

JEWISH SOCIALIST

The magazine of the Jewish Socialists' Group

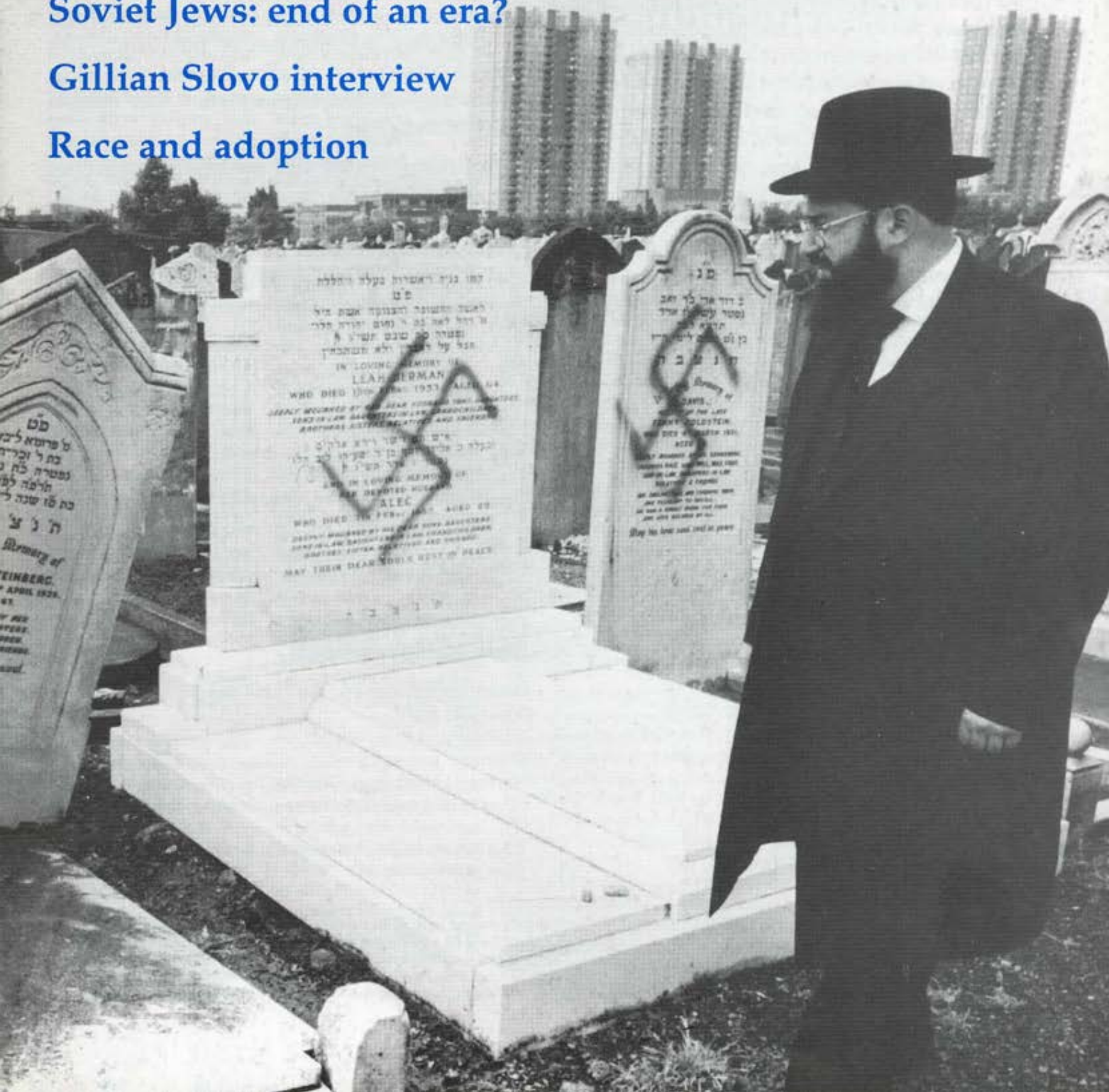
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Britain ... France ... USSR antisemites on the move

Soviet Jews: end of an era?

Gillian Slovo interview

Race and adoption



Antisemites east and west are operating with a confidence unprecedented since the War. One of the most alarming movements is the Russian Pamyat, with its ideological cocktail of 19th century Pan-Slavism and 20th century Nazism. The strict quotas restricting the numbers of Soviet Jews allowed into the USA mean Israel appears to be their only refuge. Most people going there now are not ideological Zionists, but are Jews who see no future for themselves in the Soviet Union.

The dialogue between Russian Jews and Palestinians (page 5) sheds new light on their predicament. Russian Jews recognise the dangers of a mass Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel and the justifiable alarm of the Palestinians at the prospect of their settlement in the Occupied Territories. Their request to the Palestinians is to tell the Soviet leadership to take a more public stance against antisemitism. It would be a terrible irony if the conditions which enabled Soviet Jews to express their cultural identity for the first time in 50 years also led to the dissipation of this community.

The outrage of Carpentras, as Barry Smerin

reports (page 8), was possible in the climate of racial hatred and antisemitism engendered by Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front. It is encouraging that some French politicians are challenging the National Front's bid to decide the terms of the debate. It is even more encouraging that French North Africans are making the links between the racism directed at them and the attacks on French Jews.

In Britain the desecration of Edmonton cemetery has reminded us all that organised Nazis are targeting Jews. Though these attacks are growing, the policy of the leadership of the Jewish community refuses to report them for fear of providing the "oxygen of publicity". This simply allows the attacks to continue while depriving Jews of the information they need to fight antisemitism.

In Britain, France and the USSR antisemites are equally hostile to other minorities. In all three countries though, some Jews are working with members of other minorities for pluralism and a secure existence, as Jews, in the society in which they live. They must be encouraged.

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Cover photo: Edmonton cemetery, London, May 1990
Sean Smith/Guardian

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COMMUNITY INSECURITY - terror in Stamford Hill

The desecrations that have taken place in Carpentras and Clichy-sous-Bois signal the extent of the resurgence of antisemitism throughout Europe. Let no one suppose that Britain is somehow immune.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Stamford Hill, home to a very visible Chasidic community. Throughout its history the community has been the target of abuse, petty crime, bullying and physical assault by sections of its non-Jewish neighbours. The community has never retreated into invisibility in the face of this intimidation. Its members have held their heads up proudly, having found ways to endure, resist and, on occasion, fight back.

Over the last few weeks things have taken a turn for the worse. Attacks are more violent, more regular and brazen. The targets have been mainly children and Jewish educational and communal centres. There have been serious stonings - in at least one case a child was hospitalised. There has been an alarming increase in children being attacked and robbed in the street. An elderly woman was attacked by a man with a rice flail (a Kung Fu weapon). Chasidic children were sprayed with CS gas, though it may be that in this case they were not the intended victims as they were caught up in a gang fight among non-Jewish youth at the time.

A yeshiva has been broken into day after day, and swastikas and NF signs have been daubed throughout the area, especially near and upon Jewish communal or educational and religious buildings. Even the slogan

"Die Juden" has been seen near Springfield Park. Curiously, the community does not seem to make it a priority to remove this disgusting graffiti.

Whether gangs of predominantly white youth have simply been emboldened by the increasing prevalence and publicity which antisemitic actions are getting, or whether the attacks reflect fascist organisation in the area, has not been established. The distinction may well be academic. Local fascists will have lost no time making contact with the gangs.

The central plank of any effective response must be community self defence. This does not simply mean looking on while the community looks after itself. Like any other group under siege, it needs support and access to what has been learnt from other struggles.

Supporting and building community defence is never easy. The crude strategy of sending in the "heavies" on an occasional basis can do more harm than good - raising the stakes and leaving the community to take the consequences when they've gone. It requires consistent work alongside the community.

But this raises enormous problems. Socialism and Chasidism are antithetical in many ways. For the Chasidic leaders, the potentially corrupting effect of secular involvement may appear as much a threat as fascist and antisemitic attacks. These are the kinds of questions which local Jewish socialists are urgently trying to come to grips with.

DAVID LANDAU



Antisemitism - fact and fiction

In the wake of the Carpentras cemetery outrage on 9 May, news has seeped out about a series of attacks on Jewish targets in Britain in recent weeks. At Edmonton cemetery in North London, 50 headstones were smashed or daubed with swastikas in an operation carried out in three visits over a 10-day period. There were smaller-scale attacks on West Ham and Bushey cemeteries and a further large-scale swastika daubing at Gelderd Road cemetery in Leeds. During May there were also attacks on synagogues in Manchester, Dundee and Staines.

The Board of Deputies and the Jewish Chronicle persist in labelling such attacks as "copycat" incidents following Carpentras, even though it has now been revealed by others that the first major attack at Edmonton cemetery took place on the weekend of 4-6 May, at least three days before the event it was supposedly copying.

On the morning of Sunday 3 June the Jewish Socialists' Group took part in a demonstration called by Enfield Trades Council

protesting the Edmonton desecration. This welcome initiative was supported by a variety of local left-wing groups but also attracted opposition. Right-wing elements in Edmonton Labour Party had tried to stop local Young Socialists taking part, while, in the Jewish Chronicle, leading Board of Deputies member and Labour MP Greville Janner argued that demonstrations were unnecessary and that trades councils tended to be dominated by left-wing undesirables! Janner also scolded a Poole Zion veteran, who spoke at the demonstration, for evoking the anti-fascist struggles of the 1930s. "Things have changed," Janner insisted. Clearly one thing hasn't: the Board of Deputies still seem to regard left-wing Jews as more of a threat than right-wing antisemites.

The Jewish Socialists' Group is carrying forward its campaign against the current wave of antisemitism with public meetings in Nottingham on 11 July (together with Nottingham Council for Racial Equality) and in London on 24 July.

Keeping Britain tidy

The British National Party has recently been busy attempting to spread its racist and antisemitic poison around the country. Jewish Socialist reporters have been monitoring its activities.

Prompt action by local anti-fascists stopped the neo-Nazi British National Party from holding a public rally in Nottingham. The BNP had advertised their meeting for 30 April. Their East Midlands and national leaders, John Peacock and John Tyndall, were due to speak. Official bodies such as the Council of Christians and Jews, the orthodox synagogue and the Community Relations Council, as well as local councillors for the area made protests to the police and city council, and several individuals and the Trades Council occupied the site of the meeting.

Unfortunately for the BNP, the site was also city council land and the council was pressured into taking out an injunction against the BNP preventing them from meeting there. On the day, despite the competing attraction of the national anti-poll tax demonstration, some 300 anti-fascists occupied the site in case the police ignored the injunction. The turnout was largely comprised of "unpolitical" young people and the event was only slightly marred by some officious "stewards" getting paranoid about anyone they didn't recognise – including the chair of the Council of Christians and Jews!

In the end the police escorted an unhappy bunch of fascists to a rubbish tip outside town where they were allowed a 20-minute rally – hemmed in by the anti-fascists who had followed them. Their day was made more unhappy when their evening social in near-by Mansfield was also

aborted when an angry pub landlord found out his room had been booked by a Nazi group.

An anti-fascist infiltrator on the day revealed that John Tyndall was most upset that it met both with resounding failure and coordinated action from all anti-fascist groups in the community.

ROSS BRADSHAW

The past few months have seen a frightening increase in racism directed against the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets, which the BNP is creating and trying to exploit. Tower Hamlets has very severe housing problems: over 80 per cent of the housing in the borough is council-owned and a large proportion of this is in very poor condition. The worst housing is occupied by the Bangladeshis, due largely to the racist policies of successive councils, but the overall shortage of housing has led to a feeling among white people that the Bangladeshis are responsible. The BNP are attempting to exploit this situation with their "Rights for Whites" campaign.

In February, following weeks of escalating tension and violence between Bangladeshi and white pupils at Morpeth school, a white boy, John Stoner, was stabbed by a group of Bangladeshi boys. The family of the boy organised a march which they claimed was intended merely to protest about violence and was not aimed at the Bangladeshi community. When it became clear the BNP was attempting to use this situation, they publicly disowned the BNP. However, it is also

clear that the main organiser was a racist, and the BNP did infiltrate the march in significant numbers and chanted racist slogans throughout. The newly-formed East End Youth Organisation held a counter rally in Brick Lane on the same day. Two weeks later the BNP organised its own "Rights for Whites" march, which was prevented from reaching its intended destination, Patriot Square, by anti-fascists who occupied the square.



On 21 April the BNP held a local election rally at Weaversfield School in Bethnal Green. Although it was legally obliged under the Representation of the People Act to let the BNP use council premises, the council made no attempt to avoid or delay the meeting. Since the speaker was John Tyndall, the BNP mobilised fascists from at least the whole of London, although they were outnumbered by the anti-fascist picket. Unfortunately, the picket was rather badly organised, and we did not manage to stop any fascists from entering the meeting. There were a number of violent incidents and 17 people were arrested. A decision was made to stay to the end of the meeting in order to see the fascists off, and let them know that they are not welcome in Tower Hamlets.

DAVE KING

As a Jew living in York for the past nine years, I have long been aware of the significance of Clifford's Tower, the site of a massacre and mass suicide of Jews in 1190. I particularly enjoyed

the symbolism of a "ring around the tower" demonstration in early 1983 at the time of the Greenham Peace Camp. The National Front too recognise its significance and have used it as a focus for demonstrations in York on the past few Remembrance Sundays.

A commemoration to mark the 800th anniversary of the massacre was organised by the B'nai B'rith Jewish Music Festival and the Council of Christians and Jews. The programme included a memorial gathering at the Tower, concerts, lectures, exhibitions, as well as religious services. In its own terms it was a success: Jews and Christians were brought together to mourn the event and recognise that some religious organisations, at least, have moved a long way in their attitudes since that time. The symbolism of Jewish prayers in York Minster is a powerful indication of the changed attitudes of the church. However, the programme of events was disappointingly limited in range, restricted to a discussion of medieval Jewish life, concerts and religious services. There was no discussion of antisemitism today, the social and economic forces that lead to the encouragement of antisemitism, or the parallels between antisemitism and racism. The limited understanding of antisemitism was evidenced by attitudes of the well-meaning people involved, for example that the Jewish stereotypes in medieval drama are merely theatrical forms or that the "coming together" of Jews and Christians at the commemoration was from an equal position of separation, as if the responsibility for antisemitism was equally shared.

In the period leading up to the commemoration antisemitic leaflets surfaced, calling for the commemoration to be cancelled. The British National Party

announced that they were going to hold a seminar to tell the "truth" about the massacre. The response from the organisers was to ensure adequate police protection and security. Some Jewish Socialists in Leeds organised a meeting with Gerry Gable on modern-day antisemitism to be held at the York Peace Centre during the festival but were not allowed by the organisers of the main festival to publicise it for security reasons. The meeting was small but interesting, and resulted in the organisation of a vigil the following week at Clifford's Tower in response to BNP-threatened activity there. Despite threats, the BNP disruption of the commemoration and "seminar" the following week never materialised. Hoax, empty threats or just bad organisation, who knows? But antisemitism hasn't disappeared in 800 years and the commemoration failed to acknowledge this fact. The BNP will be back at Clifford's Tower next Remembrance Sunday. In the meantime, the events of the past weeks have brought some of us together to look at longer-term responses to antisemitism and racism in York.

