

# JEWISH SOCIALIST

The magazine of the Jewish Socialists' Group

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# Editorial

As we go to press, America is continuing its drive towards war in the Gulf with the British government willingly in tow. The threat looms of a devastating war in which there will be losers all round.

Saddam Hussein poses under the banner of pan-Arab unity, but his vision of unity is through murderous coercion, not consent. He may temporarily win support among abandoned classes suffering occupation and hardship in the Middle East imposed ultimately by imperialism, but he will not be their liberator. When the Iraqi Kurds needed "bread, peace and land", he gassed them, wiping them out in their thousands.

Bush and Thatcher hold up the banner of "freedom" and "democracy" in a new world order emerging after the collapse of the Eastern bloc. But their real concerns are the flow and price of oil and the satisfaction of America's longstanding aim to establish a permanent presence in the Gulf. They have been growing impatient with their unreliable local policemen, particularly Yitzhak Shamir. And now Saddam Hussein has given them the chance they've been waiting for to move their forces in. Despite the war rhetoric, the USA may eventually settle for a peace compromise but, if it does, it will try to keep as much of its military hardware and personnel in the area.

Thatcher sees the Gulf crisis as a chance to revive her party's fortunes by picking up the votes of those who still admire gunboat diplomacy. A Labour Party front bench that echoes her every step will not stem this tide. Ironically, though, Thatcher is hampered by the very racism she seeks to mobilise. British nationalists are less enthusiastic about defending Kuwaitis than about defending their white "kith and kin" in the Malvinas.

But socialists cannot rely on the whims of racists and must now mobilise the strongest and broadest coalition against the war drive and in favour of self-determination for all the peoples of the Middle East, free from imperialism and local tyrannies.

Jewish socialists cannot ignore the fall-out from the Gulf crisis on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The apparent support for Saddam Hussein among Palestinians both at grassroots and political leadership levels has generated a crisis within the Israeli peace movement. Nurtured largely on the false idea that the prime reason for opposing the occupation was for its effect on Israel's moral health, and only secondly for its effects on the people occupied, important sections of the peace movement have been unable to withstand the latest shift

in Palestinian political positions and have suspended the dialogue. Unlike Israeli peace campaigner Boaz Evron, they fail to acknowledge that the demand for a Palestinian state, for self-determination, is to correct a continuing injustice and is not to be treated as a prize for good behaviour.

The damage to Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and co-operation is considerable, but should not be overestimated. The PLO's position, as their London representative, Afif Safieh, states (page 10), is more complex than the western media have characterised it, and the more politically sophisticated elements in the Israeli peace camp are maintaining the dialogue and raising the necessity for a solution to their conflict while international eyes are focused on the Middle East. They justifiably argue that had there been serious moves towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Saddam Hussein's populist but empty rhetoric would have fallen largely on deaf ears.

The responses to the Gulf crisis, though, highlight a more general issue for socialists which seems increasingly clouded with confusion – that the defence of a principle is not obviated by questionable positions taken up around that principle. Shamir's policies do not remove the Israeli people's rights to self-determination. Likewise we defend Palestinian rights irrespective of the positions taken by their leadership, though we will express our view on these positions. Opposing American imperialism does not mean we should give credence to Saddam Hussein's brand of "anti-imperialism". Defending the Iraqi people from American geopolitical designs does not require of us that we support Saddam Hussein. Indeed, our socialist principles of freedom, equality and self-determination make us bitter opponents of Ba'athism. But we do not look to western oil interests to defeat him and liberate the Iraqi people and other peoples threatened by Iraqi expansionism.

A parallel but related discussion, about religion and progressive politics, runs through this issue of *Jewish Socialist*. As Julia Bard argues (page 20), supporting the physical safety and rights to belief of religious minorities does not mean that we should suspend judgment of their reactionary and repressive ideas and practices. On the contrary. We cannot leave such issues for the socialist "world to come". We must raise them and be prepared for the challenge they pose here and now if the future is going to bring real freedom and equality.

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## Call for action

The months since Carpentras have shown that the British Jewish community has the commitment to fight racism but still has far to go in terms of creating organisations with the capacity to do so.

A new group, Jewish Action (JA), has been set up to counter the propaganda and attacks of the far right on the Jewish community. JA is an initiative launched by members of groups as diverse as Reform Synagogue Youth and the Jewish Socialists' Group. It has been meeting since the early summer.

The group is committed to challenging antisemitism, racism and fascism on as broad a front as possible. It hopes to be able to counter far right propaganda on a national as well as a local level. To

achieve this long-term aim it is currently attempting to forge links with other communities under attack while building support within the Jewish community itself.

The group has attracted considerable media attention in recent weeks in conjunction with the general interest the press is now taking in antisemitism. However, this interest has shifted from usefully exposing antisemitic attacks to sensationalism about "vigilante" groups and now to a fascination with conflicts inside the Jewish community. As a result, Jewish Action has toned down its current links with the press.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has also proved problematic. JA believes that the Middle East conflict should

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Cover photos: War Resisters International and Evelien Gans



not be a stumbling block to unity against the far right, but the common confusion of anti-Zionism and antisemitism remains a major obstacle to creating an effective, broad and coherent force to combat

racism and fascism here in Britain.

If you want to support and be part of Jewish Action, write to them at: Box 23, Centreprise, 136 Kingsland Road, Hackney, London E8 2NS.

ADAM LENT

## Low marks for Hackney

The abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) earlier this year gave the Borough of Hackney's new Directorate of Education responsibility for two Jewish voluntary-aided primary schools: Avigdor and Simon Marks. In May 1990 Hackney, which has many Jewish voters, re-elected a Labour council. Shortly afterwards the Directorate of Education, noting staff vacancies at Simon Marks, placed advertisements in the press to recruit teachers.

As one of the new education authorities in inner London, Hackney has more than its share of daunting challenges. Teachers' pay is miserable, and the government's repeatedly demonstrated hostility towards the teaching profession, along with the abolition of ILEA, have led to an exodus of teachers pursuing different careers. Many of the newly-qualified decide

against teaching and never enter a classroom at all. As has been highlighted in the media, Hackney and other boroughs have had such difficulties in finding teachers in the United Kingdom that they have had to look overseas. For instance, a number of Dutch teachers are now working in Hackney's schools.

The situation for Hackney's two Jewish voluntary-aided schools has been made all the more difficult by the proclaimed resistance of Simon Marks School to the borough's equal opportunities policy. No sooner had the job advertisements appeared than an outburst was heard from Simon Marks itself and from the Zionist Education Federation (ZEF), which is responsible for religious education in the two schools. The offending portion of the equal opportunities statement in the adverts said that Hackney welcomed applications from lesbians and gay men (alongside members of other specified minorities). The ZEF's Nathan Rubin protested against the



inclusion of this statement of opposition to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Simon Marks head teacher Leila Lazarus echoed his indignation. It was suggested that Hackney's Directorate of Education should have known that a Jewish school could never agree to express a willingness to consider gay and lesbian job applicants. Exclusion of lesbians and gay men, it appeared, had been elevated to the status of a *mitzva* (good deed).

Hackney's policy of prohibiting discrimination in employment on grounds of sexual orientation is long-standing. ILEA's policy, incidentally, was identical. Furthermore, it must be assumed on the basis of the May council election that the borough's equal opportunities stance is accepted as reasonable and just by the majority of Hackney voters. However, the Director of Education, Gus John, took a different view. Rather than pointing out that the non-discrimination pledge reflected a decision made by a democratically-elected council and reminding Simon Marks that it was financed by Hackney voters' poll tax payments, he apologised to the school. He also indicated that future job advertisements relating to Simon Marks (and presumably Avigdor as well) would omit reference to Hackney's non-discrimination commitment in the area of sexual orientation. Indeed, advertisements which have appeared since merely carry the bland statement "Hackney is an equal opportunities employer".

This development, though clearly offensive to Hackney's

lesbians and gay men, has above all incensed those Jews – "irrespective of sexual orientation" – who take issue with the tendency of a handful of Orthodox and Zionist officials to present their own gross bigotry and obscurantism as the voice of Hackney's Jews. Members of the Hackney Jewish Socialists' Group and the Hackney Alternative Jewish Alliance have been active in protesting to the education officials involved. Several Jewish residents, including parents with children at Simon Marks, have written to Nathan Rubin, Leila Lazarus and Gus John to express their dismay, stressing that discrimination against lesbian and gay job applicants is unjust and objectionable and in no sense commanded by Jewish ethics. A mother with two children at Simon Marks received no reply from Mrs Lazarus at all. Another Jewish woman in the borough, likewise a mother, received a curt rejoinder questioning her right to speak as a Jew. A single man, who had written to point out that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation amounted to injustice and should be opposed as such by those who see themselves as the guardians of Jewish morality, was treated to a tart accusation of libel by Mrs Lazarus. Nathan Rubin and Gus John have remained silent. Jews in Hackney are therefore left to conclude that the borough's Directorate of Education is now committed to discriminating against lesbian and gay applicants when recruiting teachers for Hackney's two Jewish schools.

RAPHAEL GRUNFELD

## Boardbrains

Forty-five gravestones attacked at Willesden Jewish cemetery in north-west London, followed by antisemitic daubings on two other local targets in August, have finally convinced Lionel Kopelowitz, president of the Board of Deputies, that there is currently an antisemitic campaign in Britain. Under pressure from the grassroots of the community, Kopelowitz and other leading Board representatives visited the Home Secretary recently to voice the community's concern.

