outstanding in her portrayal of Mumtaz, though even she couldn't convince me how Mumtaz changed so quickly from the shy emblem of chastity in episodes one and two to the girl passionately entwined with Adam in episode four. And, lest readers think me prudish on behalf of Asian womanhood, I should add that the Hindu Meera's disgrace at the hands of the well-meaning but weak Hafiz was far more credible, and one of the best handled subplots in the series.

Just as Jones attempted to deal with the contradictions between the warmth and repressiveness of a British Muslim family, his treatment of the Astler/Morris family centres on another contradiction: their hatred of racism and their strained relations with their Asian employees and their difficulty with Adam's predilection for non-Jewish girl friends. The disparity between well intentioned social analysis and the actual quality of scripting and characterisation is even more marked here.

The Astler/Morris family are a pallid and unlikeable lot compared to the Sattars. Adam's grandfather, Joe Astler, is the proprietor of a prosperous clothing firm and a German Jew, the only one of his family to escape the Holocaust. Once settled here, he seems to take delight in tyrannising his eldest daughter and uttering Jacobovitz-like reproaches to his Asian workers.

Home life in the sumptuous Astler residence seems to consist of surprise parties thrown by his eldest daughter which Joe consistently refuses to attend. It would have been nice if just one of the Astlers could have been a down-at-heel *shnorrer* (beggar), as most viewers would be forgiven if they concluded (as did Adam's school friends) that "all Jews are rich". Astler's younger daughter, Sarah Morris (Charlotte Cornwell) is a Labour Party activist and social worker who whisks Adam off to Israel when things get too fraught at home. Although Jones has focused on some identifiable types in modern Jewish life (leftish social worker, capitalist factory owner), they don't consistently ring true. The research was thorough but the dialogue was wooden, the atmosphere not quite captured.

A real weakness in the series was its failure to deal with Adam's attitude to himself as a Jew. For someone of Adam's lefty-liberal background, Israel would have been a crucial issue, particularly given his relationship with a Muslim girl. But the only hint we have is in the scene where Adam seems momentarily upset after an anti-apartheid speaker blamed Israel for arming South Africa. Mumtaz blithely brushes aside his discomfiture and Adam's only rejoinder is, "What do you want me to do, join the PLO?" This begs so many questions that it constitutes a sadly missed opportunity to take the series beyond soap opera.

Gareth Jones should be congratulated for venturing into such interesting territory. Overall, the series was highly watchable, but he was not incisive enough about some of the political issues, and the picture of Asian and Jewish life in modern Britain was not as richly resonant as it might have been.

MADGE DRESSER

publication

FACING UP TO ANTISEMITISM
How Jews in Britain countered the threats of the 1930s

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Full of East End promise

Life is a dance — you should only know the steps

by Katie Brown

(Bacon Publishing, £3.50)

This is a collection of 12 of Katie Brown's stories, published privately by Sydney Bacon, her nephew. Katie Brown was born in Ulanow, Galicia, and came to the East End of London with her family at the turn of the century when she was 16; she lived until 1954. She joined the Workmen's Circle where she met Shlomo Brown, a cabinet maker who doubled as a milkman selling from a horse and cart. Katie Brown worked as a small trader to help support their five children, and turned for escape, reward and fulfilment to the Yiddish theatre, writing Yiddish lyrics to English popular songs of that time. She began to write pieces for the Workmen's Circle and, eventually, for *Di Tsayt*, the leading Yiddish newspaper.

Many of her friends and colleagues from this period appear in her story, 'It's not so bad to be sick...'. The narrator is sick in bed with the 'flu'. '...The next day, important guests came to visit our poor patient. First came the editor (of *Di Tsayt*), Harry Meyer... He assured me that in future he would print my pieces regularly — that is, assuming he hadn't anything else. After him came my comrade Palmeh to read a poem that he had composed some time ago. He begged me not to prolong my illness, as he

had no time to visit. Then came my friends Etta Topol and Mark Markov (the Yiddish actors), expressing their displeasure at my taking to bed just at the time when they needed me most to provide new songs for their big new production. They were followed by Fuchs, Shtentzl, Katz, Tiger, Lamech junior, Izzie Wolf... The next day the general chairman of the Workmen's Circle came to visit, bringing me greetings from the membership, all 2,500 of them..."