SUE COOPER

Sowing hatred – reaping massacre

Seven Palestinian workers were massacred at Rishon LeZion on 29 May 1990. Following the massacre, a further 15 Palestinians, including an 8-year-old child, were killed as Israeli soldiers cracked down on the Occupied Territories. Here are some Palestinian and Israeli reactions.

Everyone who founds settlements, everyone who sabotages the peace dialogue, everyone who sends soldiers to open fire on demonstrators – all of these share in the responsibility for the blood that has been spilt.

The massacre in Rishon LeZion is not the doing of an isolated madman – it is part of the public atmosphere created by Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin, with the policy of oppression and killing which they have carried out these past two-and-a-half years. Today, more than ever, we say: there is no way out and no solution other than immediate negotiations with the Palestinian people and their representative, the PLO!

The Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, PO Box 956, Tel Aviv. Ha'aretz, 24 May 1990

So now we have another madman. Another whose turn it is to be the madman. Because our last refuge from insanity is in this madness. No one can escape or hide. In the lineup will stand: – everyone who preached "transfer" – and everyone who depicted every Arab person as an "animal" – an everyone who referred to them as "dirty ones" over the [military] walkie-talkies – and everyone who passed laughable sentences on the murderers of Arabs – and everyone who arranged plea-bargains with these murderers – and everyone who pardoned them – and everyone who "understood" their motives – and everyone who said: "Too bad I didn't have the privilege of killing" [Rabbi Levinger] – and everyone who said: "This is not the time to think, but rather the time to shoot to the right and to the left" [Rabbi Neria] – and everyone who said

nothing: a long lineup of state, army, legal, academic and religious figures. And the victims pass before the lineup and identify them one by one – by their voices and by their hands – You and you and you and you and also you. Yossi Sarid MK, Hadashot, 21 May 1990

The killings in Rishon LeZion cannot in our view be separated from the fatalities subsequently inflicted on the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. We see them both as part of the ongoing violent repression and bloodshed witnessed there since the beginning of the Intifada.

The Arab Association for Human Rights deplores and condemns the reaction of the Israeli army to the demonstrations which followed the horrific killings in Rishon LeZion.

We demand the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and their replacement by a United Nations Peace-Keeping Force.

The Arab Association for Human Rights

Peace reigns under glasnost umbrella

Dialogue between Jews and Palestinians goes on in a variety of contexts all over the world. One of the most interesting recent exchanges was between the PLO and Jews in the Soviet Union, as reported by Izvestiya on 23 April this year. (Based on a translation by Stephen Shenfield.)

The PLO delegation was headed by Abu Mazen, a member of the PLO Executive. The Soviet Jews came from bodies such as the Moscow Jewish Cultural-Educational Society and the Jewish Historical Society. The sharpest exchanges concerned firstly Zionism

and secondly the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. On Zionism Tankred Galenpolskii (editor of the journal, Courier of Jewish Culture) made the following parallel: "Zionism as an ideology is not responsible for the actions of this or that Israeli government, just as Marxism is not responsible for, say, the introduction of Soviet troops into Afghanistan. In our situation here, under conditions of an explosion of antisemitism, the word 'Zionist' has come to mean something quite different. It has become simply a synonym of the insulting word 'Yid'." To which Abu

Mazen replied: "When we speak of Zionism we have in mind those who stand for the continued occupation of our land." But he noted that in Israel there are "organisations and parties the Zionist nature of which could not be doubted" which did stand for the freeing of the territories occupied in 1967 and for Palestinian self-determination. The PLO was building dialogue with these organisations.

With respect to Soviet emigration to Israel Galenpolskii pointed out that Soviet Jews were emigrating to Israel not because they hated the Palestinians

but because it was the only country accepting them without restriction. They asked the PLO to make clear to the Soviet leadership their concern not only that "the Jews emigrating from the USSR may end up in Palestine with rifles in their hand but that nobody in the Soviet leadership is taking the antisemitism in hand." A Gerber added, "We have appealed to ... Gorbachev clearly and publicly to declare: do not leave; we need you; we shall defend you from the antisemites. But the leaders for some reason do not want to make such a declaration."

Papermates

Roumania's elections may not have been a victory for socialism, but at least they saw a defeat for right-wing reaction. The so-called National Peasant Party and its presidential hopeful, millionaire London businessman Ion Ratiu, came a poor third.

As the election drew near, British media coverage concentrated on whether the right-wing party was getting a fair deal, and on its charge that the ruling National Salvation Front were just "neo-communists". Perhaps we were expected to forget what National Peasant Party leaders said earlier this year, about the "disgrace" of Roumania being "governed

by a Jew".

Roumania's fascists once shocked even the Nazis with their savagery, hanging Jewish children on meat hooks and skinning some alive. But, no matter how many Roumanian Jews were slaughtered in the Holocaust, or left as refugees, the present-day right-wingers still say there are "too many". There were rumours of a pact between the National Peasant Party and the revived fascist Iron Guard.

While the reactionaries in Roumania were appealing to such traditions, and blaming the old Jewish scapegoat for their country's economic plight (the

infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* reappeared in Bucharest, together with slogans attacking the "Jewish Antichrist, Karl Marx"), Mr Ratiu canvassed support in London.

On 6 March, he saw Mrs Thatcher at Downing Street, and had talks with the Foreign Office. The following evening, announcing his candidature for the National Peasant Party, he told Members of Parliament at Westminster that he had found the British government very "understanding". A 1,000-tonne consignment of paper for election purposes was being shipped to Roumania, at British expense.

As a result of questions raised by a Jewish Socialist Group member, and taken up by Labour MP Harry Cohen, Prime Minister Thatcher denied, in a letter on 2 April, that the British government was backing any candidates in the Roumanian elections. Acknowledging that "paper donated by the British paper industry" was to be sent, she assured us that if any of this was used to publish anti-semitic material, the supply to the offending party would be stopped. We leave our readers to decide whether such reassurance is satisfactory.

CHARLIE POTTINS

Gypsies shape their destiny

Amid the revolutions shaking the Eastern bloc, Eastern Europe's 2 million Gypsies, most of whom have been settled for generations, are suddenly entering the political arena.

Communists."

Havi Ujsag periodical, 1989

Roumanian Gypsies have been accused of collaborating with Ceausescu and for not helping the revolution. Ten Romanians arrested during the inter-ethnic fighting between Hungarians and Roumanians in Targu Mures in March are still in prison without trial. A Belgrade newspaper has published an article charging Ceausescu with being a Gypsy.

The Congress heard of the oppression Gypsies faced in the post-1945 years. It is not generally known that the Bulgarian Muslim Gypsies were forced to change their names in 1954, several years before other Bulgarian Muslims (1964) and finally the Turks. Romanians were killed in 1974 in the Lovetch concentration camp, while Romano Manush, now President of the World Romany Union, was expelled from Sofia for organising Gypsy cultural events. They heard too how Gypsy women in Czechoslovakia were still being sterilised this January. Social workers have a target of sterilisation each

month and Gypsy women are given sums of money to undergo the operation which they are told is for contraception and is reversible.

In Hungary there is the Romany Social Democratic Union, which runs in tandem with the Social Democratic Party. Two candidates were elected to the Budapest Parliament while the Congress was in session and one of the new MPs arrived in Poland just before the closing day. In Czechoslovakia too the Romanians have formed a political party. Pending the elections one Gypsy has been nominated to serve in each of the regional and national parliaments. Roumania has not one but five Romany political parties representing different shades of opinion. They are, however, united in demanding cultural rights and issued a joint declaration to this effect.

The Bulgarian Gypsies have formed a union which in three months has enrolled a membership of over 20,000. In that country ethnic groups are not allowed to form political parties, though the Union for Demo-

cratic Rights roughly represents the aspirations of the Turkish minority. The President of the Romany Union recently met Prime Minister Miadenov to see how Gypsies could be represented in Parliament pending the election.

The USSR Union of Romanians has recently been revived, but the population (some 30,000) in Poland seems too small and too scattered to become politically active.

The Congress took steps towards a unified literary language (Romani has more dialects than Yiddish) and, although the idea of a national state (Romanestan) was not mentioned — the lesson of Israel has perhaps been salutary — there was an emphasis on the bonds with the Indian mother country.

With this Fourth Congress, the Romanians are now a force on the political scene of Eastern Europe, as was the Bund in its day, and the predominant colour is no longer the *lolipe* (redness, of Communism) but the light red of Social Democracy.

DONALD KENRICK

The sound of music

Klezcamp, the annual Jewish arts festival organised by YIVO, is a must for anyone interested in Yiddish culture and particularly in Klezmer music. It is held in a hotel in the Catskills outside New York. The highlight of the week is the music. Every day there are masterclasses in clarinet, drums, violin and ensemble playing. Dances such as shers, bulgars and doinas spill out into the night. It is exciting to see and hear so many fine klezmer musicians together. For non-musicians there are workshops in the Yiddish

mance of Yiddish theatre, then a feminist from San Francisco juggled a croissant, a bagel and a plate before proceeding to give a *shpil* on the conflict between her roots (the bagel) and her current lifestyle (the croissant).

The amount of thought and effort that had been put into organising and making people feel welcome was impressive and I was moved by the care that was taken of me and other "strangers" from abroad.

JEANNETTE COPPERMAN



language (at all levels), literature, song, film, dance, calligraphy and even toy-making. The well organised daycare actively encourages children to learn Yiddish and make music.

For someone coming from Britain, where socialist and feminist Jewish culture seems to be forced to struggle for its existence, what struck me was that there was so much of everything: energy, Klezmer music, songs and so many Yiddish speakers. Of the 350 people there, the youngest was two months old and the oldest was celebrating his 101st birthday. Some families were represented by three or even four generations and among them were some 30 native Yiddish speakers.

One evening at the nightly cabaret an old Yiddish actor gave a perfor-

More information about Klezcamp is available from Henry Sapoznik at YIVO, 1048 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10028, USA, Tel 010-1-212-535 6700. The cost of the week is around \$375 per adult but the organisers want to encourage people to come from abroad and scholarships may be available if they are contacted early enough.

There is also a residential summer programme held throughout July on Yiddish Literature and Culture near New York, organised by the Workmen's Circle. The theme of the first week is *Women in Jewish Literature*, and of the second, *The Culture of Yiddishism*. It costs \$375 for five days' board and lodging; \$135 for children (there is no charge for under-2s).

For further information contact the Culture and Education Department, The Workmen's Circle, 45 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016, Tel 010-1-212-689 6800.

Politics of language

In areas where there is a high proportion of people from ethnic minorities whose mother tongue is not English, political parties generally put out their election propaganda in relevant languages. In Hackney at the recent local elections the Labour Party put out a leaflet in Yiddish in appropriate areas of Clapton and Stamford Hill.

The leaflet noted that the new Labour education authority had set aside

£750,000 specifically for *haredi* (religious) education. And, in contrast with the Conservative Party in Golders Green, was offering provision for Jewish institutions serving the under-5s.

Above all, the leaflet noted that large Jewish families would have to find groys gelt, up to £4,000 a time, to pay the Conservative-imposed poll tax.

Labour kept control of Hackney council.

Taking liberties

We expect the Board of Deputies to tell lies to the community, but now it's being less than straight with the National Council for Civil Liberties in a reply to their enquiries about the Community Security Organisation (CSO) which excluded several members of the public from a film festival organised by the Spiro Institute last January.

Hayim Pinner OBE, Secretary General of the Board, wrote that the CSO "operates under the direction of the Board, the elected representative body of the Jewish community, and is fully answerable to the Board. The guidelines regarding security for the film festival were discussed with the Spiro Institute and accepted by them... There were compelling security reasons for the actions taken."

Professor Geoffrey Alderman refutes all these claims. He says in his reply to the NCCL: "My enquiries, and I am a member of the Board, met with evasiveness and lack of frankness. My attempts to glean information relating to the Everyman Cinema incidents resulted

in ... an abject failure to address the points of substance I had raised."

As for the Board's claim that the Spiro Institute knew and accepted what they were getting into, festival organiser Nitza Spiro wrote to Geoffrey Alderman: "I hope ... you have heard how I was personally upset over this issue. I take your point that in future anyone asked by us to look after public security will have to define their terms. I did not ask for such a definition in this case as I understood security to mean the guarantee of the safety of the people attending the event."

Geoffrey Alderman is one of many who believes that the Board holds a list of people they consider to be *persona non grata* on purely political grounds and that the CSO is empowered to exclude these people from communal events. He, and we, will continue to demand answers to questions the Board doesn't want asked, and to expose the lies and strong-arm tactics with which they try to silence and exclude critics and dissidents.

JULIA BARD

MILLER'S TALE

Watching Lindsay Charlton's "Divided We Stand", about the efforts 50 years ago by top people to make a deal with Hitler, I wonder what's new to come out. I'm dying to peep into the thick ledger containing the membership list of Captain Ramsay's Right Club, who protested Britain was fighting a "Jews' War". This was the outfit Joan Miller had to penetrate for MI5.

When a friend brought me her *One Girl's War* over from Ireland, I read it avidly, trying to spot what secrets had led the government to ban the book. Surely not Miller's amusing tale of MI5 burglary at Raji Palme-Dutt's home? Was it her revelation of "M", alias Maxwell-Knight, Britain's wartime counter-intelligence chief, as having been into "rough trade", astral projection, and bitter antisemitism? Or that convicted Nazi spy Anna Wolkow had been the Duchess of Windsor's dressmaker?

Knowledgeable friends assured me the government was just trying to appear consistent, by banning *One Girl's War* while it pursued its action against Peter Wright and Spycatcher. So, last autumn, seeing Spycatcher freely available in the local library, and tripping over piles of remaindered copies going cheap in the bookshops, I thought Joan Miller's book would soon be unbanned too.

Not so. Asked by Labour's David Winnick whether he'd make a statement on *One Girl's War*, the Attorney-General replied curtly on 26 October:

"Interim injunctions obtained in November 1986 against the distributor and two booksellers, restraining them from distributing or selling the book, remain in force." So there.

NUMBERS GAME

Never mind Jewish cultural freedom, nor Russian antisemitism, the reason to be excited over Soviet Jews is that, thanks to Pamyat's pogrom threats and US immigration restrictions, they can be brought in to strengthen Israel against the Palestinians.

Jane Moonman, of the British Israel Public Affairs Centre (BIPAC), reckons a million Russian olim could arrive by the end of the century. "They will alter the demography so that the higher Arab birth rate will no longer pose a threat," she writes.

Those pesky Palestinians, dammit, if they're not throwing stones at peaceful gun-toting settlers, they are having babies, every one of them a born terrorist! Israel has tried everything - discriminatory family benefits, stopping Arab couples building homes, deportations, beating up pregnant women - but there's still that "threat".

So bring in the Russians. I hope they know what is expected of them and aren't thinking of skiving off somewhere more peaceful.

Not that Jane Moonman is anti-Palestinian. Neither the word "Palestinian" nor "occupied" sullies her BIPAC prose.