But if Kopelowitz has belatedly grasped the seriousness of the situation, his yes man, Hayim Pinner, continues to display the most shallow understanding of the nature of the problem Jews are facing. On the day that freshly-painted swastikas were being scrubbed off Dollis Hill Synagogue, and

while those attacking Jews on the streets of Hackney were leaving behind hideous leaflets proclaiming: "The Holocaust was a hoax. Let's make it real," signed by "White Working Class Nationalists", Pinner ventured the Board's first substantial statement on the attacks in a feature-length article for the London Evening Standard (17 August).

In it he accuses those who focus their attention on the extreme right of suffering from "tunnel vision". He states that the threat to Jews from "the Left and Muslim fundamentalists is potentially greater than that from neo-Nazis". That may seem true seen through the eyes of the Israeli army of occupation in Gaza, but it is patently not the case for the Jews in Britain. With his own brand of "tunnel vision", Pinner explains that "there is a thin line dividing anti-Zionism from antisemitism". In practice Pinner & Co never

seem to see any dividing line at all between them and are busy collapsing the much-needed challenge to antisemitism here and now into a struggle to defend the "good" name of Zionism.

Meanwhile, the far right are stepping up their attacks on Muslims as well as Jews, and the Board's "enemies" on the Left are playing a major role in mobilising public protests against recent antisemitic and racist attacks. As we go to press there is news of a further fascist outrage at Failsworth cemetery in Oldham, the second recent major attack on the Manchester area. Manchester Jewish Socialist Group are building for a broad-based demonstration of public opposition to antisemitic attacks on Sunday 25 November. For further details contact: Manchester Jewish Socialists (see listings, page 31).

DAVID ROSENBERG

Warshawski is now serving the sentence in Ma'asiyahu prison.

Whilst the Centre's other work, providing typesetting services to Palestinian women and student groups, was not

proven as rendering services to "illegal organisations", the booklet itself was attributed to the banned PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). Although the judges stated that Michel Warshawski did not know this, he was convicted of "shutting his eyes". The judges defined this as "wilful avoidance of investigating and scrutinising the nature of things, where there may be a suspicion that they may be prohibited".

Michel Warshawski did not shut his eyes. He openly supported the production of the book as legitimate and useful. He angered the judges when he refused to identify the Palestinian activist who had brought the booklet for typesetting, claiming to draw on the lessons of his father's resistance to the Nazis, "moral principles" learnt in his upbringing in an Orthodox Jewish family, and his present view as a revolutionary socialist.

Even the reduced sentence of eight months is a very heavy penalty for typesetting a booklet on how to resist interrogation and torture. Why

was he treated so harshly?

This punishment is an exemplary deterrent to Israeli peace activists who act in open co-operation with the Palestinians. This trend of extending the use of the Prevention of Terror Ordinances (1945/48) from the Occupied Territories, where they are used all the time against Palestinians, to use against Israelis is increasing. It is the Israeli state's response to the tentative but committed fabric of new relations that has emerged during the Intifada between a minority of Israelis and Palestinians. This response, to prevent the minority growing into any broad movement, includes the imprisonment of popular broadcaster Abie Nathan for openly meeting Yasser Arafat. These contacts between Israelis and members of Palestinian organisations are said to "de-demonise the enemy".

On several occasions in the trial the judges referred to Michel Warshawski's stance as being "on the border" between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Warshawski adopted this description, being on the border, as a definite decision to remain among his people but as close as possible to the other. He also asserted that he was on the border in another sense: to defend and enlarge democratic space in Israel rather than staying in the mainstream of Israeli society and allowing democratic rights to be limited. "Only on the border of the law can we widen our

rights and examine our freedom," he argued.

This judgment is intended to warn off Israeli peace activists from solidarity with the Palestinians. It must be contested.

Write to Michel Warshawski in prison: PO Box 13, Camp Ma'asiyahu, Israel.

The AIC produces News from Within, available from AIC, PO Box 24278, Jerusalem, Israel. SIMON LYNN



## Letters from a Woman in Black

Spike Pittsberg, an activist in the Israeli peace group, Women in Black, writes to Jewish Socialist

17 July 1990

Tel Aviv is going crazy. There is just a non-stop party here. Festivals/shows/parties/markets/celebrations – it is just like the worse it gets here, the more people frantically bury their heads in the sand. It is quite insane.

The Women in Black vigils are being attacked. The right-wing parties took a decision to try to wipe us off the face of the earth. Thiya, Tsomet and Moleket have organised their youth movements to counterdemonstrate at all our vigils. So we have to cope with about 40 wretched violent teenage boys who spit on us, insult us, push us into traffic, even beat us with their holy Israeli flags. Since Women in Black long ago took a national decision not to respond to provocation, they can just do whatever they want. It is frightening, humiliating, horrid. They've already moved us several metres back from our place. In Jerusalem and Haifa, Kach also joins in and the women have suffered terrible violence. The Jerusalem women were forced to the other side of the street, even. Of course we've been demonstrating for 30 months and once school summer vacation is over, we'll still be here and will have won in the end. But it is hard to control my temper. What is great is that women have really responded, and our numbers grow weekly...

The housing crisis is the front page story here. You've probably heard about the spontaneous and spreading "tent city" movement of homeless Israelis. It's the first time in decades that people are trying to do something for themselves (would that they would move their asses for someone else's welfare...), and although all the politicians are rushing to be their biggest

supporters, some of the tenters are left wing (including support from the Kibbutz Artzi movement). Arik Sharon has emergency housing powers, and the local Arabs are organising to try to protect their few remaining lands from being grabbed by him. The government have lowered building regulations and eliminated the procedure (for him) for licences. It is very frightening...

6 August 1990

Something happened today. Two Jewish teenage boys went missing two days ago. They were found, quite brutally murdered, in a valley bordering Jerusalem, apparently killed by Palestinians who picked them up while they were hitchhiking.

Immediately Jerusalem and the adjoining areas of the West Bank were flooded by mobs of vigilante Jews who created barricades and trapped all the Palestinian workers who were rushing home in terror once they heard the news. They and their cars were smashed to bits. This afternoon we saw a TV newsclip showing one of these incidents, in which a Palestinian middle-aged man and woman were trapped within one of these vigilante-created dead ends. It was horrifying.

Tonight the newscaster was interviewing a municipal authority and – in contrast to his usual unflappable cool and objectivity – said, "It is frightening on the streets of Jerusalem. Huge gangs running around carrying building stones and other weapons, stopping cars at random to check if they're Jews or Arabs, and the police helpless in the face of their violence." I



Shut up

Michel Warshawski, director of the Joint Palestinian/Israeli Alternative Information Centre (AIC) based in West Jerusalem, was sentenced to 20 months in prison on 9 November 1989, after a long trial at

the Jerusalem District Court. The AIC was fined \$5,000. This conviction was for allowing a book to be typeset at the Centre that detailed the interrogation methods of the Shabak (Israeli security

services) and gave advice on how to remain steadfast before them. On appeal on 28 June 1990 at the High Court, the sentence was reduced to eight months, though the fine was upheld. Michel

Warshawski is now serving the sentence in Ma'asiyahu prison.

Whilst the Centre's other work, providing typesetting services to Palestinian women and student groups, was not



shudder to think what's going to happen to us at Women in Black this Friday.

Our discussions are all of chemical warfare... We have never felt a threat so imminent. The army hasn't been mobilised yet. But things change from hour to hour. What do we do? It seems impossible to wait till mobilisation and then wrap up our lives within days or less.

I remember the war in Lebanon so well. Although that was not fought on Israeli soil, I'll never forget how war forces a society into totally male constructs. How completely men and their disgusting brutality determine the tone and content of all of our lives, so absolutely. And the terrible conflicts: worrying about all our friends/relatives/students who are, of course, soldiers. Watching the roll-call of the dead each night on the news. Demonstrating against the war at the same time, being the local focus of all the hate and hysteria. Being completely marginal because of our politics – the knife in the back of the nation...

I wonder why the fuck I'm still here. Then I think about what it would be like to be abroad if war comes down here. The only thing worse than hearing the nightly roll-call of dead Israeli soldiers would be not hearing it. Not knowing. And if the war actually got played out here in our cities... How could I bear not knowing, daily, hourly...

20 August 1990

This week's Women in Black went well. We got a permit from the police and they were also present. The right-wingers went down the streets to harass the boys of Yesh G'vul (refuseniks who won't serve in the territories) who last week asked us for (and received) permission to do a weekly demo about a half kilometre away. So it was like old times.

Then on Saturday we had a Women in Black meeting to discuss the political developments. Two (out of 25 vigils) groups are not demonstrating, supposedly because of the position of the

PLO vis-à-vis Iraq. Of course their own internal politics are central: they are both vigils from Kibbutz Artzi, and Mapam took a witheringly critical position around the PLO.

Liberals (Mapam, Ratz, etc) are sulking and hurt. They thought they were friends with the Palestinians; they thought they were "just like us". Now they are passing out judgements and grades. It's as if the Palestinians only deserve our attention and support if they act right (ie, like we want them to). In the end, most of them say that they continue to oppose the opposition, but only because it's bad for the Jews.

Our position in Tel Aviv Women in Black is that the occupation of Palestine is wrong, period. Irrespective of the politics of the Palestinians. And that the PLO, as the voice of Palestine, is the body we must negotiate with, again irrespective of their position on this or that issue. In short, nothing has changed for Women in Black. (This is not, after all, the only point of disagreement we have ever had with the PLO, to say the least)...