Sydney Bacon's mother, he tells us in a very informative preface to the collection, did not approve of her sister-in-law because she was "mixed up with peculiar people and organisations of the sort guaranteed to keep her poor". Indeed, Katie Brown's stories frequently poke fun at rich friends or relatives in the West End or Golders Green. In "Things go well with me", the impoverished narrator is forced to seek a loan from a wealthy cousin in the West End but ends up offering the cousin sympathy instead. "Our expenses are high ... I must keep the maid and the cook... My children must continue with their private lessons..." Returning home penniless, the narrator sighs: "Thank God I have been spared the troubles of my wealthy cousin."

One of Katie Brown's more biting attacks on exploitation and poverty is the story "*Nishto Keyn Mazel*", retitled in this collection as "Old Age". Shloime, a presser for

26 years, is sick and exhausted. His boss suggests that he should "take a rest. A Jew like you should be studying and praying, laying up good deeds and blessings in preparation for the next world." But Shloime fears what the boss really means is that he would like a younger, stronger, faster man. (This is one of the few places where I would have the *khutzpah* to suggest — with my limited Yiddish — that the translation does not have the force of the original, which includes the memorable phrase: *Maleh vos a gav'ner redt!* There is no limit to what a boss will say!) Shloime visits an organisation which sends people away for a rest in the country — but only if they have TB. He visits a doctor who tells the relieved Shloime that, in addition to everything else, he does indeed have TB. But, too late. "All the beds are taken," says an officer of the organisation. "You should have had TB months ago."

The translations in this book, lovingly crafted by Sydney Bacon and Rose Kashtan, deserve a wide audience. To appreciate the full range of her work, though, try to find a copy of one of the original collections in Yiddish. "Lacht — Oyb Ir Vilt", for example, contains 43 pieces, including a one-act play. Struggle through them — with a dictionary if you have to, as I did — it's well worth the effort. But, in the meantime, don't miss this excellent edition of translations.

STEPHEN OGIN

Down by the riverside

Anselm Kiefer exhibition at Riverside Studios, Crisp Road, London W6, and Anthony D'Offay gallery, Dering Street, London W1, until 19 August

"Why should I look at another German saying how guilty he is about Jews?" — Edward Totah, Lebanese Sephardi gallery owner.

Is that the bottom line on Anselm Kiefer's cathedral to catastrophe at the Riverside Studios,

where three enormous pictures combine Wagner with Shoah and Metropolis? Towering infernos dissolve into salt and ash and are ringed with copper wire. Endless railway lines stretch to thunderclouds made from salt on lead (the metal of the nuclear bunker and Spaghetti Junction). The scene is named for Lot's Wife, who was lost while her family survived. A companion piece, at the Anthony D'Offay gallery in Dering Street, is called *The Princess of Siberia*.

In the smaller gallery a runkled curtain of lead covers every image and it's only through torn gaps that we can see. Radioactive rivers are written with the names of Rhine-

maidens, eroded shower holes titled *The Seven Palaces of Heaven*. A model battleship floats from an anchor-chain of human nail clippings.

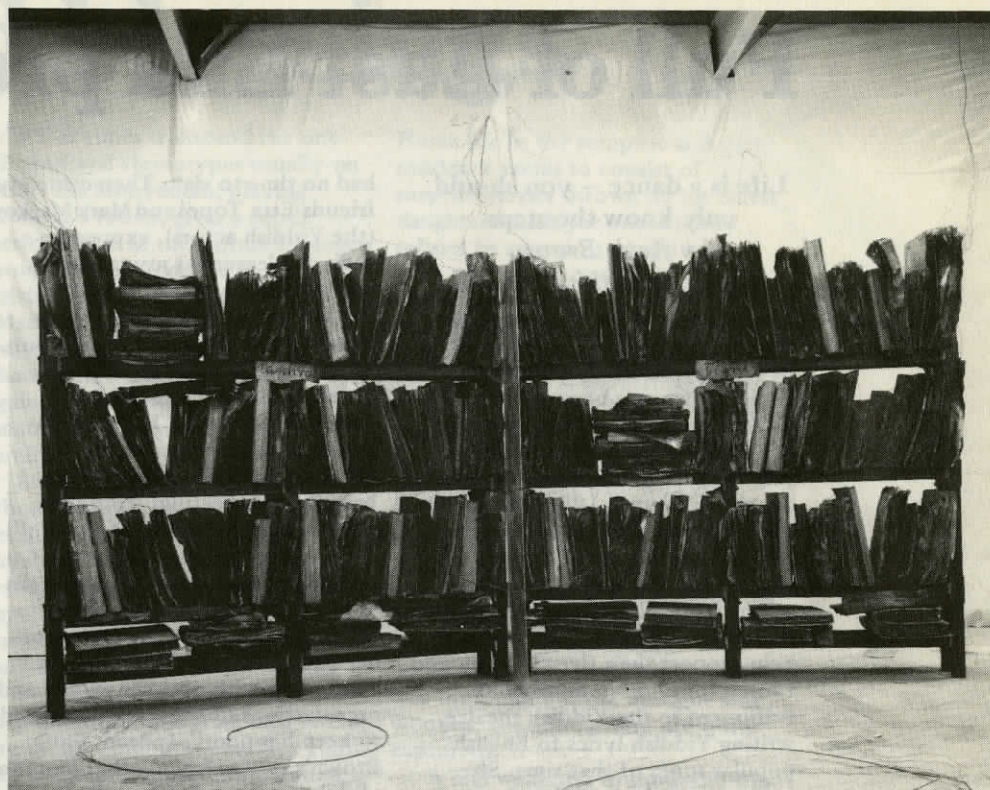
Some may suspect Kiefer's grand-scale anguishing in astronomical price labels as part of the problem. But why not appreciate instead a rare and serious occasion? In the events of the Second World War — and through them the rest of the century — one world class artist has at last found ideas big enough to match the gigantic claims and canvases of the postmodern art boom.