Israel is just "coping with rioting in the territories".

"Arab fears" that the new immigrants will settle in the West Bank "will prove unfounded" though. Of course, if you annex East Jerusalem and its environs and call it part of Israel, it's not part of "the territories", is it?

Jane Moonman's article appeared in the April issue of *Contact*, journal of Eric Hammond's EETPU. Not much of a breakthrough for Trade Union Friends of Israel, but perhaps a fitting place for Moonshine. "I suppose we should be used to printing Wapping lies," quipped the disgruntled Jewish "sparks" who showed it to me, "but I'm thinking of switching to the breakaway union."

A VERY NICE MAN

The other moonperson, Eric, was giving a talk on "security" at the World Union for Progressive Judaism seminar in London. A young rabbi in his audience asked him about the so-called Community Security Organisation keeping left-wing Jews out of Hampstead's Everyman cinema during an Israeli film season (see page 7).

Moonman, a senior vice-president of the Board of Deputies (which is supposed to run the CSO), had told the Hampstead & Highgate Express this was because "people who'd lost relatives in the Holocaust" might be upset by those with "political opinions". Did he think no left-wingers lost relatives, or that no Holocaust survivors had political opinions? And what had this to do with being allowed in to see movies (some of which expressed political views close to the outlook of the Jewish Socialists' Group)?

People said Moonman was deliberately abusing the name of the Holocaust victims to slur Jewish Socialists and confuse issues. Others thought he might genuinely not know what he was talking about. (After all, hadn't he shown confused identities in his days as BIPAC chair, when he used to bank cheques made out to an "Alexander Keddle"? See *Jerusalem Post* 20 August 1987.)

Asked to explain the Board's policy in the Everyman affair, Moonman's only reply this time was to tell his questioner, "You're really burnt up about this, aren't you." But would he answer the question? "You're really burnt up..." he repeated, evidently pleased with himself for this inanity. If the World Union of Progressive Jews audience were satisfied, the young rabbi wasn't. He tried to speak with Moonman later and was told that he was "muddleheaded". (He was muddleheaded?)

Did Moonman think that being rude to the questioner was going to help answer the question? "You can take your remark and stick it!" the young man was told. Eric Moonman is a professional public relations expert, by the way. And if you think that's funny, he's also tipped as a likely next president of the Board of Deputies - which calls itself "the representative body of British Jewry". Yes, all of us.

Wednesday 9 May 1990. Jean-Marie Le Pen, guest for the sixth time of the top political chat show "L'Heure de la Vérité", is once again praising the achievements of Marshal Pétain, leader of the French collaborationist government, whose militia sent tens of thousands of French Jews to the gas chambers. To the four journalists supposedly there to grill him, the man who claims to defend France against the "anti-French racism" of the immigrant hordes explains that there is still a need to free the French media from Jewish influence. The journalist in the hot seat for this quarter of an hour looks a little sheepish, hoping Le Pen won't ask him whether he is "of Jewish origin".

Jean-Marie is in his element, the centre of attention, alternating avuncular charm and thinly-veiled threats, oozing self-confidence. "Just you wait," he insinuates when his interviewer dares to show a hint of exasperation. "It won't be long before we are deciding who interviews whom on French television."

And he could be right. The Front National (FN) is on the up and up. Its recent national congress was held under the slogan "The Conquest of Power". True enough, when proportional representation was repealed a couple of years ago, it lost its 35 seats in parliament, but its representatives sit firmly on hundreds of local councils up and down the country. Its new heroine, Marie-France Stirbois, was recently elected to the National Assembly in a by-election with over 60 per cent of the vote. Local leaders of the "respectable" right, Jacques Chirac's neo-Gaullist RPR and the UDF Liberals led by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, are making electoral alliances with the FN in desperate attempts to hang on to their influence. The extraordinary 14 per cent polled by Le Pen in the last presidential election, which almost left him as the principal right-wing contender after

Carpentras and after

The Carpentras outrage shocked France to its roots. But, as Barry Smerin reports from Paris, although mainstream politicians are back to "business as usual", elsewhere there are signs of a new awareness.

the first round of voting, is more than holding up in the opinion polls.

Setting the agenda

The political agenda for the whole country is set by the Front National. The central issue for both Left and Right is the "immigrant problem". Prime Minister Rocard is urging the Socialists to stop talking about giving immigrants the vote in local elections because the public is not ready for the idea. Mitterrand himself has adopted the Right's slogan about a "threshold of tolerance", the mythical percentage of "immigrants" (ie non-Europeans, whether born in France or elsewhere) beyond which tolerance is not possible and racial conflict inevitable.

The RPR leadership is split between those like former interior minister Charles Pasqua, who "share many values with the Front National", and those like Chirac himself who see a direct attack on the FN as the only way to win back their lost voters. Having beaten off a Pasqua-led bid for the leadership, Chirac has for some weeks been openly attacking Le Pen. Meanwhile Giscard, arch smoothie and self-appointed leader of the Right, is treating Le Pen with the "courtesy owing to any serious political opponent".

Thursday 10 May. France awakes to the unspeakable obscenity of Carpentras. The whole country is shocked to the roots. The television news on all channels talks of nothing else for four days, as if

the rest of the world had ceased to exist. Not that the desecration of Jewish cemeteries is anything new. Just as in Britain and other European countries, Jewish grave-stones have frequently been daubed and smashed in the last ten years without a great deal of public reaction. This is something different. Somehow, somewhere in France in 1990 there are people consumed with such hatred of the Jews that they can tear the freshly buried body of an old man from the ground and impale it on an iron railing. My local bistro owner, a man with a penchant for gory details and more than a soft spot for Le Pen, confides: "I never thought they would go that far. You'd need a bloody strong stomach for it."

And of course "they" haven't. Le Pen is furious. Just as everything was going so well! As I write this at the beginning of June the police still have no clue to the culprits but Jean-Marie himself has no doubts. "Who does the crime benefit?" he raves. "It's a plot to discredit the FN, perpetrated by the Communists or a Muslim terrorist group." Alone among political leaders, he has no word of sympathy for the victims.

Few people think the FN is directly responsible. Not directly. But for the first time there is, across the political spectrum, widespread realisation of the damage that has been done to the fabric of French society by the race hatred and antisemitism peddled by the FN. An opinion poll published two days later showed that 57 per cent of the

people interviewed hold the FN morally responsible for the Carpentras outrage, while a further 34 per cent consider the media to blame for giving the FN too much coverage.

Turning point

The silent protest demonstration is enormous. Close on a quarter of a million people, including the leaders of all the main political parties, march from the Place de la République to the Bastille. For the first time since the Second World War, a President of the Republic takes to the street on a public demonstration. There is a feeling that at last people have had enough, at last they are going to react. The left-wing papers are jubilant. "Carpentras is a turning point. Things will never be the same again." Politicians are beginning to ask some of the right questions. Is the Front National just a party of the Far Right or is it a fascist organisation dedicated to destroying everything the Republic stands for? Should the media treat Le Pen just like any other politician? Should we debate with him? Pierre Mauroy, General Secretary of the Socialist Party, walks out of a political symposium, refusing to be in the same room as Jacques Medecin, mayor of Nice and a known FN sympathiser.

And yet. Barely two weeks later Chirac, who in the aftermath of Carpentras finally agreed to join Rocard's all-party round table on racism, has reneged, accusing the Socialists of not really wanting to fight Le Pen. And Rocard himself

has finally buried his party's "Votes for Immigrants" proposal. The mainstream politicians, having enjoyed their emotional outburst and the novelty of being filmed in a synagogue wearing a *yarmulke* (skull-cap), are back in business as usual, or so it seems.

Right-wing Jewish groups who usually spend most of their time urging French Jews to leave for Israel and let the Arab and French antisemites fight it out, complained vociferously that there were very few Arabs and blacks on the Carpentras protest demo. Angry Arab community leaders, exemplary in their support for the demonstration, point out that there are no massive demonstrations when Arab community centres are firebombed or blacks gunned down in the back streets of Marseilles.

But there are some signs of a new awareness and of new connections being made. Listen to Abdel Alissou, chief news editor of Radio Beur, the most popular Arab radio station in the Paris area:

One struggle

"The struggle against anti-Arab racism and antisemitism is one struggle. Racism and antisemitism are used by the French extremists like a two-stage rocket. In igniting the first stage, anti-Arab racism, the racists tested the limits of democracy. Their immediate political goal is to kick the Arabs out of France, even if it takes racist murders to do it. But, as the political pay-off has been slow in coming, they are now igniting the second stage, antisemitism, previously kept under wraps because of the taboo of the *Shoah*. But in attacking the Jews, what they are seeking to do is to wipe them off the face of the earth. We must fight this now, especially as the antisemitism now feeding through to us from Eastern Europe is, unlike the French variety, devoid of any sense of guilt."

The pen behind Le Pen

In the wake of the recent desecrations of Jewish tombs at Carpentras, Tony Blend examines a more discreet but no less dangerous form of anti-semitism: revisionism

In England, a recent symposium on the Holocaust was entitled "Remembering for the Future". Here in France, however, there is also a more immediate question: will revisionist historians distort the events of the Second World War to such a point that the public no longer knows or cares to know the truth? Remembering for the present is just as much an issue.

The political face of right-wing racism and antisemitism in France may well be Le Pen. But what lies behind that? Politicians put forward ideas; thinking up those ideas is often left to others. Where does Le Pen get his ideas from? One source is pseudo-scientific revisionist research propounded by right-wing "intellectuals". What the Front National is to politics, revisionism is to academic research.

In recent years, certain university theses, articles and books have attempted to minimise the scale of the Holocaust or deny its occurrence altogether. The University of Lyon II, in particular, has emerged as a centre for revisionism, housing such "historians" as Rocques, Notin and Faurisson.

French Jews – particularly those interested in historical research – have fought back, led by the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Centre (CDJC) in Paris. The Centre contains archives on the treatment of Jews during the war: books, articles, photographs, letters and other materials. In addition to providing these resources for students, researchers, journalists and institutions, the Centre has provided evidence for the trial of war criminals such as Klaus Barbie. It has also published a comprehensive two-volume catalogue of its extensive archives, a precious record of antisemitic legislation passed during the Occupation, and puts out a quarterly journal, *Le monde juif*, devoted to the study of contemporary Jewish history.

Jews and revisionists clashed back in 1978 when Robert Faurisson claimed: "Hitler never ordered or agreed to whosoever being killed, by virtue of their race or religion." Also, *Le Monde* published an article on Hitler's gas chambers in which he stated that while there had been ovens in Hitler's concentration camps there had been no gas chambers, implying that the Nazis had cremated the dead but had neither actively nor systematically killed Jews. Indeed, he argued, how could it have been possible to operate such gas chambers?

The article is short, polemical

rather than factual, and its sources are obscure. A rare reference is to fellow revisionist R Christophersen.

Le Monde published a reply by George Wellers, an honorary research historian at France's national scientific research centre (CNRS) and major force behind the CDJC and its journal. With much self-restraint, and demonstrating the scientific thoroughness lacking in Faurisson's article, Wellers sets out evidence to refute the revisionist case.

From German archives, he refers to telling correspondence between the German authorities and a firm contracted to build and install a gas chamber at Auschwitz in 1942.

From the testimony of former SS officers, he quotes the diary of an SS doctor, Professor Kremer, at Auschwitz. On 2 September 1942, he writes: "At three o'clock this morning, I attended my first *Sonderaktion*. Dante's Hell seems like a comedy in comparison. Auschwitz is not called a death camp for nothing." On 12 October 1942: "I... attended a *Sonderaktion* at night (1600 Dutch). Terrible scenes..." Wellers adduces further evidence. In July 1945 and March/April 1946, two senior SS – Pery Broad and Rudolf Hess – gave British authorities a detailed description of the gas chambers in their camp and how they operated. Moreover, during various trials before the German courts, SS officers at Auschwitz admitted to having seen the gas chambers operating. Not one denied the gas chambers existed. (Instead, they denied having personally had any hand in their use.)

From the evidence of former detainees, Wellers cites the testimony of five prisoners who escaped from Auschwitz between 1943 and 1944. Their description of the gas chambers was published in November 1944 by the US Executive Office of War Refugees Board, who stated: "We have every reason to believe that these reports paint an accurate picture of the horrible events

which are taking place in these camps."

Wellers concludes: "I do not know if Mr Faurisson is an anti-semitic and pro-Nazi. He says he is not. I do know, however, that were he so, he could do no more, no better than he is doing at present to malign and insult Jews by treating them as imposters and excusing the most abominable and revolting features of Nazism."

Thus in 1978 a French historian has to disprove a claim made in France's most reputable national daily newspaper that Hitler's gas chambers never existed.

Twelve years on, Faurisson and Wellers have clashed again. This time the matter was resolved not in the columns of a national newspaper but in the courts. Having investigated Faurisson's revisionist activities further, *Le monde juif* described him thus: "Lecturer at the Arts Faculty, University of Lyon II, head of the revisionist school in France and falsifier of the history of the death camps during the Nazi period."

Faurisson then brought an action against Wellers and the CDJC for defamation. His case? "Historians would gradually come to realise that they have no evidence of an order, plan or budget to exterminate the Jews." He claimed Wellers' evidence was based on inaccurate translations or interpretations of the statements of Nazi leaders.

Wellers defended the CDJC journal's description. It was "an accurate definition of the methods used by Robert Faurisson to study the genocide of the Jews during the Second World War". Faurisson's work was "pseudo-scientific research having no other purpose, than to rehabilitate the crimes committed by the Nazis against humanity".

On 14 February 1990, the Departmental (High) Court in Paris said it was up to historians and the public to decide what was historical fact; the court itself was not competent to do so. However, it noted Faurisson's claim that

the Nazi expression, "the Final Solution to the Jewish Question", meant simply transferring Europe's Jews, rather than exterminating them. It also noted the testimony of Himmler, cited by Wellers: "Elimination of the Jews, extermination, we will do that."

The court saw in Faurisson's claims "general assertions, which were not scientific in nature but purely polemical". It pointed out that in the Federal Republic of Germany itself, under a law passed on 1 August 1985, denying that the Nazi Holocaust took place was a civil misdemeanour.

The court ruled that Faurisson had failed to show he had good cause for the action, which it dismissed, ordering him to pay costs. The description of him as a falsifier of history was not considered libelous.

In condemning those politicians who – in a last, desperate bid for power – play the race card, we should not forget those whose ideas they feed off. Ultimately, the weakness of Faurisson's case was matched by the weakness of his research. It is a pity that French universities have not been as sharp at singling out revisionist tendencies as the French courts were.

Disproving the incredible and proving the obvious are no easy matter. A great deal of time, money and effort was spent on simply reaffirming that the Holocaust occurred and on defending the right to challenge those who claim it did not. It is also a distraction from other issues.

But the likes of Faurisson have to be challenged. With the passing of time, the denial of the Holocaust increases in scale.

"Not I," denies the Nazi.

"Not anyone," denies the revisionist.

"A detail," says the politician.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the French experience, it is that there is nothing more important than remembering for the present.