As always, traditional political positions in the Middle East are being turned upside down and inside out. For example, all those racists in Israel whose position has been that Jordan is Palestine are now in trouble. After all, it is the Palestinians in Jordan who are signing up as volunteers for the welcoming troops when Saddam invades Jordan. So to turn Jordan into Palestine would mean to invite Iraq to our longest border! And this capitulation of Saddam to all of Iran's conditions? Simply amazing. One wonders how the Iraqis don't choke him...

A worrying development is that a number of women in Women in Black are getting very threatening phone calls from the Kach movement. The calls are frequent, promising to burn their doos/apartments, to kill the women, to kill their children, etc. The police are going to put traces on the phones, but meanwhile it is rather nerve-wracking. And now Kach have put out a widely-distributed leaflet with seven names/addresses/phones of "traitors to the nation: Women in Black leaders who urge our boys to refuse service in the army". That's scary.

## Culture and Resistance



Jewish socialism received one of the greatest boosts for years when more than 500 people took part in a special event at Hackney, east London, organised by the new Hackney branch of the Jewish Socialists' Group. The East Enders – and the national group overall – may gain large numbers of new members, for one in five of those who attended left their names and addresses to be kept informed about future initiatives.

The 11-hour event was billed to promote Jewish culture and resistance, and the barometer of

success for any such venture – animated discussion between different groups – registered a great popular response. There were other measures of success, including its broad appeal which

- brought people from every age group flocking to the venue, William Patten primary school in Stoke Newington
- attracted many gentiles as well as Jews
- drew Londoners from all parts of the capital
- maintained a steady flow of arrivals during the day.

It was fitting that, given the JSG's broad commitment to fighting racism, the event was launched by local black mayor, Shuja Sheikh. And, in the opening ceremony, tribute was paid to former Hackney teacher, Denis Rosen, whose efforts for race equality ended in death, with suspicion pointed at South African security forces.

Several workshops tackled issues raised by the past

● Veteran JSG activist, Majer Bogdanski, seen on television a few days earlier in a documentary on Yiddish, recalled the halcyon period which fuelled Jewish socialism in the Bund.

● The holocaust was examined in Ralph Levinson's talk on writer Primo Levi who, like childcare expert Bruno Bettelheim a survivor from Auschwitz, took his life in his twilight years.

● Pam Schweizer told how elderly people are encouraged to remember their personal histories with the Age Exchange Theatre.

● Older women from Hackney celebrated their lives in a new drama, "Side by Side", directed by the day's compère, Norma Cohen.

● The arts featured, too, in screenings of films on Jewish women, made by Rosalind Haber and Ruth Novoczek.

● In another workshop, led by James Baaden, lesbians and gay men swapped their experiences in the Jewish community.

Political issues brought the largest gatherings

● Immigration controls were explored by Steve Cohen in a look at original restrictions on Jewish refugees entering this country, and threats to mobility for black people in a barrier-free Europe.

● Concern was voiced about rising contemporary fascism, in a comparison with its ugly spectre in the 1930s.

● Reform or revolution were argued out in another group.

● Israel was the focus for a workshop and major debates. Two set-piece dialogues were the best-supported parts of the event. Both were so crowded, some people had to stand. In the first, solidarity with the Palestinians came from socialist-Zionist Mapam spokesperson, Clive Trouberman, Mike Heiser representing the International Jewish Peace Union, and Nira Yuval-Davis from Women in Black, who have held a weekly vigil outside the London offices of the Israeli airline El Al.

Shirley Murgraff, from the floor, questioned criticism levelled against Zionists at a Jewish gathering. She claimed there was no Arab equivalent to the JSG. Mike Heiser said the Palestine Liberation Organisation had similarities to the International Jewish Peace Union. He felt the Israeli troubles could not be left out of such an event.

A number of speakers called for a democratic, secular state in the region. Nira Yuval-Davis backed the sentiment but said this ideal was not on the present agenda. With fundamentalism spreading, there was an urgent need for peace. She insisted that Women in Black would continue their demonstrations, despite racist and sexual abuse from passers-by.

The other showpiece debate posed different political strategies for Jewish socialists. This involved John Rose, from the Socialist

Workers' Party, Jewish Socialists' Group national secretary Julia Bard, and Shirley Murgraff of Mapam.

Julia Bard rejected the Jewish establishment belief that its community should unite on Zionism, arguing that Jewish communities had always been pluralistic and saying that alliances should be forged with other groups.

Shirley Murgraff condemned anti-Zionism from leftists who, she claimed, ignored Jewish history. She favoured a Palestinian state, but exclaimed: "I'm sick and tired of Jews having to be better than anybody else."

John Rose said Israel was a "catastrophe". He added: "You can't have one millimetre of Zionism and call yourself a socialist." His Jewishness emerged, he said, when he was faced with antisemitism.

Political, cultural and historical exhibitions decorated the school, including a room of paintings, drawings and photographs.

Amid growing antisemitism in Britain – not least towards the ultra-orthodox community living in Hackney – hope for a brighter future was symbolised by children's activities. Toddlers made decorations for the Hackney JSG banner, under guidance from Monica Strauss.

Links between generations were further strengthened through a Yiddish song workshop for youngsters, given by Chaim Nesien, Mike Heiser and David Rosenberg, from the band Hemshekh (continuity).

The busy creche was supplemented by a book-bus and inflatable, both well used throughout the day.

There was rhyme from poet Mike Rosen, and rhythm from folk artist Leon Rosselson.

Eve Corrin led Israeli dancing, and Gabriel Ellenberg ran a

musical session for under-fives.

Paul Burrows showed how to produce musical instruments.

Sign language was taught by Issy Schisselman.

Understanding about disability was also increased in tuition on braille from Richard Fleser.

Marxist conjuror Ian Saville showed that children's entertainment could avoid violence and sexism like Punch and Judy.



A video – "An American Tail" – described Jewish migration from the Soviet Union to America. Some parents might have felt this was ironic, since the United States has now mostly barred Jews from the USSR, leaving them with Israel as their only option, whether or not they choose to go there.

Hackney JSG presented Red Curtains, a musical play written by Brian Simons, with music from Hemshekh.

In the evening there was poetry from Berta Freistadt, Gerda Mayer and Jeremy Silver. The event ended with dancing to music from the Middle East Enders and the Big Red Band.

PAUL COLLINS

## Poorly observed

Black American populist Louis Farrakhan is back in the news here with a three-page feature by Russell Warren Howe in the Observer Magazine (7 September) about the man and his movement – the Nation of Islam.

Readers of Jewish Socialist will recall our exposé of Farrakhan's antisemitic public statements (JS5) and dangerous echoing of his views

among his supporters here (JS8) and in the USA (JS14). It is a pity that Mr Howe did not check these sources before making the claim that Farrakhan's movement has won "the enmity of Jews" because of its "natural Muslim support for Palestine".

For a taste of the real reason why Jews oppose Farrakhan, take his speech at the Washington Convention Centre in 1985: "I'm not backing

down from the Jews because I know their wickedness. I'm not separating just Zionists out because the Zionists are the outgrowth of Jewish transgression."

The Palestinians don't need support from antisemites, neither do the many Jews who have genuinely voiced support for a Palestinian state and against Israeli repression in the Occupied Territories. Still, Louis Farrakhan's stand on Jewish matters and on black separatism has won him some plaudits in Britain – in the columns of National Front News!

DAVID ROSENBERG



## Dutch courage שלהומו

On a sunny morning in Amsterdam 40 Jews are sitting in a circle. They are asked to perform a number of actions. Those who are still living in the country in which all four of their grandparents were born are asked to move to one corner. Those who are living in the country of birth of three of their grandparents are asked to move to another corner. The same process is then applied to those with two and with one grandparent in this position. The effect was confusing. Forty people wandered around the room trying to work out in which corner they belonged.

The three of us were participating in the closing workshops of the second European Conference of Lesbian and Gay Jews. As we wandered around the room the significance of the exercise became clearer. Forty people, all with very different personal histories, had chosen to identify themselves as Jews and

as lesbian and gay Jews. We shared a history of displacement. The workshop was designed to look at the position of second generation Jews born after the war. It was one of the most moving events in a weekend of exhilarating activities.

At the end of April, 112 people from 12 countries met at the COC (the Amsterdam Lesbian and Gay Centre) for five days of workshops, ceremonies and social activities. Amsterdam is the gay capital of Europe and a city with deep Jewish connections. The conference centre was a short walk from the Homomonument – the memorial to the lesbians and gay men persecuted by the Nazis – and very near to the Anne Frank House. The monument, consisting of three marble pink triangles in part a memorial to the past but also makes a statement for the present and future. This was symbolised by its differing functions over the week-

end. On the Saturday night it was a meeting place for the recital of *Kaddish* (memorial prayer); on the Monday morning it was literally the platform for the celebration of lesbian and gay culture on the occasion of the Dutch queen's birthday!

The conference was organised with both humour and efficiency by the Dutch lesbian and gay Jewish group, *Sjalhomo*. The sense of belonging and acceptance in the city was reflected by the welcoming speeches made at the Homomonument by the director of the COC and the Minister for Culture.