Kiefer's biggest work at the Riverside, *The Land of Two Rivers*,

took four years to make, an immense double bookcase piled with foot-high volumes of lead. Some of these unreadable pages (collapsing under their own weight and needing a fork-truck to lift) store images or clay or hair, and some store nothing. One side of the stack is labelled "Tigris" and the other "Euphrates" — the two rivers which join where human civilisation, and The Word, are said to have started.

You could say the wires reaching from these great closed books might be smoke (the burning of the Great Library at Alexandria, after the Christian lynching of its woman librarian Hypatia, is one of Kiefer's repeated themes) or lightning, or roots (one of Kiefer's smaller pictures shows a thorn bush wired for electricity). But I'd sooner bypass fire, air or earth and see the twining lines as currents from the waters of time, mixed as unstoppably as my own origins. A high glass centre wall tries to keep the sections "pure" and apart. But it is when the rivers come together that human history begins.

AMANDA SEBESTYEN



Feminism 20 years on

'68, '78, '88, from *Women's Liberation to Feminism*, edited by Amanda Sebestyen (Prism Press, £5.95)

Post feminism is a term that is around a lot at the moment. Inherent in this phrase is the assumption that the women's movement has somehow outlived its usefulness. This theory would not be shared by many of the women who tell their stories in this book.

Conceived in part as an antidote to male-dominated celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the events of 1968, 35 women of differing ages, backgrounds and political perspectives contribute short pieces. Each contribution has a common thread, the interaction of the personal with the political; 35 different lives seen through the perspective of feminism.

And the lives represented in this collection are very different. Although loosely grouped together in sections, the pieces are extremely wide-ranging covering issues such as identity, sexuality, class, race and motherhood. Quietly co-existing between the pages of this book are women who would, I suspect, have great difficulty being in the same

room as each other. There are radical separatists, socialist feminists, older women, young women, women for whom feminism is primarily political and women for whom it inherently encompasses mysticism, spirituality and goddess worship.

The contributions that worked best for me were the ones which, rather than recounting a personal history, made a conscious effort to take up theoretical or ideological arguments and apply them to the fabric of their lives. For instance, Griselda Pollock's contribution on feminism and marriage which analyses the contradictions and difficulties of trying to fuse the political with the personal, "to consider the revolution that our early iconoclasm and energy has forced us to live through ... to attend to the actual ways people are taking that revolution to the heart of their daily lives."

Coming from a totally different perspective, as someone who was two years old in 1968, Thelma Agnew writes a sparky essay, "I'm the late arrival at the party who insists it can't have been very good since it finished so early", which confronts many of the assumptions cherished by those of us in our mid-30s. It was one of the few pieces in the anthology which I

found both challenging and thought provoking.

Amid all the diversity there were what seemed to me some strange omissions. Many of the women are Jewish, and their specific contribution as Jewish women is acknowledged by the editor. However, there is little mention of the acrimonious debates in *Spare Rib* over Zionism or of the existence of the Jewish Feminist group.

In some ways the diversity of experience is very positive. For instance, it is very refreshing to read a book in which not all the contributors are white, middle-class heterosexual women living in London. However, this very diversity also means the book seems to lack focus. By reading widely differing perspectives without editorial comment, feminism comes over as a movement where different tendencies have co-existed happily, and you get no sense of the sometimes bitter, sometimes constructive, battles that have been fought between different feminist tendencies. I would have welcomed an arrangement of contributions which produced a sense of constructive dialogue between different voices in the same movement.