Amid an international resurgence of anti-semitism, the debate in Britain on whether to prosecute suspected Nazi war criminals continues to arouse strong passions. Marian Shapiro uncovers low forms of antisemitism in high places.

Former Nazi collaborators who have been granted British citizenship since 1945 cannot be prosecuted in this country for crimes committed abroad during World War II, solely because they were foreign subjects at the time. If the War Crimes Bill had become law, it would have closed this loophole, bringing British law into line with that of other countries such as Canada and allowed the prosecution of a small group of people living in the United Kingdom. The Chalmers-Hetherington Report, which provided the impetus for the legislation, found grounds for prosecution against three people and sufficient information to warrant further enquiries in another 124 cases.

Before falling in the Lords in early June, the Bill had rather a rough ride through the legislative process. The Lords debate at the end of 1989 was marked by strong resistance and blatant antisemitism; the most notable comment being Lady Saltoun's that the proposed legislation would allow "aliens to be revenged on other aliens for something done in a foreign country nearly half a century ago".

On its second reading in the Commons in March 1990 it was passed overwhelmingly (273-60) on a free vote. Opposition views in the debate and committee sessions ranged from the undesirability of bringing in legislation which could be seen as retrospective, and of prosecuting a few "sick old men", to the supposed unreliability of witnesses in recalling events of nearly 50 years ago. Ivor Stanbrook, the (very) Conservative member for Orpington, was one of the Bill's staunchest opponents. His opening remarks in the second reading debate included the inimitable remark "what the Jews called the holocaust...". He then went on to argue, "The criminals were not restricted to the so-called Nazis but existed on all sides... In principle, we ought not to delve into history, to revive the grim, terrible, cruel stories of the last war, in which many, many people suffered." Later he added: "In view of the present state of world affairs, when peace and co-operation are watchwords, we should not be reviving thoughts of hatred, cruelty and revenge."

Although not always explicit, a strong strand of xenophobia ran through the debate. Stanbrook again: "These offences were committed 1,000 or 2,000 miles away, by and among the people whose language and customs were quite different from our own. It would be very difficult to translate all that in such a way as to enable a British jury to

decide dispassionately the question of guilt or innocence."

Balanced against such sentiments were some moving testimonies from MPs. Alex Carlile recounted his family's experiences, particularly his mother's: "She and others can give evidence that would shame in quality some of the evidence given, say, last week in courts of law throughout Britain. When she was fighting in the Warsaw uprising, on a Warsaw street, she was stopped by two soldiers and she heard them discussing in German, which she understood but which they did not know she understood, whether she should be killed because she had an attractive leather bag... She remembers that event as though it was yesterday. She remembers what was in the bag ... the people who spoke to her and the words that were used, even though they were spoken in a language that was not her own."

Shortly after the Commons second reading, the Lords made further moves to halt the Bill's progress. At the end of May an amendment was passed to a bill which would have made live evidence by video link from abroad permissible under Scottish law. The successful amendment specifically excluded Nazi war crimes, presumably making the provisions of the War Crimes Bill considerably less workable in practice, as many of the people referred to in the Hetherington-Chalmers report live in Scotland.

The vote in the second reading debate in the Lords this June was as conclusively against the Bill as that in the Commons had been in favour. Suggestions that a negative vote in the Lords would hasten the upper chamber's abolition didn't help. "We are not to be bullied in this House; we are not to be blackmailed; we are not to be intimidated..." said Lord Hailsham.

Several lords, including Lord Beloff, challenged the opposition's grounds for objection: "A degree of prejudice has crept into the matter that is very similar to that contained in some official documents of the wartime years when the first rumours of those appalling events reached this country and were largely dismissed... It was stated that the Jews were always complaining and were probably exaggerating." His sentiments were echoed by Lord Goodman: "Lord Beloff ... showed a good deal of courage in expressing his suspicion regarding the motivation of some of the people opposing the Bill. I have no evidence to support that; I should like to think that there is no evidence to support it, but it would be losing one's eye to the reality not to believe that a certain amount of antisemitism is to be found in a number of them."

As in the preceding debates in both houses, the dominant strands of the opposition's argument focused on the inviolability of British justice, the "retrospective" nature of the proposed legislation and whether defendants would get a fair trial. On

the face of it, worthy and rational objections. Less palatable were clear inferences that the legislation did not seek justice but retribution - an "alien" concept. And for alien read "Jew"? Or would that be being over-sensitive? Lord Shawcross, speaking from his experience as a member of the government at the end of the Second World War, made several telling statements. Quoting Churchill's 1946 call for "an end to retribution", he added: "Retribution does not cease to be retribution by posting a label called 'justice' on top of it." He claimed that earlier attempts to bring war criminals to justice had been thwarted by the very people they were intended to help. "Indeed, the efforts of those like myself, who wanted to do more to punish those who had slaughtered the Jews, were not helped by various things that had happened in the meantime, including the activities of the Stern Gang and the bombing of the King David Hotel." He argued: "We can now revive the policy of retribution but we cannot, in my view, do it without imposing an indelible blot on every principle of British law and justice."

Another equally unpalatable argument, strongly

echoing the argument against giving refuge to Jews at the time, was that the legislation would encourage antisemitism. Lady Saltoun of Abernethy, who had made the infamous December remark about aliens, said: "I can see ... the danger of an anti-Jewish backlash and of fuelling the antisemitism which may have led to such deplorable incidents as the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in North London recently ... the danger is far greater if we embark on trials than if we do not." Lord Longford agreed: "...if they [the trials] were to take place can anyone imagine the growth of antisemitism? It is obvious that people would ask, 'what are these trials?' ... People would ask 'what is this all about?' The answer would be 'It is our Jewish friends.'"

The Bill fell in the Lords by 207 votes to 74. It is almost unprecedented for a government Bill which has been passed in the Commons to fall in the Lords. Many have questioned whether an unelected chamber should be able to overturn the Commons' clearly expressed will in this way. The government now intends to reintroduce the Bill in the autumn session of Parliament.

1992: racism knows no boundaries

The benefits for business of the Single European Market have been much trumpeted, but what will 1992 mean for black communities, immigrants, migrants and refugees? Simon Lynn investigates.

Due largely to the objections of the British government, the proposed "free movement of persons" within the EC will be restricted by frontier controls within the community. This will primarily affect Europe's 15 million migrant workers, though the racist assumptions behind these controls are likely to bring suspicion and harassment to non-white EC residents, too. The external borders of the EC will be virtually sealed to migrants and people seeking asylum.

The British government's

objections to relaxing border controls within the EC have been made clear on a number of occasions. In an interview with the *Daily Mail* in May 1989, Mrs Thatcher said: "We joined Europe to have a free movement of goods... I did not join Europe to have a free movement of terrorists, criminals, drugs, plant and animal diseases, rabies and illegal immigrants."

The assumption that equates drug trafficking, smuggling, terrorism and rabies with refugees, migrants and immigrants is constantly reiterated in European governments' debates about 1992. This implicit criminalisation and association with "menace" weighs heavily on the daily lives of migrants, immigrants and refugees.

Policy towards refugees is formulated by the Trevi group of senior EC ministers, who meet in

secret every four months with a brief to form EC policy on terrorism, drugs and immigration. The Refugee Forum in Britain is demanding that these discussions be opened up to democratic debate.

European countries will continue to turn their face away from non-European countries to which they have been historically linked: the Netherlands from Surinam, Italy and France from North Africa, Spain from Latin America



Hachway Trade Union Support Group

and Britain from the Commonwealth. European governments are formally turning away from taking responsibility for the havoc wreaked by their imperialism and neocolonialism.



tion Act deprived black people long settled here of the right to family reunion.

"Harmonisation" of legislation in preparation for 1992 is proceeding apace. Fines imposed on airlines which bring in people without the correct documentation are now commonplace in Europe, and exist in Britain in the form of the Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987. This has made the journey to Europe impossible for many people who face harassment and victimisation at home.

The Trevi group has already agreed on 50 countries whose people would require visas to visit any EC country, which prevents those seeking asylum from getting to an EC country. This was Britain's explicit intention when visa requirements were imposed on Sri Lankan nationals in 1985-86 to prevent Tamils escaping from persecution and violence.

The countries of the EC are increasingly hostile to asylum seekers and use an increasingly restrictive definition of "refugee". Some categories of people are rejected outright, but there is also a newly-developed second class status, in this country called "exceptional leave to remain" and on the continent called "B&C" status, which gives fewer civil, social and economic rights than the rest of the population.

Britain categorises many asylum seekers as "economic refugees" whether it is the case or not. It is not true for Kurdish refugees, for example, but in any case economic pressures are powerful in displacing people and are often connected with violence and persecution.

Mainland European countries have strict internal controls such as the use of identity cards. In the past Britain has relied more on controls at the point of entry.

However, there has been a creeping and extensive establishment of a network of internal immigration controls here too. Black people in Britain are increasingly subject to checks, questions and suspicion of their immigration

status when they are in contact with public services: the DSS, schools, colleges, housing benefit offices, job centres, employers, marriage registration offices, GPs, health centres and others.

The British state has moved steadily over the last 11 years of Conservative government to relinquish responsibility for the "social cost" of migrant workers. The Recourse to Public Funds rule, first used to restrict the entry of Jewish refugees at the turn of the century, was used in 1985 to deny migrants public housing and benefits. The 1988 Social Security Act requires DSS officers to police the black community and pass on information to the Home Office. Trades unionists should resist being used in this way.

This continual monitoring, alongside direct harassment, raids, violence, arrests and attempted deportations by police and immigration officers, constitutes a concerted attempt to destabilise the lives of black people in Britain.

The Schengen Accord is an agreement which includes the development of a base of computerised information on refugees, asylum seekers and "undesirable aliens". The Accord also envisages a single chance of entry to the EC for an asylum seeker. If an application were refused by one country, the information would be circulated to all the others who would then automatically refuse entry too. And it is salutary to realise that information used by West Germany last year to check the identity of East German refugees was compiled under the Nazi regime.

In Britain, the Home Office has been rapidly computerising. INDEC has 300,000 names of people refused entry and their associates (names taken from diaries, address books, etc, of asylum seekers). HOLMES is the police computer system used to track down those considered to have evaded immigration controls. Information on this system includes that from anonymous

phone calls and denunciations. Raids by police and immigration officers have been based on HOLMES. Operation Needle was one carried out on clothing factories in Hackney, which came up against fierce resistance by migrant workers and their communities and supporters on the streets and in the workplaces.

The poll tax will add to the already extensive computerised information base and itself creates

full citizens who are registered and disenfranchises those not registered, particularly migrant workers. The central principle underlying the poll tax of locating every individual is part of a deeper agenda.

These preparations for 1992 are being made against a European-wide rise in racism, racist violence and a growth of openly fascist parties. In Britain there are an estimated 70,000 racist inci-

dents each year and at least 46 people have died as the result of racist attacks in the last 10 years. Such attacks have frequently increased in the wake of media and government scares about immigrants. The challenge to racism must meet the new European agenda and the breadth of both the political and the physical attacks being mounted against minority communities right across Europe.

Letters...



NO BLESSING FROM BARUCH

The view you printed by Raymond Suttner (*JS19*) is probably universally held: that a new phase is commencing in South Africa; and that it was the ANC that brought the country to this position. But Suttner only mentions the ANC. There is no mention of any other organisations among those that struggled against the apartheid state. Yet surely this cannot be correct. Besides the many other movements that opposed the South African government (such as the PAC, Azapo, the Black Consciousness Movement, the Cape Action League, and so on), there was the powerful trade union movement that claims three-quarters of a million workers and, of course, the Communist Party.

The programme that Suttner mentions as the keystone to change is the Freedom Charter, a programme of democratic demands that has aroused much criticism from the other black movements, from many trade unions and from groups on the left. Yet Suttner is a communist. Is Suttner withholding something – or does this represent the limit of his aspirations? If the latter, then perhaps socialists need to be somewhat less enthusiastic about what is on offer from your contributors.

Is the struggle for change in South Africa one that will be consummated by the petty bourgeoisie or will the democratic transformation be achieved through the action of the mainly black working class? If there is to be no Lancaster House-type deal (in the image of Zimbabwe), the negotiators must be placed under surveillance by an elected assembly, or by the organised working class. If this is not done there can be no assurance that

the talks will not end in some squalid deals.

Amy Thornton writes an impressionistic piece on the position of Jews in the struggle for a better South Africa. In the past, she says, 90 per cent of those whites involved in the struggle for democracy were Jewish. Surely not. When I was in prison (all the white male political prisoners were kept together) the Jews (at the peak period of imprisonment) did constitute about 30 per cent. At that time the total number of white male prisoners was 25. Among the women the percentage, and the absolute number, was lower. The impression given by Ms Thornton is misleading. The number of whites involved in any of the political movements that opposed apartheid was minuscule. At its height there could not have been more than a few hundred whites in the Communist Party, and it is doubtful whether there were more in the Liberal Party. They never constituted more than a tiny proportion of the total white population.

The Jews who joined the struggle did so, not because they were Jews, but because they accepted certain political programmes. In so far as they did, they did not ask for credit as Jews. Baruch Hirson
London N2

TELL ME MORE

The article in *JS19* about the revolutions in Eastern Europe was interesting, but I found it too vague and abstract. I would've liked to learn something more solid about the role of Jews in these events and – especially with all the publicity about emigration to Israel – something about what the ones who intend to remain are doing. Has there been more interest in the sort of politics represented by the Bund, inspiration from the revolutionary traditions of East European Jewish communities? In cities where there've been threats of pogroms, have there been Jews organising self-defence along with other threatened minorities?

I did think the editorial attacking the collaboration of Jewish officials in

Roumania and South Africa (and the UK) was spot-on.
Rozanne
London SW2

PRESERVING HISTORY

Readers of *Jewish Socialist* might like to know that the entire library of the *Morgen Frayhayt* (see *JS19*) was donated to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and that I am in process of cataloguing it onto the Odis computerised system, which is accessible through JANET (Joint Academic Network).

The cataloguing is proceeding rather slowly, largely because the powers-that-be did not consider the collection important enough to warrant the full-time services of a librarian, and it was only after much persuasion that I was allowed to embark on the work on a strictly overtime basis.

There are over 4,000 volumes, ranging from translations of Marx and Lenin to modern poetry, including *Yog-bikher* from the ghettos and Workers' Circle *Alif-bes* primers for children. Some of the books are in poor condition, but it is an exceptional collection. Those interested in the preservation of historic Yiddish socialist material might consider writing to the Librarian to emphasise the importance of the *Frayhayt* collection – and, of course, coming to see the books!
Lindsay Levy
Oxford

MISLEADING OUR PEOPLE

The current exposure of the autocratic "official" Anglo Jewry's representative "leadership" must focus attention on the failure of the religious and communal sectors to demand the cessation of the anti-democratic structure of the Board of Deputies. The establishment of a weekly Jewish radical newspaper to refute the *Jewish Chronicle* distortions of the Anglo-Jewish news coverage and reports becomes an immediate priority to resist the current despairing situation confronting Anglo-Jewry.