The weekend brought together 112 people whose stories were moving, distressing, riveting and uplifting. We had travelled from the *yeshivas* of Antwerp, the *shmatte* shops of Paris, the leather bars of Berlin and the suburbs of London, from places where being gay was easier than being Jewish and

where being Jewish was easier than being gay.

The stories told by the Hungarian participants and the one Russian were particularly memorable as all had experienced high levels of homophobia and anti-semitism.

The workshops covered a huge variety of topics: coming out and your family; having a non-Jewish lover; lesbian daughters of the Holocaust; building a European lesbian and gay community; being alone and happy; Judaism and homosexuality; relationships; setting up a help line, and much more.

On the Saturday night the best klezmer band in Europe played the wildest, most uplifting music, while a huge number of Jewish lesbians and gays joined together and danced. The jubilant hours on the dance floor, as the music got faster and faster, and the dancing wilder and wilder, symbolised a wholeness within ourselves that many of us had never experienced before but will remain with us.

ROSALIND HABER,  
DANIEL MONK and  
PAUL LINCOLN

## Lines of communication

More than two years after its formation, the Jewish Lesbian & Gay Helpline flourishes – and remains the only organisation of its type. During the same period, the Jewish gay/lesbian scene in the UK has expanded and diversified markedly. Where once there was only the Jewish Gay Group (the world's oldest Jewish gay or lesbian organisation, founded in 1972), since renamed the Jewish Gay & Lesbian Group, there are now four more organisations – the Helpline itself, a northern (Manchester-based) Jewish Gay & Lesbian Group, Hineinu (for young gay and lesbian Jews), and Beit Kial Yisrael, a more broadly-based London synagogue congregation in which lesbians and gay men are

explicitly made welcome and are strongly represented.

At the international level, the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organisations has increased its membership to over 30. Many of the newer groups in the WGLJO are in Europe and Canada, thus helping to dilute the federation's once all-American flavour. However, the Helpline remains the only member of the WGLJO which was specifically established as a service organisation; the others can be categorised, generally speaking, either as synagogue congregations or as political/social groups.

The Helpline is a collective of about 20 women and men who staff a phoneline on two evenings a week, based in

central London. The number of callers per evening is very variable, but the genders seem to be more or less equally represented. On the other hand, there are more men than women in the Helpline collective at present, so the project is particularly keen to hear from women interested in volunteering.

There is a carefully-structured process of recruitment, training and induction for volunteers who, when finally ratified, are expected to make a commitment to regular sessions on the line. Training on specialised issues for all volunteers continues throughout the year: AIDS/HIV has, for instance, been recognised by the Helpline as an area where it can play a vital role as a resource within

the Jewish community, and the project is currently looking to bodies such as the London Boroughs Grants Scheme to support its work in this field. At the same time, should funding be forthcoming, the Helpline hopes to organise a more general information-sharing event for a range of people in caring professions and voluntary projects, the purpose of which will be to look at the particular needs and concerns of Jewish lesbians and gay men. As such, this would be the first event of its kind; and it likewise again serves to highlight the role of the Helpline as a service provider. In the same way, the Helpline, having realised that it seems to be here to stay, is seeking to develop its links with other phonelines and independent advice agencies.

For Helpline details see *Fifth Column Listings*, page 31.

## DYBBUK'S DIARY

### A Winter's tale

Mr Leslie Winters of the Brent Conservatives is solicitous for the welfare of the Jewish community. Following the Nazi swastika-daubings on Willesden cemetery, Dollis Hill shul and the memorial to concentration camp victims, he commented that it was "distasteful and disgraceful" that the Socialist Workers' Party was involved in the demonstration against the Nazis.

I hear the SWP did a lot to raise the issue in local trade unions as well as marching themselves. Many local Jews, including refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria, might be inclined to welcome solidarity from anywhere – even the Conservative Party. It's very good of Mr Winters to be concerned lest we fall in with bad company.

The *Jewish Chronicle* (31 August 1990) says "Mr Winters will accompany Brent North MP, Rhodes Boyson, to the annual service at Gladstone Park memorial..." run by the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen (AJEX). It also quotes him as supporting "greater police pursuit" of racist criminals, and use of the law to deal with antisemitic literature. Perhaps he'll have a word with Tory MP Rhodes Boyson, who is leading a campaign to abolish race relations legislation.

### Anti-Agatha

Apropos the Agatha Christie anniversary hype, someone was saying what a help her works were to the would-be social historian: chronicling stuff like what servants were kept, and where you could buy a handy bottle of strychnine for household emergencies.

This won't spoil my enjoyment of Miss Marples videos, ideal on long-distance motorway coaches. I've slept blissfully from Stockport to St John's Wood right through Liz Taylor in *The Mirror Cracked*.

But before the formula whodunits and preposterous Poirot, Ms Christie was penning some jolly good yarns which do tell us about her times, and class. In *The Secret Adversary* (1920), Tommy and Tuppence Beresford confront a conspiracy involving Bolsheviks, Sinn Féiners and Germans. The deadly danger they face is that a secret treaty to which Britain is party will be revealed and used by the Labour Party and trade unions to bring down the government through a general strike and civil disorder.

What evil the treaty might contain to provoke such unrest we're not told. Clearly it's assumed we must side with those keeping such secrets from the

public. But a few years later, another kind of secret must be uncovered: "...there's a further rumour to the effect that they've found oil in Herzslovakia... people are getting ready to be interested in that unimportant little country". "What sort of people?" "Hebraic people. Yellow-faced financiers in City offices."

A Herman Isaacstein is introduced as representative of the syndicate. "The all-British syndicate?" asks the Marquis of Caterham. "Curious names these people have." Later someone is to be loaned "a million or so" to grant a concession "to Mr Key Hermanstein & Co" (*The Secret of Chimneys*, 1925).

Agatha Christie's biographers haven't so far seen anything to comment on in her antisemitism. But then it was par for the course in the popular fiction of the time, so maybe Agatha, however unusual in other respects, was simply giving her publishers what they expected.

### Nice friends

At least someone speaks highly of our Jewish community leaders. A Mr Mark Burdman praises the way Dr Kopelowitz, President of the Board of Deputies, pooh-poohed reports of any antisemitic campaign in Britain after the Edmonton cemetery desecration last May. Writing in *European Intelligence Review*, Burdman quotes approvingly, and at length, from the *Jewish Chronicle's* editorial on 1 June, playing down the swastika-daubing and warning ominously against "those who use the spectre of rampant antisemitism to further their own purposes".

Burdman is in no doubt that this means Gerry Gable and his magazine, *Searchlight*, which, he claims, is a "KGB disinformation conduit" and "has operational links" to the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League in the United States! He praises the Board of Deputies, together with the House of Lords (for its vote against bringing Nazi murderers to justice), as having "dealt a blow to two leading agencies of the east-west global condominium, the Anti-Defamation League and the US Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations".

*European Intelligence Review* has more than just "operational links" to one Lyndon LaRouche Jr, jailed a couple of years ago for fraud, so understandably broyges with the US Justice Department. Known in his student "leftie" days as Lyn Marcus, LaRouche was rumbled by most of the US Left some 20 years ago when his violent rhetoric gave way to

organised violence against other groups.

Reappearing as an open (and apparently well-funded) right-winger, he produced a conspiracy theory which featured liberal Americans, the Queen, and various Jewish organisations in a plot to spread homosexuality, drugs and communism, in order to attain world domination. In California, the LaRouchites campaigned for gays to be put in camps. In Sweden, one of his followers was arrested as a suspect for the murder of Olof Palme.

I know poor old Dr Kopelowitz can't be blamed for the way these people have dragged in his name (along with those of Hailsham and Hartley Shawcross, who deserve it). But if I was on the Board of Deputies or had written that editorial in the *Jewish Chronicle*, I'd feel a bit uneasy at getting praise from such quarters.

### Thank you, m'Lud

First Ridley, now Denning! Trying to bring back circulation to that true-blue organ, the *Spectator*, master Dominic Lawson (of that ilk) and no-longer-young-fogey AN Wilson may be doing more damage to the ruling class than their pinko rivals at the *New Statesman* could manage.

Lord Denning says there need not have been any fuss about the innocence of the Guildford Four or the Birmingham Six if they'd been hanged. He complains that "any Tom, Dick or Harry" can sit on juries. (If they were handpicked, like judges, from a select background, they'd probably know better what was expected of them.) He grumbles about Leon Brittan, "a German Jew, telling us what to do".

The morning Radio 4 newscaster points out that Sir Leon was born in London. By the six o'clock news, the bit about the Jew has been discreetly dropped.

By the weekend, Tory MPs and the *Independent* (is it?) are saying how rotten it was of the *Spectator* to print what Denning said: he's an old man of 91 (they're all heart, sometimes), and besides, it wasn't said for publication. Looking back on Denning's faithful service (Profumo Affair, Fares Fair, Birmingham appeal), and past comments, I reckon he was just blurring out what the squires in the shires are thinking. We ought to be grateful.

Once watched boxer Mohammed Ali, in an interview by Michael Parkinson, explain why he preferred his native south to the big cities of the US north. In the latter, he said, he was never sure where he stood; whether the white people were just polite to him on account of his success and money. But as soon as he stepped off a plane in the south, he'd be warned: "Now watch yourself, nigger!" "And I say, thank you sah, ah will, ah will!" he clowned.

So let's say "Thank you" to Lord Denning, and, of course, the *Spectator*.