MARIAN SHAPIRO



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 29 September

Anne Frank in the World An international exhibition, will be in Nottinghamshire, 1-28 October. During that month there will be lectures, meetings and cultural events related to the exhibition.

4 Oct Ken Leech (Runnymede Trust) on Immigration Law and Gerry Gable (*Searchlight* magazine) on The Far Right in Britain Today.

5 Oct Cecil Gutzmore and David Rosenberg on Combating Racism and Antisemitism: how and why Black and Jewish people can unite.

10 Oct Majer Bogdanski on The Jewish Workers' Bund.

11 Oct Philip Marshall (children's librarian) on Racism in Children's Books.

12 Oct Michael Billig on The Psychology of Fascism.

17 Oct Janina Bauman (author).

18 Oct Clive Burton on The Story of Anne Frank and its Background (to take place in Sutton-in-Ashfield).

19 Oct Christabel Bielenberg (author).

21 Oct Yiddish Music Evening.

23 Oct Denis Goldberg (ANC) on How White People can Fight Racism (to be confirmed).

24 Oct Dorothy Rowe on The Psychology of Survival (to take place in Mansfield).

25 Oct Dagman Krause singing songs by Kurt Weill.

26 Oct Peter Tatchell on The Men with the Pink Triangle.

October 28 (provisional) Anthony Rudolph and Elaine Feinstein present an evening of Primo Levi.

29 Oct Royte Klezmores (klezmer band). Awaiting confirmation: a meeting on Antisemitism, its History and Roots, and There will also be several complementary exhibitions throughout the month.

For further details contact the Anne Frank Exhibition Steering Group, c/o YMCA, 4 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham. Tel 0602 473068.

Israel/Palestine Peace A meeting organised by Golders Green Community Relations Group on 17 September, 2-5pm at the Unitarian Church, Hoop Lane, London NW11. All welcome. Further information from Frank on 01-349 9586.

East Midlands Jewish Group meets monthly. Contact Myra 0602 603355

Manchester Jewish Socialists meet regularly. Contact Adrienne 0204 591460.

Friends of Yiddish meets every Saturday at 3pm at Toynbee Hall, Commercial Street, London E1. All welcome. Further details from Majer 01-488 3092.

Jew Left Review

Women in Black in London hold weekly vigils, every Saturday, between 3 & 4pm, in Regent Street in front of the offices of El Al. We distribute leaflets, ask pedestrians to sign a petition calling on the Israeli government to end the occupation, and raise funds for groups in Israel working with children and women who have been detained and their families. The organisations are: In Defence of Children under Occupation, PO Box 44984, Haifa, Israel; and Women's Organisation for Women Political Prisoners, PO Box 31811, Tel Aviv 61318, Israel. Further details: Women in Black, c/o Nira, School of Social Sciences, Thames Polytechnic, London SE18 6PF. Please come and join the vigils (wear black) or contribute generously.

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 would like to campaign against the religious education changes and other issues and would welcome involvement from anyone interested. More information from Davina Cooper on 01-340 7136.

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 5 and 6pm or 8 and 9pm) on 0272 249903 for details.

Nottingham Jewish Lesbian Group has been meeting on Monday evenings for two years, sometimes fortnightly, sometimes monthly. We also celebrate the main festivals. New lesbians welcome. Details from 0602 622604.

Khamsin Bulletin is published by Middle-Eastern revolutionary socialists, and contains topical material and analysis on the region. The latest issue includes a letter from a Palestinian to the Israeli "Peace Camp", as well as an analysis of the Algerian crisis. Price 80p per single issue; subscription (Europe post free) £5.00 (6 issues). Send cheque (payable to Khamsin) to *BM Khamsin, London WC1 3XX, England*.

The next "**Red Ruach**" weekend will take place from Friday eve 27 October-Sunday 29 October in London. Left unaffiliated people from outside London are particularly welcome. If you are interested please contact: Red Ruach, c/o JATC PO Box 175, London N4 2UN.

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Where we stand

- We stand for the rights of Jews, as Jews, in a socialist future.
- We fight for a socialist movement, embracing the cultural autonomy of minorities, as essential to the achievement of socialism.
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- We recognise the equal validity and integrity of all Jewish communities, and reject the ideology of Zionism, currently dominating world Jewry, which subordinates the needs and interests of Diaspora Jews to those of the Israeli state.
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