Louis Behr
London E1



Jewish Socialist takes pride in uncovering hard and often distasteful facts. This inquiry has been no exception. Diana and Chaim Neslen have conducted a "classified" investigation.

One ancient question, still relevant today, is pondered by sages in every *Sanhedrin* of the diaspora: "How many sides does a bagel have?", such is the weight of responsibility which we Jews still bear for the rest of the world. Carrying on this responsible position, we were given the brief to cast personal safety to the winds and examine the bagels produced in the very heartland of progressive Jewish London – Ilford.

What is a bagel?

It would be easier to describe what is not a bagel. The first recorded reference to bagels can be found in Exodus 127.4-7 in the Grodzinsker Rabbi's translation: "and the Israelites were sore oppressed by the great burden of stone for the Pharaoh's tomb, and yea, one Gelach, son of Bulkah, of the tribe of Fressers, conceived of an plan; using four of his wife's (Bayleh – Bai for short) last week's rolls, he joined them with two axles, and planing them beneath the stone lubrications them with creamy cheese, observed them to roll, thus it was that Bai Gelach performed a *Mitzvah* which would bring glory to Jewish generations to follow." (For further references, the reader should turn to K Marx: *The Bagel and the Elephant Question*; V Lenin: *A Revolutionary Whole*; A Einstein: *Derivation of the Theory of the Curvature of Space*, p 1-215.)

Types of bagel

The Polish bagel: hard inside, soft outside, sweet after eating.
The Lithuanian bagel: hard outside,

...and now for the centre spread!

We decided to begin our search right in the heart of England in: **Northampton**

Waitrose Kingsthorpe
Opening hours: 8.30-8.00
Atmosphere: 8 – Supermarket
Service: 9
Taste: 5
Texture: 5
Shape: 9 – round, what else?
Quality: 6
Good with fillings: Yes, depends on filling
Comments: Why can't we get Bagels in Leicester!
Researcher: *Reni Chapman*

Moving further north now, we go to the fast-growing hotbed of Jewish socialist action...

Nottingham

The Vienna Deli
St James Street
Opening hours: Lunchtime
Atmosphere: 9 – Pleasant, cosmopolitan for Nottingham.
Have daily papers
Service: 7
Only sold with fillings
Comments: They are ordered from Manchester!

Still more from Nottingham...

The Continental Deli
Melton Rd, W Bridgeford
Opening hours: 9-5.30
Atmosphere: pleasant
Service: 9 – friendly and helpful
Taste: 5 – not very bagel-like
Texture: 3 – soft and squishy

Shape: 8
Quality: 3 – not v good
Price: £1.40 for 6
Value: not really
Good with fillings: It would fall to bits
Comments: Sadly, a great disappointment. The search goes on...
Researcher: *Myra Woolfson*

And now for the town that is more than just a big government garden centre...

Gateshead

Stenhouse Bakery
Coatsworth Road
Atmosphere: 6
Service: 2
Taste: 8
Texture: 7
Shape: 10
Quality: 7
Price: 20p
Good with fillings: Yes
Researchers: *Carrie Supple, Sharon Gewirtz*

On now to see what heights can be scaled in the Peaks

Derby

St James Delicatessen & Tea Room
9/11 St James Street
Opening hours: 9.00-5.00
Atmosphere: 7
Upstairs: take-away deli; downstairs – cafe
Service: 6
Taste: 8
Texture: 8

soft inside, sweet while eating.
The Russian bagel: hard inside, hard outside, can sour.
The British bagel: soft inside, soft outside, cloying.
The American bagel: reversible, sweet and sour before and after.
The Israeli bagel: even the hole is hard, sour.

Features

Standard size: 35cm, 60cm, 80cm (for *khazerim*)
Standard weight: 150g, 272g, 330g

Standing around until being served: Sundays 15-20 mins, weekdays 1-5 mins; Saturdays closed.

The Great Bagel War

It has been said that the known taxi driver population of Greater Ilford traffic in bagel bullion. Those in the know claim that this home-grown industry threatens to engulf the whole of London and its environs, flooding the markets with Ilford bagels. A great

Never let it be said that *Jewish Socialist* does not take the essential needs of its readers seriously. We thought we should consider looking at the kind of provision available for the good Jewish socialist. To this end, for the past two months Karen Merkel and her team of intrepid surveyors have scoured the country in search of that most elusive of objects – the perfect Bagel (or Beigel, depending on where you hail from). You may, of course, already be consuming this – in which case we want to know about it! However, in the meantime, we are publishing our exclusive findings. We'll leave you to judge which bagel you would take to your desert island...



Shape: 10 – authentic
Price: 18p
Quality: 8
Researcher: *Larry Beckreck*

To return to the centre of English life...

Peterborough

The Hot Bagel Company
38 Manasty Road, Orton Southgate
Taste: The garlic ones are nice – 3
E numbers, though!
Texture: 6 – too soft
Shape: 8 – too perfect
Quality: 7 – good toasted
Comments: Not as good as a Brick Lane Bagel
Researcher: *Henry Iles*

Whitechapel

...and so to Brick Lane, home of two bagel shops just two doors from each other and separated only by the (not kosher) "Jolly Butchers" pub
Evering Bakery
155 Brick Lane, Whitechapel, London E1
Opening hours: daytime
Atmosphere: 3 – basic. Orange decor, dirty lino floor replete with deceased bagels, dark, gloomy and perhaps waiting for electric lights to be invented.
Service: 6
Taste: 4 – bland, a non-event
Texture: 2 – good texture for chewing gum, not so good for bread
Shape: 8
Overall quality: 5 – doesn't make

the word "fresh" spring to mind
Price: 10p
Value for money?: If this is based on how long it takes to chew one up completely, it is certainly good value. On the other hand, with the rising cost of dental treatment...
Good with fillings?: Let's just say that it is better than without
Comments: Don't go there if you are feeling depressed and, if you are fastidious about the surroundings where you buy or eat food, remember to take your broom.

Beigel Bake
159 Brick Lane, Whitechapel, London E1
Opening hours: always except Pesach it seems
Atmosphere: 8 – a bit clinical but generally bright, cheerful and alive. Colourful cakes thoughtfully placed on the counter.
Service: 8
Taste: 9 – with just a hint of sweetness
Texture: 10 – real body!
Shape: 9 – nicely rounded (a colleague described them as voluptuous)
Quality: 9
Price: 10p
Value for money?: For sure!
Good with fillings?: You bet.
Comments: The sign outside promises "hot beignals all night". They certainly know my fantasy. These are bagels worth travelling for. And while you are in the area you could get a good curry at...
Researcher: *David Rosenberg*

bagel bakeries are nothing if not good business people. What better evidence is there of your hygiene than exposing your bakery premises to the paying customers? So as you enter the shops, you are confronted by the counters groaning under the weight of cholesterol-filled goodies, but also as background you are treated to the gleaming steel of the discreetly visible bakery ovens.

The conservative habits of the environment are on show in other ways too. The bakers – the skilled workers – are men; the service workers – who take the orders and the money – are women. All are in uniform or at least in overalls. The *Bagel Factory* has converted its women workers into heritage butcher boys complete with blue and white checked overalls and boaters. *Bite Me Bagel* comes complete with *Hechsher* (religious seal of approval). It did not do too much for business on the Sunday afternoon when we visited – it was empty. While nearby *Shalom* was so crowded with aficionados that it spilled out onto the pavement and we were unable even to catch a glimpse of the famous black binliners into which they delved to produce the perfect bagel. *Shalom's* secret may be that its bagels are "still only 10p".

The fillings in all of the shops are unimaginative, namely: cream cheese, cheese, egg and onion, smoked salmon, chopped herring. It is the taste of nostalgia, of roots, the most forgiving and least demanding of all produce. In the beginning we asked "how many sides does a bagel have?" Clearly the answer is two sides – inside and outside. We have given you the inside story; see you outside one of the shops!

conspiracy of silence prevails and none of the dealers we approached was willing to discuss this. Together, they wield a great influence. What, you may well ask, are the authorities doing to protect us from such blatant racketeering? It is not politic to ask such questions in Ilford. Backhander bagels have been known to change bags with innocent policemen being seen eating bagels on our streets. It has even been mooted that a newly

invented "Pesach Bagel" designed to replace the traditional *Matzo* will shortly be launched on to an unsuspecting public.

Your guide to Ilford bagels

The Bagel Factory: Redbridge Lane East; *The Bite Me Bagel*: 388 Cranbrook Road; *Shalom Bakery*: Woodford Avenue. As befits a suburb on the make, its residents set great store by cleanliness. You can only be sure something fits the bill if you see it yourself. The

Staying on

Stephen Ogin looks at the history of the Jews of south-west India

It wasn't difficult to find the old disused synagogue on Market Street, Ernakulam. The building is well preserved and the grounds, together with the cheder, now house another type of nursery run by Sutton's Seeds. In the synagogue itself, up near the Ladies' Gallery which looks directly towards the Ark, is a second *bimah*, a local tradition. Here lay some account books gathering dust – the credit and debit of an old community neatly recorded in the curling script of their language – Malayalam.

How the first Jews arrived on

the Malabar coast is not entirely clear. It is probable that the first Jews visited the Malabar at the time of Solomon, whose fleet seems to have obtained "ivory, apes and peacocks", as well as silver, from this coast. The old Tamil word "takai" (peacock) became "tuki" in Hebrew. What is undisputed is that from the 5th to the 15th century these Jews, living close to the port of Cranganore, had virtual independence, being governed by a chieftain of their own choosing.

The fame of this community, its prosperity and autonomy, was known throughout the Jewish world. In the 14th century, a Hebrew poet and traveller, Rabbi Nissim, wrote of the Cranganore (known as

Shingly to the Jews):

I travelled from Spain,
I had heard of the city of Shingly,
I longed to see an Israel King,
Him, I saw with my own eyes.

The Cochin Jews have in their possession famous copper plates which granted remarkable rights and privileges. The plates, written in Vattezhuthu, an old Tamil alphabet, were given to the Jew Joseph Rabban by King Sri Parkaran Iravi Varman and bestowed upon him the title of Chief of Anjuvannam. "To Joseph Rabban, Chief of Anjuvannam, and to his descendants, sons and daughters, and to his nephews

and to the sons-in-law who marries these daughters in natural succession, so long as the world and moon exist, Anjuvannam shall be his hereditary possession." There is a controversy over the date of the plates, but the Cochin Jews put the date at 379CE.

The Cranganore community grew and prospered, not without internal dissent (of which more later), until the 16th century. Then, in 1524, on the pretext that the Jews and Christians were tampering in the pepper trade, the Moors attacked these two communities and laid waste the Jewish settlement. But worse was to come with the arrival of the Portuguese. There were no Jews in Cochin at that time, but the remnant living in Cranganore were forced to leave and fled 25 miles south to the city of Cochin. They placed themselves under the protection of the Rajah of Cochin, who granted them a site for a town by the side of his palace and temple. Here, in 1567, Jew Town was built, and, in 1568 the Cochin Synagogue. The 160 years of the Portuguese occupation was a difficult time for the Malabar community. The Portuguese completed the destruction of Cranganore and later sacked Jew Town and the Cochin Synagogue itself. The Jews returned to Cochin when the Dutch captured the town and lived there, and in the twin city of Ernakulam and surrounding villages, in peace for the next 400 years.

At their peak the cities of Cochin-Ernakulam housed a combined community of about 4,000 Jews, with eight synagogues. In 1912, the census showed about 1,200 Jews. Today, only one synagogue is functional – the Cochin Synagogue in Jew Town, Mattancherry, serving a community of 25. The rest of the synagogues are now disused or used for other purposes.

Unfortunately, the tranquillity of the relationship between the Jews and their neighbours, the Hindu majority, the Christians, Muslims and the many other tribes and castes, was not replicated within the Jewish community itself. A fiercely held division emerged between the (so-called) White Jews and Black Jews. However this division initially arose, it seems likely that the numbers of White Jews were augmented by settlers from Europe, especially from Spain and Amsterdam. The White Jews also appear to have benefited from links with the Dutch Sephardi congregations. The Black Jews, always numerically outnumbering the White Jews, constituted almost a separate community for many centuries.

India presents one of the most profound challenges for western Jews, many of whom will find it hard or be unable to accept that in India Jews have lived a tranquil life as Jews without experiencing antisemitism, whereas Europe has been the scene of so much Jewish grief. How strange to be able to ask the auto-rickshaw driver for "Jew Town, Mattancherry" and to begin to realise that western Jewish unease, or nervous embarrassment, is out of place here, where Jews have lived for 19 centuries. The existence, today, of only a very small community in the Malabar will be eagerly grasped as evidence of a latent antisemitism, but the truth is otherwise. Kerala is one of the poorest of India's states. Having no heavy industry, it relies on cash crops (eg cashew nuts, spices, rubber) and remittances from Kerala expatriates in the Gulf for income. The Jews of Kerala appear either to have gone in search of a better life or, as SS Koder has written, left for Israel, driven by a religious motivation. In his 1965 paper to the Kerala History Convention



Clock tower in the courtyard of the Cochin Synagogue

he prophesied the exodus of his community. "After some years the story of the Jews of ... Malabar may come to end. If this happens, history can record that their emigration was not motivated by intolerance or discrimination by government, nor by external-social pressure, but their deep sense of religious fervour to die in the Holy Land."

The 425th anniversary of the Cochin Synagogue is in 1993. It is time that world Jewry recognised the remarkable place of India in Jewish history.

Sources
SS Koder: Paper to Kerala History Convention 1965 entitled "Kerala and her Jews".
LK Ananta Krishna Iyer: *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, 1912.



Jew Town Road, Mattancherry, Cochin

Next year in Johannesburg

The book takes on an ambitious task: to follow the lives and struggles of two South African families – one black and one white and Jewish – through four generations, from the turn of the century to the 1980s. In the process Gillian Slovo covers much of the history of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party, though the characters are fictional. She says: "I had wanted to write this book for years. It is a book about families, but more so about lives of women and particularly about mothers and daughters – I think that is a fraught combination." Certainly many of the mother-daughter relationships in the book are fraught and Gillian agrees that some of this draws on her own experience. Her mother, was deeply involved in the struggle against apartheid and died for it.

"My own involvement dates from the time of my mother's death," says Gillian. "I was so angry, and my anger was directed at the whole system in South Africa." All the brutality, violence and repression of that system are well illustrated in the book, along with the huge costs, physical and emotional, paid by those who oppose apartheid – particularly if they are black. Somehow the choices are always more acute for women, black and white, who are expected (or wish) to be mothers and activists. Is this conflict universal for women who are closely involved in political struggle? How does Gillian Slovo feel this experience altered her choices?

"It's difficult to compare, as we don't have to take the same risks – our choices are so much easier. I do often wonder – would I have been so brave? But then when I think about the people in

Gillian Slovo, a South African-born Jewish writer, came to Britain aged 12, when her mother was forced into exile. Her book, *Ties of Blood*, has just come out in paperback. Lucy Wedderburn talked to her.



the book or those I modelled them on, I think that in many ways they were very ordinary people who became extraordinary. Somehow the situation brought out the best in them." This strength comes over in the book, but for the child of activists, the issues are not straightforward. Gillian Slovo says: "Sometimes I even think my parents' generation were very lucky – the choices were stark, but somehow they had a moral 'rightness' that we don't often

have. They lived hard, and celebrated hard – it was a vibrant world they lived in."