# Oil on troubled waters

by

MICHAEL HEISER

Afif Safieh has not become the new PLO representative in London at the easiest of times. The crisis in the Gulf has pushed Israel and Palestine off the front pages. In addition, the PLO's stance in the matter has been widely interpreted as pro-Iraqi.

Safieh is very much a PLO high flier. He has recently been the PLO representative in the Hague. His CV includes a period as a visiting scholar at the Harvard Centre for International Affairs.

When *Jewish Socialist* spoke to Afif Safieh we first asked him to explain the position of the PLO on the Gulf crisis. He considers that the PLO has been the victim of what he calls "a constant exercise in deliberate misunderstanding. From the very first day," he continued, "Yasser Arafat activated himself in a shuttle; a diplomatic endeavour to help solve the Iraq-Kuwait crisis." The plan was concerned with, firstly, Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, secondly its replacement by Arab forces, and thirdly a negotiated solution within the framework of the Arab League, a solution "revolving around the issues of finance and frontiers". Two Kuwaiti islands would remain under Kuwaiti sovereignty but under a "lease/lend" formula would remain at the disposal of Iraq so that Iraq would acquire access to the open sea.

Yasser Arafat's diplomacy "had taken him from Cairo to Baghdad to Vienna, Jeddah then back to Cairo but unfortunately, before the Arab summit meeting took place, the American military build-up had already started." At the Cairo summit Arafat had put

forward a proposal "where the summit meeting would delegate and mandate a group of six heads of state to go to Baghdad to resolve the issue in an equitable manner". But, added Safieh, "unfortunately by that time the military build-up had gained a momentum of its own". The summit meeting had taken place in an atmosphere where there was a "total absence of any serenity".

"Those who consider that we should resort only to persuasion as far as the Israelis are concerned," he added, "were the first to rush in with all the ingredients for pressure, not excluding nightmarish scenarios. We in the PLO believe we should give diplomacy a chance. A military confrontation will have devastating results not only for the region but for the entire international system."

Safieh was distressed by the way in which the linkage proposal (where Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait would be linked with Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories) "had been waved away as uninteresting and unworthy of serious consideration, even though the proposal demonstrated that the Iraqis saw their presence in Kuwait as negotiable and that it had the merit of drawing the attention of the world community to the other pending unresolved crisis."

He went on to talk more directly about the Israel/Palestine conflict. "We (the Palestinian people and the PLO) had hoped that the Middle East would have been positively contaminated by the new era of international relations. Alas, it seems much easier

to bring down the Berlin Wall than to overcome Mr Shamir's obstinacy. If Shamir and Rabin used their grey cells a bit more and their iron fist a bit less, we would be closer to peace. Had our Palestinian peace initiative been reciprocated, the major themes in the regional debate would have been peace, security, stability, development, democracy and participation."

What was the future for the dialogue between the PLO and the USA which Palestinian diplomacy had fought hard to establish? Afif Safieh told how he had been intimately involved in its establishment. "I have lived the fascination, the excitement, then the disenchantment and frustration." He had accompanied Arafat to Stockholm to his meeting with American Jewish personalities. "Our rationale was that it was of capital importance to initiate dialogue with the outgoing administration so that the incoming administration would inherit it."

Yet disenchantment had soon followed. "The dialogue was kept at a deliberately low level. There was only one channel of communication and the Americans never agreed to upgrade the dialogue." In addition, "whenever there was a substantial element to be conveyed it was done through third parties, thus banalising the dialogue." The dialogue degenerated into "an exercise in futility, a sort of boringly repetitive double monologue".

The American administration had "allowed the peace process to become a hostage to the Israeli domestic arena. For a long time the Israeli political establishment considered peace with the Palestinians to be a compromise formula halfway between Labour and Likud. Even worse, within the Likud the general feeling was that peace was a compromise formula halfway between Shamir and Sharon."

He quoted the late Nahum Goldmann's "painfully accurate description" that "diplomacy in

the Middle East is the art of delaying the inevitable as long as possible." Safieh continued, "I have always believed that the regional actors would never achieve a solution if left to themselves, so I have hoped for an elegantly imposed solution on the basis of the package-deal implementation of the relevant UN resolutions. The package deal means the two-state solution." Prior to the 1988 Palestine National Council he used to call this the "necessary and indispensable but mutually unacceptable solution. I have always believed that this concept of mutual unacceptability, bearing in mind the pathology of the conflict and the psychology of the belligerents, carried enormous potential."

But from the 1988 PNC onwards "the two-state solution is our political programme. We have become unreasonably reasonable." The PLO was still committed to exploring all diplomatic arenas and working with the Israeli peace camp. "I personally", he continued, "have over the last 15 years attended over 100 symposia dealing with the Israel/Palestine conflict. I know around 25 Knesset members, a dozen generals or ex-generals and hundreds of persons from academia and the media. I have always believed that between the Palestinian national movement and the Israeli peace camp there was a convergence of analysis and praxis, since we wanted to liberate the territories occupied by Israel and they wanted to liberate Israel of its occupied territories."

But he returned to the importance of the US through an anecdote, again involving Nahum Goldmann. "In the 1970s Goldmann said to Moshe Dayan, 'Moshe, the Americans give you much aid and some advice. Up to now you have taken the aid and left the advice. What would happen if they were to tell you you could only have the aid if you took the advice?' Dayan thought a bit then said with resignation:

'Then we would have to take the advice.' That", continued Safieh, "is why I personally believe that the battle for Washington, or the battle to inject one's input into the US foreign policy process is the major battle for peace in the Middle East."

We ended by talking about the Jewish community here. "I have been here for only a few days", said Safieh, "and half of my interlocutors have been of Jewish origin. I am proud of that." He enumerated different areas in which he hoped to work: the government, political parties, and the media.

A major field of activity would be dialogue with the Jewish community, which he saw as "plural, diversified and not at all monolithic. I always hope to be available for dialogue or debate with any Jewish institutions on subjects of mutual concern. Differences of opinion should not be an obstacle to mutual exploration of attitudes."



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# Last exit **NOT** to Brooklyn

**Pressure on the United States government is forcing Soviet Jews to go to Israel regardless of their own wishes or best interests, argues Charlie Pottins**

Towards the end of 1988, it became apparent that the United States government was no longer assuring Soviet Jews refugee status and therefore settlement rights in the US, though it was still pressing the USSR to grant more exit visas. Some officials cited budget difficulties; others pointed to human rights improvements in the USSR to argue there was no longer a "well-founded fear of persecution".

According to Philip Saperia of the long-established Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS): "The policy is causing panic in the Soviet Jewish community here in the US and in the Soviet Union" (*Guardian* 7 December 1988). The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews claimed that "hundreds of Soviet Jews" had been denied refugee status in the past few months, and threatened that the issue would be an embarrassment for the incoming Bush administration.

In recent months, we have seen a spate of publicity given to Russian antisemitic organisations like Pamyat with its threats of pogroms. Some Jewish publicists affect to see escalating antisemitism even in parts of the Soviet Union where it has never existed, and claim widespread murders of Jews have begun. It would be dangerous to play down the threat of Russian fascism and Black Hundredism – and *Jewish Socialist* was one of the first publications to expose Pamyat. Of course, even if the threat is as serious as made out or genuinely feared (despite the racists' failure in the last election, though things could look different if the economic depression continues to worsen), our answers might still be different.

Present fundraising efforts emphasise panic and flight – in effect, telling Russian Jews they have no future in the country where they have lived for centuries, and for which they made sacrifices and shed blood, and tapping powerful emotional springs in diaspora Jews, prompting them to help the *olim* (immigrants to Israel) as refugees.

So what about entry to the United States? On 6

September 1989, the *Jerusalem Post* reported: "American Jewish organisations that have been pushing hardest to get more Soviet Jews into the US on refugee status are now ready to accept limits on numbers. They are seeking a compromise with the administration that would channel more US aid to Israel to help it cope with an increased Soviet *aliya* (immigration to Israel)."

The report quoted Micah Naftalin of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews as saying: "We acknowledge that there are finite limits to how many refugees the US can handle." But Naftalin rejected the policy of giving refugee status only to those with close relatives in the United States.

David Harris of the American Jewish Committee said limitations were inevitable, but the Bush administration was hoping to reach an accord with the Jewish community so as to prevent a fight with Congress, which was considering a bill giving all Soviet Jews automatic refugee status.

HIAS president, Ben-Zion Leuchner, told the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* that "the majority of federations (Jewish communities in each city) will not fight the government on this because of their own financial problems. Some Jewish communities are nearing the point where they can only fund family reunification cases." However, both Leuchner and Harris said the Jewish community would only support the administration in return for concessions.

## Enter Shamir, far right

The Israeli government also had a view on Soviet Jews. Speaking to Likud Party veterans, Shamir declared that mass immigration of Soviet Jews was a "miracle", and that it required Israel to "be big as well". They could not think of giving up the Occupied Territories. "We need the space to house all the people," he said, to applause (*Jerusalem Post*, 14 and 19 January 1990). The call for *lebensraum* has not gone unnoticed abroad, and not least by the Arabs, of course; but after a period of Intifada, and talk in Israel of a so-called "transfer", a more accurate interpretation might have been that Shamir's Israel desperately needs more Jews if it is to hold the territories.

Shamir had been pressing the US government for

some time to stop Soviet Jews entering, and he also wanted the Soviet authorities to permit direct flights to Israel so that people could not drop out en route. An earlier plan had been to have Soviet Jewish migrants fly to Israel via Bucharest, where Ceausescu might co-operate in stopping drop-outs, but circumstances intervened.