The book illustrates how many (if not most) of the white people involved in the South African liberation struggle have been Jews. But Gillian Slovo says: "Those who were involved were nearly all communists – and they were communists first. Somehow it didn't feel relevant that they were Jews." This has a familiar ring, particularly with respect to the feminist movement in Britain where women have spoken out only recently about how a Jewish background may have fuelled their political involvement. The collective consciousness of oppression and racism can be a source of energy.

Gillian Slovo agrees that it is no coincidence that so many of those whites involved were Jewish and that many of these came from radical backgrounds. Many others remain in South Africa and benefit from apartheid. Even today, most of the Jewish establishment in South Africa has been slow to show any support for the radical movements opposing apartheid.

Of those South Africans who left or had to leave, many are still in exile in Britain. For Gillian Slovo the recent events in South Africa have transformed her perceptions of that exile: "Before, South Africa was like a part of my home, yet a part that I could never go to. Now it feels very different; exciting but scary now that returning is a real possibility. It is not really going back but going forward, to a new, changing place."

Ties of Blood by Gillian Slovo is published by Headline at £4.99.

Colour matters

Neil Collins has two black adopted children. Now, as a white person, he is against transracial adoption. He explains why.

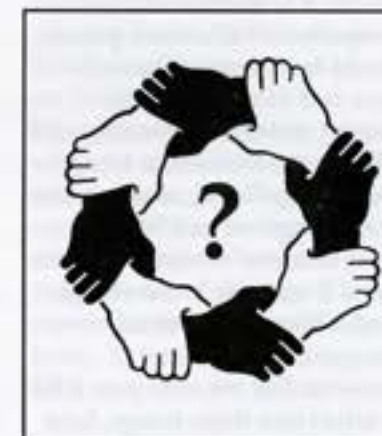
I want to look at this subject from three separate strands. Firstly, the two children that I have adopted are black, so this is based on my own history and my own experience, as well as my interpretation of my children's experience. Secondly, I am a social worker, so I am interested in these issues, particularly working in a multi-racial borough like Hackney. Thirdly, as a political activist I am interested in issues of identity and anti-racist policies. The issue of colour throws into sharp contrast a lot of our so-called cherished socialist or liberal suppositions and forces us to look at what the reality is as opposed to what our upbringing and ideology have taught us.

I believe that skin colour is the key to understanding this issue but it is only important in a racist society; if we were not living in a racist society, skin colour would be totally irrelevant. Biologically the term "race" is nonsense because there is only one race, homo sapiens.

I regard a child whose skin colour is not white, whatever the mixture, as being black or Chinese or whatever. I do this because of the issue of "visibility". I can remember hearing Paul Boateng give a talk at a JSG meeting in Stamford Hill. At the time he was a

leading member of the GLC, a successful lawyer; his father had been a brigadier in the Ghanaian army and Minister for Mines, but if he left the hall that night and met a racist they really wouldn't be interested in who he was; it was the fact that he was black.

I want to say something about how I came to adopt black kids. We had a child born to us and we wanted to build the rest of the family by adoption because we knew there were kids who needed homes and from our point of view it seemed to be unnecessary to go on "producing" as it were. At that time, in 1977 or 1978, there were



lots of black kids in children's homes who weren't getting adopted or fostered. Like lots of people with a liberal upbringing we felt that colour didn't "matter" so we would be quite suitable to bring up black kids. We also knew those kids were over-represented in care but

never understood why. We knew that black people weren't coming forward, but never really thought about what that meant.

As the black and ethnic communities became more organised, and with the rise of the GLC, racism awareness and so on, but most importantly because black social workers, child care workers and parents' groups were getting organised, issues of institutional and personal racism came to the fore. It also related to the lessons the labour and socialist movements had learned from the women's movement; issues of identity, socialisation and personal politics. There was also research concerning kids who had been brought up in loving, secure and mainly middle-class homes, largely in middle-class areas, who would appear to have all the advantages which kids can have, but who were not able to relate to the black community. They had no racial identity. Many didn't even see themselves as black. When someone called them "nigger" or "wog" in the street they were devastated; more so than black people growing up in a black community. It is extremely painful when your own kids tell you they wished they were white and they ask you, when they are watching fairy stories in television, "Why are witches always black?" and "Why are the fairies always white?" and you haven't got the understanding or proper answers, just some unease.

The black community, and in particular a body called the Association of Black Social Workers and other Professionals, began, in a very assertive way, to push for changes. This led to a situation where most local authorities, irrespective of political colour, now accept that, when finding substitute homes for children, it was best if you could match up colour, race, culture and, ideally, also religion. So, against this background, we changed our view. They are our kids and we love them the best we can. But as long as society remains racist it would have been in their best interests to be placed with a black family.

As a side issue, because I had to pay attention to helping my kids to have a black identity, I began to pay more serious attention to my own identity as a Jew. It was quite important to me that during this time I discovered the Jewish Socialists' Group at a stall at a GLC May Day festival.

There is this "sixties idea", the melting pot theory, that if we all mix together racism will disappear. (George Bernard Shaw, on a visit to South Africa, was asked, "How do you solve the race problem?" and answered, "Through marriage.") The other idea connected with this is that it is "not nice" to notice what colour children are. My kids have suffered through this. They needed, in order to develop a black identity, to talk and think of themselves as black, and Tania and I were genuinely "colour blind", although we were probably more aware than the typical "transracial adopters".

In addition, for the kids who look different from their parents due to skin colour, adoption as an issue comes much more to the fore in their daily life. Kids ask at school, "Is that your dad? Is your mum a black woman?" and so on. When you adopt kids

you tell them they are adopted but then it is up to them when to talk about it and when not. When they look different from you it becomes more important in their lives than it needs be. For example, with my adopted daughter it is clearly an embarrassment to her to be faced with this when we go to collect her from athletics. We live in Waltham Forest and the largest minority originates from Pakistan. Adoption there, although it takes place often, happens within the extended family or within the village. There is no concept in Islamic law of the parent who gave birth ceasing to be the parent in law and someone else becoming the parent. The school where my children went originally had about 78 per cent of children whose parents originally came from the Indian subcontinent. Many times they have been told, "She can't be your mother" and so on. This couldn't have happened to them if they had had black parents.

Another issue is that I cannot protect my kids from the hurt that is racism. Whilst I can empathise with them, I have doubts if I could be as "empathetic" as a black person would be. Any experience I have had of antisemitism doesn't relate to skin colour. It is difficult for the kids to bring these things home, and because at one stage we had "colour blind blinkers" we didn't notice them. Even now I miss things. And, although it sounds arrogant, if that is true of someone like me who puts a lot of effort into these things, how much more true for people who don't think about it.

The kids are of Afro-Caribbean origin, although they were born here. There are practical issues to do with hair care and skin care that, because we didn't know how to care for the kids, they haven't had the care they should have had. It took Tania a long time to learn

to plait hair in the appropriate way. Even now my adopted daughter gets comments like "your white mum doesn't do your hair properly".

Another issue relates to mixed origin children. I know children you would say "they are black kids" but their parents would talk about them as being "half white". On the street the BNP would see them as "wogs". So what does "mixed origin" mean? It relates to ethnic and cultural identity rather than racial identity. A lot of kids from mixed relationships see themselves as black, including in a political sense.

There are still a small number of people who say "it isn't best for children to be placed like with like, that is the road to apartheid". A group called "Children First in Transracial Fostering and Adoption" say: "We support the 'same race' policy but there aren't enough black people coming forward and the most important thing in a child's life is to be with a loving family. If they stay too long with foster parents or in children's homes, they are damaged and if the only alternative is for them to be fostered by white families, that should happen if a 'same race' placement hasn't been found after so many months." I regard this as a racist position. It is clearly demonstrated by Brent, Lambeth and so on that if you have a workforce drawn from the communities it serves, it knows how to approach those communities. It is a question of knowhow and resources. It is interesting that this group, which is mainly white, pushes on the issue of race and I have to ask myself why is this? The answer, I believe, is to do with the fact that, deep down in white liberals, is a racist attitude; they object to the organised black community telling them that they should leave the black community to look after its own kids.

For God's sake

The ultra-orthodox Lubavitch movement expends a great deal of energy and imagination recruiting young, alienated Jews, often using personal "true life" stories. Ruth Lukom plays them at their own game.

Dear Paula,
The photos were wonderful. Canadian snow looks better than our Hendon sludge. I'm sorry to hear Stan is restless again. I do wish he'd get out of selling. I know socialists and their children have to eat too but Stan's body and soul do not belong with typewriters and office stationery.

You won't believe who I bumped into last week. Remember Sarah Edelman? Lived near the Central, smoked Number 6 and told Mrs Hartstone to fuck off when she caught her. She is now (are you sitting down) the wife of Rabbi Stephen Goldman. She was even wearing a *sheytl*. Before I knew what I was saying I'd invited them to dinner on Saturday night.

I spent all week agonising over the vegetarian menu and scrubbing everything clean. I even threw out an old Sunday Times magazine because it had an article in it about Billy Graham. I served up the meal in the china dinner service you

gave us. As the Rabbi said the *brokhes* I remembered the last time we used it. Last summer when you and Stan were over, sitting in the garden eating oysters. The evening passed without a single thunderbolt.

Rabbi G thinks David is wonderful and wants him to write for various Lubavitch magazines. I think Sarah is wonderful. A history degree, six children under 12 and non-stop committees. She has a sparkle in her eyes which I haven't had since Donny Osmond in 1972.

I'm busy next week too. David has been asked by the University to speak at a convention on 19th Century European Literature and wives are invited too. Great! I thought: remember last year when he went off to Venice. I was ready to give the credit cards a bashing in Fenwicks when he told me we were off to Warsaw in February. Change course for the Survival Shop.
Love,
Gail

Dear Gail,
Thanks for the postcard from Warsaw although I'm not sure I understood it. What did you mean: "Something very important is missing from our lives"? I thought maybe you had lost your travellers cheques but Stan shook his head and mumbled: "It might be her marbles."

I know the streets of the old ghetto are very moving. Some friends of ours came back from there shaken but very stirred. They said: "Remember, amidst all the killing and destruction there were people that fought back." Good solid antifascists, Adam and Sharon are. That's what you meant isn't it? It's the determination to fight fascism and racism that's missing from our lives.

Stan has finally left City Business Machines. They couldn't make him out. They hired him because he's Jewish and as his boss said: "You guys could sell ice to the Eskimos." In four months Stan sold three pocket calculators and a stapler.

Sarah Edelman has no right to get snotty about your china set. Remind her when she used to stand outside the take-away stuffing her face with sweet and sour pork balls.
Love,
Paula

Dear Paula,
I'm sorry I haven't written back earlier. I haven't recovered from our trip to Warsaw. Probably I never will. I'm sorry the postcard was a bit cryptic. Let me explain what happened. In between lectures, David and I spent 10 days wandering through the old streets. One afternoon we found the old Jewish cemetery. There we met a Polish Jew and his two children and we invited them for tea. As we all

sat around the table awkwardly, the father nudged the elder of the two boys who recited, proudly, the sum total of his Jewish knowledge – the four questions from the Passover Haggadah. Paula, I know your feelings about religion but you would have wept too. It's not just the people and buildings which were destroyed, but also our culture and heritage. The tragedy is that our Jewishness is still being eroded away and we're responsible. If we lose it our children will lose it and it will be lost forever.

As soon as we returned home we called Rabbi Goldman and told him to make our home kosher. Poor man! He had to use gloves to clear the prawns out of the fridge. It's going to be a slow process but please G-d we can try and bring back what has been taken away from us.

It's at times like this I'm glad we write to each other and don't bother with the telephone. I can imagine the ridicule David and I are getting, but you must respect our choice.

Love,
Gail

Dear Gail,
Your letter has stimulated many hours of discussion in our house. It makes a change from: "Who wrote that cheque that's made us go overdrawn" or "Who has to take the kids to see Care Bears – The Movie?"

No, Paula, I'm all in favour of religion and even God (sorry Gee dash Dee). It's the Rabbis, Priests and Mullahs I hate. Religion is fine as long as you don't take it seriously.

There's a group of Jewish feminists nearby who used to campaign as Jewish women on various issues. They turned out in force on a pro-choice rally and were yelled at by some nuns. Then, during the summer, some of them

began reading about Judaism and decided it had been "stolen" from them and that women were unjustly excluded from practising its rituals. So instead of fighting the anti-abortionists, the pornographers, the deportations, they are fighting, yes fighting, for their right to meander round a synagogue on a Saturday morning holding the scrolls and mumbling the football results.

Stan is standing over my shoulder and saying: "What about the priests in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Nazi Germany?" I say they were brave and decent despite religion and not because of it. Religion says: "God is the answer so shut up and do as you're told."

Stan says if this letter had a volume control you'd be turning it down.
Love,
Paula

Dear Paula,
So religion is full of meaningless rituals and mumbling men. You and I spent many hours being told where to march and which slogans to chant. We sat in meetings listening to the men on the Student Union Management Committee: "You can't vote on the motion before you've voted on the amendment." "You can't vote on the amendment before it's been proposed and seconded."

Two years ago I would have shared your attitudes towards Rabbis. But these aren't crazed fanatics. They don't abduct people and brainwash them. These are warm, caring people. They are our people. For the first time in my life I am proud of being Jewish. I wish you could share the warmth and love that David and I have been welcomed with. Each day I am drawn further into the community.

I go to classes with other women and learn Hebrew or

kosher cooking. I visit our nurseries and schools or go out with the Mitzva Campaign to the Jewish elderly or infirm. However, one thing is troubling me that I've been trying to pluck up courage and tell you about. As you know, we've been koshering our home. Most of our utensils have now been made kosher by either boiling or blowtorching. But the only way to kosher china is to break it. I decided to sell the china and, with the support of the other women, I used the money to buy a sheytl. And now every day as I wear it I think of you and how important your friendship is to me.

Love,
Gail

Dear Gail,
I'm not going to pretend I'm not angry about you selling the china service. It was a gift for you to cherish, but it is yours to do as you please with. I therefore will defend your right to sell it to buy a dead cat to stick on your head. Enjoy! May you never get caught out in a strong wind.

Gail – the worst thing you have done to me is destroy the joy your letters brought to me. They made me laugh out loud and feel less lonely. Now when I open them all I get are booklets on Judaism and The Soul. So please don't write any more – it's too painful.

Perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps I'm supposed to stay at home bearing children each year and making kreplakh. If so I'll apologise to you and Gee dash Dee and we can start writing again.

Stan, of course, has read your letter. I thought he was going to lecture me on the rights of people to practise their religious beliefs but he just sighed and said: "What a waste of good people." Funny thing is, I expect you're doing the same thing.

Love,
Paula

One Body, One Soul

(in memory of Michael Robinson – London teacher, anti-racist and communist)

Black and grey and white, O pigeon you are the true citizen of this city
With that passionate sheen that Cockney youth have in Brixton and Bethnal Green
Ours is a city of psychopaths and punks, of layabouts and night-cleaners, pathetic bankers and lovely busmen.
I in my summer guilt prefer quiet anonymity.
Yet there are few who are innocents here, a few poor and black kids roaming the streets without racial lusting and sexual envy.
Still with the black and brown worlds under us:
feeding us, nurturing us, sustaining us body and soul
in the parks of Kensington and tenements of Bermondsey.

The bitterness of fag-smoke at the back of the throat
incites us to vital knowledge of violence and despair:
this bursting flower-bed and this teeming supermarket are tended
by a burnt African village and craving Irish stomach;
the shrivelled eyes of these Indian children speak
of cuppa after cuppa in the local cafe;
a Jamaican labours for the stone in our fireplace;
Chinese sacrifice for our holiday binges.
Angrily, I stub my fag out with my foot.

There is a bench on Hackney Downs where one can watch half the world
a woman drudging heavy bags from the market,
an old man with pockets full of confused memories,
a Cockney lad – angry, brave and silent;
green English common between sombre estates.
And at night, lovers beneath a wild, indifferent moon

O, one day our stubbornness must break away,
for it cannot endure the changing needs of our indestructibility

And the pigeons join us as we step along and down the streets together
singing and piping and dancing
beneath spreading plane-trees.

In Finsbury Circus

June 1985

This tree can teach me a lot if I let it
But am I ripe for it?
I am callow and cold-hearted and confused
but ripe for a gentle awakening
There is death all around – walking,
discordant, fearful death.
The tree has bargained its frail, beautiful leaves
with our death-dealing,
the friendly sparrow, its song with our hard hearts;
a drunk, his wise, telling talk with shillings and pence.
What they teach me I burn against this human winter.
The deadly demanding director has rendered his blood
for a strange imperial glory.
The tree and the drunk are breathing deeply.
What do we need besides murder and victory!
A Cockney cleaner moves home eastwards
into the bright slums of humanity.

These poems are reprinted from *The Ivy: collected poems 1970-1989* by David Kessel, c/o 4 Bridges House, Philpot Street, London E1, price £3.50 (proceeds to Nicaragua Health Fund)

FIFTH COLUMN

Be part of the Fifth Column. Deadline for listings in the next issue of *Jewish Socialist* is 14 September. Please keep listings as brief as possible (50 words max) and send them to *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC2N 3XX.

Hackney Jewish Socialists' Group
Newly formed. Meets regularly. c/o Box 11, Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS

Nottingham Jewish Socialists' Group meets monthly. Contact Myra on 0602 603355.

Manchester Jewish Socialists Contact Adrienne on 0204 591460.

Bristol Jewish Socialists Contact Madge on 0272 249903 (5-6pm & 8-9pm).

Jews Against Apartheid: Contact Shalom 081-568 0971 / Diana 081-554 6112.

The Jewish Teachers' Forum (or NOT the Association of Jewish Teachers) is for teachers alienated from/by the Jewish establishment, to get together and talk about being Jewish and teachers. Contact Clive Trouberman 081-519 3943.

East Midlands Jewish Group meets regularly. Contact Joy 0780 720194.

Royte Klezmores – the all-women Klezmer band for all occasions. Contact Julia on 071-482 2940.

Hemshekh Yiddish Folksingers available for workshops and performance. Contact Chaim 081-554 6112.

Friends of Yiddish cultural group meets every Saturday at Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel, at 3pm. Contact Majer 071-488 3092.

London Museum of Jewish Life, Sternberg Centre, 80 East End Road, London N3 (081-349 1143).

Regular opening times: Monday-Thursday, 10.30-5.30; Sunday 10.30-4.30 (closed Sundays in August, bank holidays, Jewish holidays).

Women in Black: open meeting 25 July, 7pm, Quaker International Centre, Byng Place, London WC1, to receive report-back from Women for Socialism delegation to the Occupied Territories.

Also women wanted for regular Women in Black pickets Saturdays 4-5pm in front of El Al. Wear Black.

Israeli Mirror: Monthly digest of news translated

from the Hebrew press. Details: 21 Collingham Road, London SW5.

Challenge/Etgar: English edition of new quarterly Israeli peace camp journal. Details from POB 2760, Tel Aviv 61026, Israel.

Israel & Palestine Political Report Details from Magelan, 5 Rue Cardinal Mercier, 75009 Paris, France.

Islington ARAFA meets regularly. Contact Box 11, Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS.

Sheffield Anne Frank Committee plans to hold a conference in 1991 to help develop a Jewish perspective on anti-racism. Further details from: Sheffield Anne Frank Committee, c/o Dave Hayes, 29 Brook Road, Sheffield S8 9FH.

Pen Pals sought by Andy Martynyuk, a 21-year-old Jew from Moscow. Hobbies: music, dancing, karate, Jewish history, Judaism, philosophy, reading, cinema, theatre, travelling. Can reply in Russian, English or Hebrew. Write to Andy Martynyuk, Poste Restante, Moscow 101000, Soviet Union.

Know your enemy

British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis, edited by Vernon Richards (Freedom Press, £1.95)

Israeli premier Yitzhak Shamir at a Holocaust memorial ceremony in April gave a rare insight into what had shaped his world view. "I raise the memory of my dead father, Shlomo, killed by Polish farmers – friends of his youth – to whom he went for shelter after escaping from a death train." I am a Jew, but as a socialist and non-Zionist, I distance myself from everything the ex-Irgun terrorist stands for. The rejectionist right he leads looks set to squander the best chance yet for peace in the Middle East. But that simple speech was a revelation. I am now perhaps a notch closer to understanding what has made Shamir such a sour and stubborn hardliner.

Empathy – the ability to put oneself in the place of another – is a quality that Vernon Richards, editor of *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis: Selections from the Anarchist Journal Freedom 1938-1948*, lacks. He seems unable in his introduction to make the empathetic leap that would give his critique of Zionism more credibility – for Jews anyway.

With an insensitivity common on the left, Richards glibly likens Zionism to fascism. This simple equation does an injustice to the issue's complexity. For example, he makes no mention of those Jewish groups, Zionist as well as non-Zionist, who risked being ostracised and worse to attempt a reconciliation with Arab workers.

Thankfully, this oversight is corrected elsewhere. In a 1948 article, Damashki writes: "There is no doubt less irreconcilability between certain Zionist and Arab elements ... than between the ultra-nationalists faithful to the fascist conceptions of their dead

leader Jabotinsky and the supporters of the left Zionist organisation Poale Zion, or between certain Arab workers' unions and the great feudal Moslem chiefs." Zionism doesn't even necessarily equate with a Jewish state, as some Zionists were then advocating a bi-national homeland for Arabs and Jews.

To address Zionism three-dimensionally – taking account of the knotted contradictions of Israeli political life – does not make one a Zionist. But it does make one's argument far worthier of respect.

Richards blithely bandies about such phrases as "the new master race" and "funds from World Jewry". There is no organisation called World Jewry, so why the capital W? Moreover, not all Jews donate to Israel as the phrase implies. Carelessly Richards has used the same sort of euphemism as neo-fascists in place of "Jewish Conspiracy". Noam Chomsky, whom he is fond of quoting, could have enlightened him on the insidious effect of linguistic nuance.

What saves the book and makes it a good buy at £1.95 is the provocative interplay of opinion, some of it informed by direct experience. The exchange between Quaker Reginald Reynolds and Emma Goldman is particularly lively. Goldman writes: "Reynolds has not a particle of antisemitic feeling in him, although it is true that his article leaves that impression." In fact I have read it carefully twice and it does not. If Goldman has overreacted, it is the anguished response of a Jew who knows that her people are being systematically expunged from the heart of Europe. She points out that it

was not only the Zionists who backed the *Aliyah*: "Perhaps he does not know that the Jewish masses in every country ... have contributed vast amounts of money ... unstintingly out of their earnings in the hope that Palestine may prove an asylum."

Albert Meltzer recommends instead that Jews put their hopes in the solution to workers' problems everywhere, "the building of a world freed from nationalism and states". Yes, but to a people caught in a hopeless struggle for survival, who couldn't afford to wait for the realisation of socialism, Zionism may well have seemed a credible alternative.

To understand that does not make one pro-Zionist, anymore than to comprehend why frustrated Palestinians flock to the Hamas makes one an advocate of Islamic fundamentalism.

An unattributed 1948 article renders the situation into humane perspective: "It is futile and unreasonable to blame Jewish immigrants for this problem of Arab homelessness; they have themselves certainly nowhere else to go and are naturally bitter at the cynical ease with which the Great Powers, who deny the great open spaces under their control ... declare that they ought not to go to Palestine. They cannot be expected to stay behind barbed wire and bars until their death."

Also castigated is Stalinist Eastern Europe: "There can be no denying that if conditions were normal and decent in Roumania, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and other countries behind the Iron Curtain, there would be no 'DP problem'; the fact of open and silent pogroms in those countries causes the great exodus to the overlaid DP camps of Germany and Italy and the great freights of human cargo leaving the Danubian ports."

There is an unmistakable shift of tone in the immediate post-Holocaust articles, a far greater readiness to treat the Jewish question with the circumspection it deserves. Richards as editor must

have studied these articles carefully, yet he treats the concerns of Jews with as dainty a tread as a Sherman tank.

That is not to suggest that Jewish concerns should supplant those of the Palestinians. The true horror of the Middle East is that one people's oppression has been superimposed over another's.

Crude anti-Zionism of the sort espoused by Vernon Richards will do nothing towards solving the problem. It's more likely to drive the despairing Jew to the bosom of the Zionists. He can hardly believe "that a people, many of whom have had first hand experience of the Nazi concentration camps, who have lost close rela-

tives in the Holocaust, can have learned *nothing* from the inhumanity of man to man." But why should the victims of sub-bellial cruelty automatically become saintly rather than cynical? Only the comfortably distanced can afford such a moral high tone.

MIKE GERBER

Who can tell the tale?

In 1986 David Grossman wrote *Yellow Wind*, an account of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which prefigured the Intifada. In it he quotes from George Orwell's anti-colonial essay *Shooting the Elephant*. To stop himself looking like a fool, Orwell's British colonialist, surrounded by Burmese natives, is forced to shoot an elephant as "a sahib has got to act like a sahib". It is, I think, the self-conscious choice in the "sahib's" brutal exercise of power that appeals to Grossman and made it a suitable analogy for the choices that ordinary Israelis are making in relation to the occupation. Grossman's first novel, *Smile of the Lamb* (1983), was a fictional exploration of these themes in relation to the West Bank, and his second novel, *See: Under Love* (first published in Hebrew in 1986), tries to understand the exercise of power in relation to the Holocaust.

Grossman has argued elsewhere that he wrote *See: Under Love* to undermine the myth that idealises the Jews as victims and the Nazis as merely monsters. According to Grossman, both of these stereotypes turn the Holocaust into a "monument" and make it impossible for individuals or societies to understand their present conditions in relation to the past. Grossman, a 37-year-old Jerusalemite, is neither a

Holocaust survivor nor the son of survivors. In Israel, inevitably, there have been those who have asked what right Grossman has to write about the Holocaust. What his critics have failed to see, however, is that Grossman has not written a straightforward "Holocaust novel" but rather a novel that is self-consciously about the difficulties of writing about the Holocaust.

See: Under Love gives the reader a range of possible stories necessary for those whose flesh has not been directly touched by the past to come to terms with the Holocaust. Thus the novel is divided into four sections, each with a different vocabulary and perspective. By far the best part of the novel is the opening, which George Steiner, with only a touch of hyperbole, has described as "one of the great feats of modern fiction". In this section Momik Neuman, Grossman's alter ego, is a 9-year-old child of Holocaust survivors who, in the Israel of the late 1950s, tries all too literally to discover the "Nazi Beast" in the strange menagerie which he has collected in the cellar of his parents' flat. Grossman makes it shockingly clear that the "Nazi Beast" is not "Over There", as the young Momik imagines, but potentially within everyone.

The style of the next phantasmagoric section might irritate some readers. But Bruno Schultz,

the Polish-Jewish writer at the centre of this episode, was arbitrarily shot by an SS officer as a "house Jew". He also practised a complex literary technique which Grossman shows is necessary to understand the intricacies of the past. If this section is supposedly purely imaginary then it is also rooted in history, just as the alphabetised "encyclopaedia" which ends the novel is both coldly factual and a part of Momik's story about Wasserman.

Grossman is trying to break down the common categories by which we understand the past and its relationship to the present. This is especially true of his controversial third section where Momik imagines that Wasserman has survived the death camps by telling childhood stories to Herr Neigel, the concentration camp commandant. In Momik's fantasy, Neigel is redeemed by Wasserman's stories. This might appear to be staggeringly pretentious on Grossman's part, but *The Yellow Wind* made it clear that there is an urgent political need for Israel, at least, to break down the "simple stories" which Herr Neigel insists that Wasserman narrates. Grossman tries to understand the Holocaust through the prism of high literary modernism and in relation to Israel's urgent political needs. There are few writers of whom this can be said and for this he must be thanked.

BRYAN CHEYETTE

See: Under Love by David Grossman, translated by Betsy Rosenberg, Jonathan Cape, £13.95

A Century of Ambivalence Exhibition at Royal Society of Arts
22 April – 8 May 1990

Some months ago, the prominent Israeli writer, A B Yehoshua, told a Jewish audience in London that the diaspora is a "cancer connected to the mainstream of the Jewish people". He was reiterating the classical Zionist position which started from the negation of the diaspora and emboldened itself to demand the liquidation of the "galut" (exile). For Yehoshua, and like-minded ideologues, all roads of Jewish history and destiny lead ultimately to Israel, and if when tested against the reality they do not, so, Yehoshua says, they should and action must be taken to ensure that they do. Thankfully it is rather rare to hear this position stated so baldly now. Most of modern Zionist thought has modified the classical demand. Recognising that Israel needs external political, moral and financial support, it has acknowledged and acted upon the need to strengthen and build up strong Zionist-oriented communities in the world. Now, what has this to do with an exhibition on Soviet Jewry...?

Modified Zionism is for the West. The Jewish diasporas of the East, whether in Eastern Europe, Asia or the Middle East, have not yet escaped the classical diagnosis and prognosis.

Immediately after the creation of Israel, the rhetoric of aliyah was universally proclaimed in the Jewish world. In the last two decades, while it has been very underplayed in the West, simultaneously and with considerable success Israel and the Zionist movement internationally have been actively promoting the dissolution of eastern Jewish communities by encouraging their mass aliyah to Israel. One community in particular has, for the most part, remained obstinately beyond their reach, and yet it is one of the largest of all the diaspora communities: that of the Soviet Union. Despite a long-standing agreement between Soviet and Israeli leaders to direct the low-level emigration that was allowed, to Israel, the Zionist

S a m o v a r best friends...

movement was almost beginning to lose patience with and interest in Soviet Jews. Suddenly, in the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, popular antisemitic forces have come out menacingly into the open; the Soviet leadership has been unwilling to tackle it head on; meanwhile, emigration laws have been relaxed and Israel has been able to offer its instant solution – a "humanitarian" relief programme that consists of a population transfer of Soviet Jews to Israel. Israeli leaders shamelessly proclaim the humanity of this modern-day "ingathering of the exiles". At the same time they note that the USA has closed its doors to Jewish refugees while glossing over the fact that Israel has ceaselessly lobbied the USA to take such action for years. Meanwhile, the Americans, for their own reactionary reasons, are only too happy to oblige. So, in the Soviet case, the Israeli government is the active agency in realising what Jewish historiographers have assured us is inevitable – the dissolution of the diaspora in favour of joining and building the Jewish nation state.