Back in 1982 the Jewish Agency bitterly attacked the Austrian government for placing a Russian language information poster at the Vienna transit centre, telling migrants the addresses of Jewish and non-Jewish organisations which would help them go to destinations other than Israel. The Israeli ambassador in Vienna persuaded the Austrians to remove the poster. The Agency also sought the collaboration of US Jewish organisations in ensuring that only Soviet Jews with "first-degree" relatives in the USA should be helped to go there (*Jewish Chronicle*, 15 January 1982).

Pressure was put on HIAS and the Joint Distribution Committee to stop them helping Russian Jews. After attacks from the chair of the Jewish Agency, Arye Dultzin, and Aliya director, Raphael Kotlowitz, HIAS, which had earlier claimed it was helping the "drop-outs" only to stop them falling into the clutches of the Satmar Hassidim (ultra-orthodox anti-Zionists) or non-Jewish organisations, caved in to a plea from Begin. The board of governors of the American Society agreed by 13-3 to accept that it should help only those with close relatives in the US (*Jewish Chronicle*, 9 Oct, 6 Nov, 11 Dec 1981).

## Rich uncle in the States?

Having said they couldn't afford to fund the settlement of Soviet Jews in America as one reason they backed down from challenging Bush over restrictions, American Jewish leaders are now calling upon their communities to cough up the cost of settling the Jews in Israel.

Likud Knesset member Michael Kleiner, chairman of the Knesset Immigration and Absorption Committee, told the *Jerusalem Post's* Asher Wallfish on 14 January that Shamir and Peres must go to the US to raise the money for settling Soviet Jews in Israel. Criticising Jewish Agency targets of \$1 billion from American Jewry (twice what they'd originally set) as inadequate, Kleiner said Israeli and diaspora Jews should agree to meet the eventual cost, whatever it was. Admitting that it could rise to between \$6 and \$10 billion, he said that Israel would have to shelve all national and municipal development budgets (hard luck, Hatikvah quarter) and that diaspora Jews must come in 50:50 (*Jerusalem Post*, 14 Jan 1990).

At a press conference in New York attended by Natan Sharansky, honouring an announced \$20 million housing fund for Soviet Jews in Israel set up by investment banker Joseph Gruss, David Sacks of the United Jewish Appeal said the Appeal might raise its \$350 million pledge over one year, instead of three as originally planned. Asked about the overall \$500 million, Sacks said: "I can see the possibility of doubling that figure."

Last February the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), at its General Assembly in Miami, pledged that its members would deliver its financial commitment

to Israel "whether or not we are successful in raising the full amount", according to executive director Don Felstein, who explained that if necessary federations would have to borrow the money, or cut other budgets. The UJA had meanwhile upped its target, to raise \$420 million in one year (*Jerusalem Post*, 9 February 1990).

## Rescue or aliyah?

According to Felstein, some delegates at the CJF's Assembly were concerned about Shamir's remarks on the need for a "big Israel". The leadership had managed to calm their fears, saying that less than 1% of Soviet Jews were settling the West Bank.

Felstein said that what had helped convince delegates of the need to deliver the money was a set of articles in the *New York Times* about the growth of antisemitism in the Soviet Union. "There was a general realisation in Miami that American Jewry has a chance in 1990 to do what it failed to do in 1939" (*Jerusalem Post*, 9 Feb 1990).

This last remark is significant. We all know of the Jews who were turned away from America's shores in 1939 and after. In 1981 a commission was set up to examine the way American Jewish organisations had behaved during the years of Nazi mass extermination of the Jews of Europe. Among the questions posed was whether these organisations might not have saved thousands of lives if they had put pressure on the Roosevelt administration. The commission broke up in disarray at the end of 1982 without completing its work (*Daily Telegraph*, 5 Jan 1983). However, a privately circulated interim report stated: "In retrospect, one incontrovertible fact stands out above all others: in the face of Hitler's total war of extermination against the Jews of Europe, the Jewish leadership in America at no stage decided to proclaim total mobilisation for rescue" (*New York Herald Tribune*, 5 Jan 1983).

Whether pressure on Roosevelt might have worked, we can only guess. The American Jewish community did not feel so confident then. There was fear that America's own antisemites would use the prospect of mass Jewish immigration to stir up hatred against those already there. Later, American Jews would vent their feelings on Britain for restricting entry to Palestine. Leon Uris could write *Exodus* and Hollywood make the movie.

One can understand the remark about not repeating 1939, but have Don Felstein or the Jewish Federation read the history properly? Weren't guilt pangs over bowing down to the antisemites during the War assuaged by listening to other arguments? "If Jews will have to choose between the refugees, saving Jews from concentration camps and assisting a national museum in Palestine, mercy will have the upper hand and the whole energy of the people will be channelled into saving Jews from various countries. Zionism will be struck off the agenda... If we allow a separation between the refugee problem and the Palestine problem we are risking the existence of Zionism," wrote David Ben Gurion in a letter to the Zionist Executive in 1938, concerned lest other territories be found to take Jewish refugees (*The Other Israel* by Arie Bober, published by Matzpen).



The Goldberg commission's report noted that established Zionist organisations were "riveted to post-war plans" for a Jewish state and this was another reason not to demand entry for Jews to America. And today?

"Could Israel morally survive the appearance of 500,000 Jewish refugees heading for another *galut* (diaspora) were the gates of the USSR opened?" asked Mikhail Agursky and Alexander Libin, in the *Jerusalem Post* (6 October 1982). "The drop out phenomenon corrupted and demoralised Soviet Jewry," they claimed. The Zionist writers rejected any move to grant refugee status to Soviet Jews wishing to enter America.

More recently, Isi Leibler, vice-president of the World Jewish Congress and a leading Zionist figure in Australia (doubtless another over-populated little country that couldn't possibly find room for more Jews), said: "The Soviet Jewry movement is not a travel agency, and transfer of one diaspora to another, even from a Communist society to a democracy, is not a pressing national Jewish objective. This is especially true if the overwhelming majority of Jews wanting to leave – currently over 90% – do not want to go to Israel."

#### Double bind

One problem with these arguments is that the Soviet Union today, whatever it is, is not Germany in 1939. Far from having been systematically persecuted and driven from public life as German Jews were by state policy from 1933 on (and more especially from 1938), Soviet Jews are enjoying a new flowering of cultural and political freedom. The antisemites are menacing, but not yet much more. There is violence, but not much greater than in, say, the United States (or, in a different way, in Israel). The Russian Nazi groups' votes were derisory.

This is not to recommend complacency but to suggest that antisemitism in Russia can be fought and beaten. But in order to squeeze huge sums out of Jewish communities already facing cash problems, the Zionist movement has had to hype up the Russian situation to make it sound as though Auschwitz is round the corner. "Shadow Of The New Nazis" screamed the headline to an article by Jane Moonman of BIPAC (*Jewish Chronicle*, 9 Dec 1988). "Never Again 1939" is the kind of sentiment being tapped into in the States.

The snag is, if people really believe it's that bad, mightn't they decide that what's needed is rescue rather than *aliyah* to Israel? Mightn't they press for open doors and refugee status?

On 15 February, Israel's Absorption Minister, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, shocked Zionist opinion by naively declaring: "Should the escape route of the Soviet Jews lead them to Western Europe or the United States, this is better than they should stay in the Soviet Union." (Peretz is a member of the non-Zionist orthodox Shas Party.) Shamir promptly told the Israeli press: "There is no need to take note of the remarks made by Absorption Minister Yitzhak Peretz" (*Ha'aretz*, 16 Jan 1990).

Michael Kleiner, of the Knesset's Immigration and Absorption Committee, complained that Peretz'

remarks would be used by "HIAS officials, who don't care about the well-being of the Jews", but merely wish to keep going as an organisation by "disseminating untruthful propaganda about Israel and about the condition of Soviet Jewry". Kleiner went on to claim the Absorption Minister had "fallen victim to the propaganda and fear-spreading campaign conducted by vested interests who are striving to reopen the gates of the United States to Jewish immigrants" (*Ha'aretz*, 15 Feb 1990).

Jewish Agency chairman, Simha Dinitz, had revealed on 11 February that the Agency had approached American Jewish leaders some weeks before to ask them to stop HIAS opening an office in Moscow which might help Jews going to America and "sabotage immigration to Israel".

On 18 February, Michael Kleiner proclaimed: "This cancerous growth called HIAS must be totally eradicated." Claiming that HIAS lobbying had persuaded the US government to grant 8,000 more refugee-entry permits to Soviet Jews, Kleiner accused the Jewish organisation of doing this just to maintain "bloated bureaucracy and corrupt officials". Furthermore, he accused: "HIAS is preparing the ground for an upsurge of antisemitism in the United States," because, by "luring Jews who really want to settle in Israel to go to America instead," it was leading to the day when American Jewry would be accused of stealing the places of others" (*Jerusalem Post*, 19 Feb 1990).

So how did the American Jews respond to this belligerent language and the threatening suggestion that Jews are to blame for a rise in antisemitism? Ben Zion Leuchner of HIAS denied that his organisation had asked the US to increase its ceiling on Jewish refugees. He pointed out that HIAS was actually reducing staff. He denied that it sought to persuade anyone to go to America: "To the contrary, our staff members are instructed to tell the relatives of Soviet Jews that the quickest way for their family to be resettled in freedom is to go to Israel" (*Jerusalem Post*, 4 March 1990).

Martin Kraar, of the North American Council of Jewish Federations, reassured Kleiner that the 8,000 Jews who were being assisted had already been allowed for in October and that there was no intention of increasing the entry quota further. He further assured Kleiner that his Council would be keeping an eye on HIAS to "ensure it didn't divert Soviet Jews to any other destination save Israel."

So once again language that would be rightly denounced as antisemitic on the lips of others is considered acceptable from Israeli leaders. And once again diaspora Jewish leaders kowtow to Israeli leaders, protesting their innocence of any charge that they are making demands on their own government to assist fellow Jews find freedom! No longer are they demanding: "Let My People Go," but: "Don't Let My People In!"

*A useful memorandum on Soviet Jewish migration has been produced by the Committee to Open Borders. Send a large sae to Jewish Socialist, BM3725, London WC1N 3XX, for a copy.*

# Diaspora dilemmas

**The last Annual Conference of the Jewish Socialists' Group had a very lively debate on Ireland. Jewish Socialist plans to further this debate, looking especially at contrasting experiences of diaspora. Karen Merkel met Clare McElwee and Margaret O'Keeffe, two Irish campaigners living and working in London.**

Clare McElwee was born in Corby New Town in England, which she describes as a "sectarian experience", and has lived in Donegal. She is actively involved in the London Irish Women's Centre, London Irish Women's Housing Action Group, the Abortion Support Group, Prevention of Terrorism Act campaign group (PTA) and has worked at the Irish and Islington Project.

Margaret O'Keeffe comes from the west coast of Ireland and has lived in England for 13 years. Margaret is actively involved with an organisation called Islington Women and Mental Health and the Irish Mental Health Forum. She works as administrator for the Roger Casement Irish Centre in Islington, London. She says: "The Centre's strength is that it isn't Church orientated. It's the first place that has been like this. Women have a real place here. Forty per cent of clients of our advice facility are single parents; single women and separated women also use it. Other centres usually have a very strong nuclear family feeling – ours caters for quite a different group."

Both Margaret and Clare concentrate their energies on women's issues. Clare sees these activities as "part of a network where the issues interlink". But she describes how the historical and political links are not addressed. She recognises a gap in people's awareness whereby the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) is considered "political" by the community as a whole, yet issues like abortion are considered apolitical "welfare concerns". She says: "Abortion is inextricably linked to politics, and women's issues have been placed in this 'relegated' position ever since partition."

**JS: How was the context created that led to women organising within the struggles?**

Clare McElwee: In the '70s, the mainland bombing campaign and the backlash silenced people. The PTA formally silenced people by stopping them organising. It reinforced people's vulnerabilities, people were raided, stopped en route to and from Ireland and were often picked up by the police. For a community that hadn't organised outside the Church this was a real deterrent. The hunger strike focused a lot of this. People said, "It's not acceptable," and the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) was formed. For the first time, anti-Irish racism began to be addressed seriously.

**Margaret O'Keeffe:** Repression against Irish people was very up-front in the '70s. Paul Hill received a massive sentence; there were very crude images of people around everywhere. The IBRG spawned other groups

and was massively supported. The groups that challenged racism began to be funded and gained ethnic minority status via local authorities in London in particular. However, women have always felt that they were the invisible 50%.

**Clare:** Emigration has happened on such a major scale from Ireland and yet people are having very similar experiences to the ones that previous generations have had. They might be better educated, but they still go into the same trades.

**Margaret:** Ireland itself went through a transition because of entry into the European Community; but there was still a lack of work opportunities which forced mass emigration – leaving a very old community behind. The community here in Britain mobilised in the '70s from the GLC to hunger strikes, and a much wider set of issues exists now. The Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four have mobilised more people than ever before, especially around women's issues.

**JS: What are the issues facing Irish women living in London?**

**Margaret:** The experience of the loss of their homeland and at the same time having to live within the same structure of Catholicism and the family, causes great emotional difficulties.

**Clare:** So many women coming over here see it as a key to freedom – the reality is quite different. They're isolated because they're lesbian, involved with women's rights



and can't live in the tight unit at home. Initially it's liberating and then comes the feeling of loss – also they experience for the first time anti-Irish racism. Because Ireland is so close, it feels very temporary living here. The reality is that "temporary" is often 30 years – but people tolerate things here more – because they think they're not staying.

**Margaret:** The GLC were the first body to ever fund Irish organisations. Prior to that it was always Church associated. There was no serious recognition of our ethnicity before the GLC.

**Clare:** From the GLC numerous groups sprang up – research uncovered existing groups and established new groups. Through the patterns of migration it was possible to find out that many Irish people in Islington were quite elderly – so proper lunch clubs could be established. Women were already organising on reproductive rights and the Irish Women's Centre was funded. For women, the oppressive laws in Ireland have meant that they've always been heavily reliant on women here, to get over for abortions or to leave violent domestic situations. It's harder now than before because of the new recession, and there's a kick-back here from the indigenous community. Now we concentrate on training courses.

**JS: Tell us more about women's action**

**Clare:** Many Irish women who are politically active concentrate their work on women's rights issues such as abortion and domestic violence. As a result, they often become marginalised by Irish men who see their own activity as the "real" political arena. This in turn becomes a diversion as the women then have to devote time to

### Waiting (for the Guildford Four)

How can the mind count fifteen years?  
You could count it in  
The heartbeat of waiting days and hours.

In fifteen years you could  
Have had friends and lovers  
Homes, holidays, and children.  
In fifteen years you could have shared  
Your life with whom you chose to love.

Instead you have had  
A decade and a half  
Of brutality in silent rooms  
Of tears shed for wasted youth.  
In fifteen years you have  
Not felt the seasons change  
Or sat in peace to watch the sea.

You have been prisoners  
Of the prejudice and hatred  
Of a nation that denied you life.

It is a tribute to your courage  
That your spirit still shakes its fist in rage.

Anna Sullivan

*The Guildford Four finally won their freedom in November 1989. Free the Birmingham Six!*

explaining why their activities are central to the struggles.

**JS: Why do you think this happens?**

**Margaret:** Sinn Fein's policy on abortion is, "Because we have to have a United Ireland, then the majority view would be anti-abortion. Therefore, we have to suspend this until after a United Ireland exists." Sinn Fein see feminist issues as divisive – the real issue is the struggle with the British. Sinn Fein won't endorse a women's rights policy. But the needs of Irish women are hard to get away from.

**Clare:** Before the 18th century, Irish women could inherit land, so a sister had the same rights as her brother. British law ended that right – and property law since then has been passed

down through the male line. All the laws that prohibit abortion and divorce in Ireland are British – they're as much a part of colonialism as anything else. Under Celtic law (the old Brehon laws), divorce was allowed. Under partition, the Catholic Church became very powerful, the "unifying force" which in turn became the basis for the Irish constitution. Women's rights lost out and became expendable. We should therefore look at women's issues as part of this imperialism. Now it's seen as if women are trying to impose "pagan English laws" on Ireland, ie women over here are not pure Irish and Catholic. The '69 Act was never extended to the North, nor the '67 Act.

*Ireland's membership of the European Community has placed*

*these issues on a new agenda in terms of legislation. At present, for example, the right to life of the foetus supersedes the rights of the mother. Many Irish feminists are hoping that European law will enforce changes and are actively campaigning to see that they do.*

**JS: Who is actively involved in this style of campaigning and organising?**

**Margaret:** It's the younger women mainly who organise – aged up to about 45. They have very diverse backgrounds. Many of them are lesbian – and a great many of them are working class.

**JS: Is there an issue of the "real Irish person" here? Is assimilation a live issue as it is within the Jewish community? Why do second and third generation Irish people keep their Irish identity as a politics for organising rather than taking a British identity?**

**Clare:** The diaspora community has changed especially with the recent mass emigration. The second generation experience is very different from the first. There has been conflict when second generation Irish people have spoken on behalf of Irish-born communities. There used to be big splits at conferences – you had to have first and second generation workshops. There are still difficulties since the experience is so different.

**Margaret:** Many second generation people went through a period of rejecting their parents who were talking about an Ireland that no longer existed. Those same kids faced rejection at school. Many have since rediscovered their Irishness.

**Clare:** Growing up here became synonymous with being a part of the Catholic establishment; therefore rejecting that meant you were rejecting your Irishness too.

*A whole generation has emigrated in the last decade. Clare describes one of the responses to this as being "a kind of collusion" which has developed amongst the communities left behind – "because they have become better off and they don't necessarily want to recognise the issues that face emigrés".*

**JS: How do people at home view the emigrés – do they see them as a drain, are they angry with them for leaving?**

**Clare:** Emigration has been a fact of life for hundreds of years. It's always been the most able or the most educated who emigrated. People were chosen to go to gain an opportunity. Ireland now has the oldest population in Europe. People are angry that people have to go away to get a job. There is a sense of waste. But I'm sure people connect it to the British legacy. The same thing is happening in the North as in the South – for the same reasons – but the links aren't made. I'm a big disappointment to my father. He came over here to get us all educated and here was I working with an Irish organisation and doing abortion work.

**Margaret:** They're not challenging the same issues at home and generally find them difficult to deal with.

**Clare:** Lots of issues are being denied – lesbianism, domestic violence and rape simply cannot be allowed to exist.

**JS: Do these issues come up in your mental health work?**

**Margaret:** Irish people are offered confinement as a solution far more readily than others – the issues around immigration are really the same ones that effect mental health. Racism and poor housing are big factors in mental health issues.