Here in Britain the Joint Israeli Appeal, in its series of page-length adverts in the *Jewish Chronicle*, is busy trying to convince the British Jewish public that there will not and can not be any future for Jews in the USSR. Meanwhile, the *Jewish Chronicle*, so adept at playing down any hint of right-wing antisemitic attacks in Britain, is suddenly providing first-rate coverage of antisemitic incidents ... in the USSR.

Yet can a community that has survived pogroms, revolutions, world wars, and thorough and widespread repression, simply be written off?

An evocative, well-researched

and excellently presented exhibition – *A Century of Ambivalence* – is the centrepiece of a programme of events that sets out to make sense of the relationship of Jews to Russian society in the last 100 years. The exhibition faithfully reflects the spirit of its title, giving as much attention to the constant process of involvement and renewal of Soviet Jewry as to its exclusion and bitter repression. The same cannot unfortunately be said for other events in the programme. A narrator at the "Voice of Jewish Russia" concert that preceded the exhibition told the audience, in a voice that oozed cynicism and schmaltz, that the history of Russia's Jews in the last 200 years could be summed up "in just three words ... persecution, pogroms and purges". Sadly, the music did not go beyond this limited framework except for five minutes of delightful respite provided by Kapelye klezmer band.

The exhibition, on the other hand, clearly rejects the linear model that depicts the Jews as eternal victims who exchanged repression under the tsar for a new suffering under the tyranny of a revolution that was supposed to liberate them, leaving them with only a yearning for deliverance to the Jewish state as their hope. The exhibition showed that, within the limits operating at any given time, Jews were significantly creators of their own history as well as being driven by circumstances. It charts the ebbs and flows of Soviet Jewish history, the different experiences and possibilities, the contradictions and paradoxes.

A Century of Ambivalence is divided into five sections, with most prominence given to the first two – "The oppressive empire" and "The Soviet era". Its photo-

graphic emphasis is very much on people rather than objects, and we see literally hundreds of faces. These first two sections graphically convey how people lived (residentially) and how they lived (economically), with particularly interesting details about the transformation of the Jewish economy into larger collective industrial and agricultural units in the 1920s and '30s.

Jewish socialists will closely examine the accounts of the radicalisation of the community at the end of the 19th century and its developments into its many ideological and political forms. Charting their emergence, the exhibition notes: "The political differentiation of Jewish society was complete. The spectrum included religious, secular and socialist Zionism, diaspora socialism..." But the various tendencies are presented like so many washing powders in a supermarket. There is little sense of proportion: after all, Bundists and Bolsheviks far outstripped the number of Zionists; and no sense that such tendencies arose in conflict with each other over the needs of the Jewish people. The disproportionate pre-eminence given to Zionist activities might at first be dismissed as insignificant but it is given further weight through the exhibition by the consistent priority given to Hebrew in any instance where Yiddish and Hebrew are coupled. Nevertheless, all the major texts of the exhibition are in English and Yiddish.

The cultural development of Soviet Jewry through its main language of Yiddish is studied at length. It brings out the contradiction of state support for Yiddish cultural expression, especially in the 1920s, coming as a package with state control. In a later section, the exhibition tells the painful story of activists in the Soviet Jewish anti-fascist committee, who were also cultural leaders of the community, falling victim to Stalin's murderous authoritarianism.

The second half of the exhibition covers "The Holocaust", "The other Jews" and "At the crossroads". The first of these sections illustrates the depth of the Jewish contribution to the Soviet struggle against Nazism and the terrible price paid by Jews. While crediting the USSR with saving many Jewish lives, it does not shirk from exposing the deep hostility experienced by some Jewish partisans at the hands of some other non-Jewish Soviet partisans.

A major criticism that can be levelled at many presentations and books on Soviet Jewry is their exclusive coverage of Ashkenazi Jews. *A Century of Ambivalence* is an exception. Even so, its coverage of "other Jews" is far from adequate. Nearly all the photos in this section portray Jews engaging in various forms of religious ritual. This section also contains one of the rare lapses into gratuitous propaganda in the exhibition, when it claims that "the idea of the return to Zion, having its roots in religious prayer, has always been strong among these people... Georgian Jews were among the first to demand the right to emigrate to Israel." But we are told next to nothing about the everyday lives of these communities of "other Jews" and about their relationship to the Soviet people among whom they live and work. That said, it is a major weakness of the exhibition as a whole that it has few pictures depicting actual Jewish/non-Jewish relations in Soviet society. Despite the exhibition's declared purpose, almost all the photographs depict Jews in exclusively Jewish settings.

With the pace of current developments, the section dealing with the most recent historical period feels the most incomplete. The exhibition ends in 1987 and it is since then that we have seen the most powerful changes at political and cultural levels for Soviet Jews. Up to that point it describes "an authentic Jewish revival" in the last two decades "centred around Jewish national and lately

religious values". I presume this is considered authentic when compared with state-controlled Yiddish culture. But this is problematic on two counts: firstly, state control placed severe restrictions on Yiddish culture and politically weighted it in certain directions. But, within these limits, and in the period of *glasnost*, Yiddish institutions are playing a positive role in the independent renewal of Yiddish culture today. There are, of course, many



The directorate of a Jewish agricultural co-operative in the Ukraine, 1930

instances in Jewish history where culture has developed under severe constraints. It should also be noted that the works of the great Yiddish writers murdered by Stalin were rehabilitated in the 1970s and '80s in the closely-controlled organs of Yiddish such as *Sovietish Haymland*. Secondly, the religious and nationalist Jewish revival has been responsive to the patient efforts of religious and Zionist organisations who soldiered on in their task despite the repressive circumstances. You can be sure that the young western Jews they persuaded to smuggle literature into the Soviet Union were not taking histories of the Bund or tracts about religious coercion in Israel!

The final photo of the exhibition – a railway station in Riga – is small and low key but its message is telling: a family is leaving the USSR for Israel. No more ambivalence for them, until they get there perhaps.

DAVID ROSENBERG

Laugh? I could have criticised myself

Enemies
A Love
Story
dir
Paul
Mazursky
(1989)

Herman Broder is a man with a problem. A Polish Jewish refugee who has landed in America in the late nineteen forties, he has to make a living in a foreign land by amongst other things ghost-writing for a rabbi. As if he didn't have enough troubles, his personal life isn't very tidy either. He has a dependent wife, Jadwiga, a Polish non-Jewish woman who rescued him from the Nazis. He is tied to her by guilt because she saved his life. Not so much guilt, however, as to prevent him from having a mistress: vibrant, neurotic, exotic Russian Jewish Masha (spot the stereotype!). His first wife, Tamara, and his children were murdered by the Nazis. Or so he thinks. But no, into this already complicated situation comes Tamara, who is alive after all. So he's a bigamist already. Then Masha becomes pregnant and he marries her. A trigamist? Poor man; three wives and conflicting feelings towards each of them. Also, two of them don't know about the others. The plot gets more and more complicated, with Herman desperately trying

to keep the various strands of his life apart in the closed community of post-war Jewish New York where everybody knows everybody and everybody would like to know your business.

I was rather ambivalent about this film; not least because it balances rather precariously between two stools. The humour of the situation – a man trying to juggle his personal and professional lives in situations which at times come very close to farce – is set against the more sombre subtext of an exploration of characters whose lives have been shaped by the horrific events of the Second World War, and who are struggling to survive and come to terms with these experiences.

It's a very funny movie, beautifully made and extremely well acted. So why did I feel as if I should be wearing my "I am a humourless feminist" tee-shirt? The women are strong characters, survivors. They get a lot of good lines. Even the gentle Jadwiga who is characterised throughout as being one sandwich short of a picnic has had her moment of

extreme bravery. Yet at base, however admirable they are, the film is about a man's attempts, albeit with varying degrees of success, to deceive three women. It also plays to some extent on some rather unpalatable stereotypes. Surely the humour of the scene as Jadwiga scuttles through the flat screaming with superstitious terror when Tamara reappears, thinking she is a ghost, depends on the audience holding certain images of the stupidity of Polish peasants.

Herman is a weak character; unable to make up his mind, yet charming and amusing. He's still a *mensh* and within the world of the film it seems perfectly legitimate that his needs should be paramount. His behaviour is excused by the fact that none of the women on her own would meet his needs. But what of their needs? Turn it round a moment. A successful Hollywood movie about a nice Jewish girl stringing along three husbands? Somehow that seems about as unlikely as a female Chief Rabbi.

MARIAN SHAPIRO

Songs of praise

Manfred
Lemm at
Echoes of
Silence,
presented
by the
Spiro
Institute at
the
Bloomsbury
Theatre,
London, 22
April 1990

An interesting and encouraging phenomenon of recent years has been the revival of interest, particularly in Germany, of Yiddish folk song. There can be no better representative of this than the singer, Manfred Lemm. The son of a seventh generation gardener from Wuppertal, Lemm, previously a successful rock singer, has actively promoted the songs of Mordechai Gebirtig, the outstanding representative of Jewish folk song of pre-war Poland. (See Chaim Neslen's article in *Jewish Socialist* 5.) This concert provided the first opportu-

nity to see Lemm in London. The following week he was off to Cracow to take part in a festival of Yiddish song.

Lemm's approach to Gebirtig very much emphasises the folk roots of the songs. He was at his best in ballads such as *Der Zinger fun noyt* (The singer of need), where Gebirtig stresses that his words will find an echo in the courtyards of the poor rather than the mansions of the rich, and in *Avreml der marvicher* (Avreml the pickpocket). However, in the latter the essentially tragic content of the last verse was perhaps

insufficiently emphasised. It describes how Avreml, weak from beatings and constant spells in prison, feels himself close to death. *Kum Leybke tantzn* (Come and dance Leybke) almost had the audience dancing the tango in the aisles. Unfortunately, in *Undzer shtetl brent* (Our shtetl is in flames), which Gebirtig wrote to warn Jews of the danger of anti-semitism, Lemm did not succeed in conveying the feelings of premonition, urgency and the necessity for community solidarity which a successful rendition of the song demands.

At such a mainstream community event it was pleasant to note that the readings (performed by pupils from the Jewish Free School in London) which accompanied the songs mentioned that Gebirtig was a Jewish socialist and a one-time member of a Bundist organisation in Cracow. Jewish socialism in its more recent manifestation has not always commanded such a favourable welcome from the Jewish establishment, includ-

ing the Spiro Institute. But with such acceptance comes the odd jarring incongruity. At the end of Lemm's performance, the second half of a programme of which the first part had been composed mainly of readings from the writings of Janusz Korczak, the director of the orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto, the audience enthusiastically demanded an encore. I wondered which of Gebirtig's many other popular

ballads this would be and was somewhat surprised to hear him singing *Yerushalayim shel Zahav* (Jerusalem the Golden). This song, which has become a symbol of Israel's 1967 conquests, was stunningly inappropriate in the context of the cultural activity of Poland up to and during the Holocaust which the rest of the programme had evoked so memorably.

MICHAEL HEISER

No reflection

Lily Markiewicz's exhibition (or installation, to give it its correct title) advertises itself as an attempt to portray "secular Jewish identity", and in so doing to create a "modern visual language which will also speak to a range of different people". This is a laudable ambition but one which invites secular Jews to test whether they can identify with her statement as to her Jewishness, and whether they feel it puts across their secular Jewish identity to non-Jewish people.

On entering the gallery, I was first faced with a mirror with the word "JEW" engraved upon it. I looked at myself and decided that I fitted the description. The catalogue assured me that I was thereby being forced to "assess [my] position regarding cultural identity, self-identity and political alignment". (A case of "Jew be or not Jew be"? In any case, my process of assessment complete, I arrived at the central space of the installation. On its walls hung a series of mirrors, each covered with cloth as if for the seven days of mourning, a *shivva*. A large photograph captured the artist in the act of shrouding a mirror with such a white cloth. Neatly folded piles of cloths, which looked as if they had fallen out of the back of a linen cupboard, were lying on the floor.

The idea of mourning, then, is central to Markiewicz's concep-

tion of her Jewish identity. Yet, despite her advertised attempt to make a statement about secular Jewish identity, she uses symbols which are given meaning by their religious context. Indeed, the catalogue claims that she attempts to break through "restrictions imposed by religious/traditional meanings in an attempt to make a statement to both Jews and non-Jews alike". It is, however, not a statement with which, as a Jew, I can identify, nor one that I feel would say very much to non-Jews about the values of secular Jewishness. The problem, in my opinion, isn't so much the use of religious symbols, as the lack of context within which these are placed. If Markiewicz is attempting to make a statement about the *shivva*, she misses the most important part of the institution: the reaffirmation of life and the feeling of continuity as family and friends come to be with the mourners.

Markiewicz claims that her work can be contextualised within the "literary/philosophical debate on post-Holocaust artistic/poetic production". But the use of the Holocaust in this way is fraught with problems, by no means particular to Markiewicz. As secular Jews we certainly do need to understand the life of people during the period of the Holocaust and to use it to make sense of our life today. In their different ways, the work of crea-

tive talents such as Primo Levi and Yehoshua Sobol are attempting to make connections in this way. However, there is another approach to the Holocaust, which treats it as a quasi-mystical event which can only be approached on a supernatural plane. The work of Elie Wiesel falls into this category, and Lily Markiewicz's use of the Holocaust to symbolise mourning parallels its use in this way. The banality of evil (to use Hannah Arendt's phrase), the everyday lessons of how to live one's life under a murderous tyranny are lost in the generality of the approach.

The Jewish community badly needs cultural creativity which attempts to put across to non-Jews what it means to be a secular Jew. But such creativity would have to give an insight into Jewish humour as well as sadness; a sense of cultural continuity, the use of our culture to illustrate how Jews are a minority and have concerns and experiences in common with other minorities. The paintings of Chagall, for instance, can give such a glimpse of an entire community. But as I left the gallery I thought again of what the reaction of a non-Jewish person would be. "I don't celebrate Christmas..." I thought. But the exhibition doesn't leave me with any clear idea of what she does celebrate.

MICHAEL HEISER

I don't
celebrate
Christmas
Exhibition
by
Lily
Markiewicz
at
Camerawork,
London E2
May 1990

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.
- We draw on our immigrant experience and anti-racist history in order to challenge antisemitism, racism, sexism and fascism today. We support the rights of, and mobilise solidarity with, all oppressed groups.
- 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.
- We support a socialist solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict based on an end to the occupation and recognition of national rights and self-determination, including statehood, of the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples.

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