**Clare:** The rate of schizophrenia is high. It's a by-product of the racism. Because Irish people are English-speaking, they're deemed to be English and therefore seem to deviate from English patterns. It's also true that second and third generations have mental health problems. In Catholic schools, in England, you're supposed to obliterate your Irishness. Most women still have very large families but won't seek statutory support – this is a very entrenched position, together with mistrust of the state. Women also bear the brunt of alcoholism and violence – although alcohol is a big issue for women too. This is also a major problem in Ireland, though the high diagnosis rate is also true of people from other countries colonised by the British. Mind, it's also said that Catholicism is schizophrenia-inducing!



# "I'm hated therefore I am"

Orthodox Marxists insist that a distinctive Jewish identity will, and ought to, wither away as capitalist social and economic processes mature. To hasten this inevitability they advocate that Jews jettison their separate identity here and now. Michael Rosen challenges assimilationism on the Left.

At the recent SWP Marxism 90 week, I went to John Rose's talk on antisemitism and Israel. It's an annual pilgrimage. Beforehand I always tell myself that it will put me in touch with something systematic and thorough on Jewish and anti-Zionist issues but I nearly always come away with a sore head. Someone might tell me that the Jews have survived because it was materially necessary to the ruling class. When I ask if ideas come into it at all, I'm told that I am precisely the kind of bourgeois idealist I should steer clear of.

This year John Rose wanted to talk about Jewish identity, Bush's policy on Israel and the history of the Bund in Poland – all in 40 minutes. Curiously, he began by reminding us of the Chief Rabbi's jolly little comment about assimilation in Britain today being "of Holocaust proportions". (Boo, tut tut, hiss.) John had the statistics behind the Chief Rabbi's statement. It certainly does look like there's a few empty shuls out there. Later, as I'm leaving, I overhear a conversation between two young SWP-ers.

"Great ... that stuff about assimilation," says one.

"What?"

"I had no idea so many Jews were assimilating, great eh?"

"Yeah, great."

I thought I would escape without a sore head this year. No such luck. Here were two young Marxists in London in 1990, pleased that Jews were "assimilating". But why? My mind runs over a few holy Marxist texts – throwing off superstition, sigh of the masses ... The couple's possible line of argument develops in my mind: "Judaism means primitive religion, women cooking gefilte fish all day long, support of Israel, men in little hats, rape of the phallus, odd holidays, cut off from the rest of society. Assimilation means coming out of dark synagogues, wearing jeans, watching TV, not thinking your life is governed by some supernatural dad, reading *Time Out* and *The Guardian* and not asking your parents who you're going to sleep with. People like this are nearer to being socialists than the religious ones." Maybe I caricature, but it must broadly be along these lines. And you don't find this just in the SWP. It crops up in many parts of the Left.

The word assimilation seems to be specially reserved for Jews. When black people were asked to do a similar thing, they were asked to "integrate". When Catholics do it, they "lapse". But Jews should "assimilate". This is one of the longstanding answers to the "Jewish Question" (why's it a question? and what is the question?). "If only Jews would take off their hats, put on their foreskins and stop gabbling away in

languages we don't understand, there would be no more persecution – look at Nigel Lawson and Leon Brittan ... whoops, all right, Denning did go over the top but the rest of us aren't like that." Of course, it's a nonsense. Assimilated Jews aren't any more safe from antisemitism than the *frummers* (religious Jews).

But hang on. If somebody assimilates, they assimilate from something to something. What are we supposed to be assimilating to? And why should it be so welcome to two Marxists in 1990? They presumably would admit that in orthodox Marxist terms the prevailing ideology is the ideology of the ruling class: individualism, commodity fetishism, racism, militarism, capitalism, sexism, heterosexism, elitism, consumerism and so on. Now surely that can't be a good idea, that Jews are assimilating into *that*. A Jew who sits *shiv'a* isn't any further away from the Marxist dawn than someone carrying that band of "isms" round in her head, is she?

Maybe I've oversimplified. Come in Marxist: "Yes, comrade, the prevailing ideology is the ideology of the ruling class but bourgeois culture isn't all bad. Trotsky said that after the revolution we won't burn Shakespeare plays and Mozart scores. We'll be able to see them as great humanists and anti-totalitarians. And anyway, in secular society there are spaces, oppositional moments, counter-cultural resistances. An assimilated Jew is nearer to those spaces than the religious Jew and so nearer to 'political consciousness'."

This is where the assimilation position begins to show its underwear. There is a sense here that Jews and other "ethnic" groups are culturally divergent, non-normal, minority, exotic and the like, but mainstream western secular society is normal, neutral, and liberated from the Inquisition and witch-burning. This is just cultural imperialism. Why is Mozart assumed to be better than Irish flute music? Why is going to the National Theatre assumed to be better than going to a football match or a JSG social? Why is serial monogamy (dominated by sex stereotyped ideas of beauty) necessarily better than arranged marriages; why are jeans better than kameez? Why is St Augustine more interesting than Hillel; why is Hobbes more interesting than Spinoza? Whoever is glad that you, Jew, have assimilated, is basically saying not much more than "I'm glad you're more like me".

Actually, everyone is ethnic. A suburban, agnostic, middle-class, *Sunday Times*-reading, scampi-eating, suit-wearing chartered accountant is just as ethnic as a Rastafarian. As is an inner city, jeans and T-shirted atheist. *Socialist Worker*-reading, spag bol-eating further

education lecturer. So where in all this is the assimilated Jew who brings such pleasure to the SW couple? Well, it's quite possible that he or she is also a suburban, agnostic, middle-class, *Sunday Times*-reading, scampi-eating, suit-wearing chartered accountant. She might vote Tory, he might play golf. None of which seems to me to have anything whatsoever to do with heralding the socialist dawn. My attitude is quite simple: Nigel Lawson is no nearer socialism than the *Hassidim*.

If only the matter could rest there. But I've still got a sore head because I'm worried. I've seen the argument against black integration argued very strongly in *Socialist Worker*. I've read their approving summaries of Lenin on national, religious and minorities questions and it all sounds good, tolerant, multicultural stuff. So what's wrong with the Jews? If black people don't have to "integrate" in the struggle, why should we?

There's another orthodox answer to this. And it stinks. "Black people have fought an anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-racist struggle, their culture is riven through with aspects of this: music, humour, lifestyle. Many black people seem to give off an up-yours vibe to police/ruling class ways. But Jews, well Jews, aren't they Hassidim, and Bernard Levin, and Hendon, and doctors, lawyers and accountants? And don't they all support Israel? We're not stereotyping here, comrade, we've got some excellent Jews in the party and you won't hear them raving on about the joys of bagels, Woody Allen and the Bund." Ah, stop there. You *didn't* hear Jews in the SWP talk about the Bund until recently. As John Rose put it at the meeting, "two years ago I discovered the Bund" and the SWP will soon be publishing a translation of a Bundist pamphlet. Jews who said they were Jews, socialists and workers but who didn't join Communist parties? Look out, John, you might be accused of favouring divisive separatism. In case you need an answer, try this one: joining Marxist parties in the past has neither prevented antisemitism nor brought the millenium any nearer.

At the meeting John and another speaker used the old Sartre justification for saying you're a Marxist and a Jew: I'm a Jew as long as there is antisemitism. In other words: "I'm hated, therefore I am". This position implies that after antisemitism has gone in the socialist millenium, I won't have to bother about being a Jew. I can get on and be ... er ... er what? A member of the international working class? It's one of those artificial abstract ideas that Marxists concoct in smoke-filled rooms, repeat over and over again in journals and meetings, and then in rare moments of self doubt wonder

why nobody takes any notice of it.

The point is people need to make sense of the world. We try to get through our days and nights with minimum anxiety. This means eating things we like, wearing what we like, making love the way we like, marking people's deaths the way we like, bringing up children the way we like and so on. These are our cultural habits. Where necessity and oppression bear down on us, we like to find ways of coping with it, which may mean repressing awareness of it, or imitating our oppressors, or singing, praying, joking or fighting or whatever. These are cultural habits too. Now, if history tells me I'm a Jew and experience tells me I'm a socialist, why, oh why, should my sole justification for calling myself a Jew be the defensive: I'm hated, therefore I am? Non-Jews don't have a monopoly on the best ways to get through the days and nights with as little anxiety as possible. And, as we know, Jews are certainly not ignorant of ways to fight oppression and persecution.

So finally we come face to face with what we are supposed to be assimilating from: Judaism and Jewishness. Actually I'm almost completely ignorant of Judaism, but it sounds like a lot of other religions. Some people do it one way, some people do it another way; some say you can't do this, others you've got to do that. Every so often you do something where you meet up with your family, your friends, or a whole group of people. Every so often someone dies, someone gets born, someone says they want to live with someone else, and so people get together again. Sounds OK. Certainly nothing there tells me that doing any of this would necessarily prevent you from fighting oppression and exploitation. It's no more of an obstacle than being a suburban agnostic. So far, so good. But what about Jewishness?

Well, now we're getting personal. Jews are as diverse as any other minority you can think of. And 'twas ever thus. In Roman times, Jews were everything from bankers to slaves and now they are everything from bankers to wage-slaves. Some kinds of Jewishness are good at coping with life and fighting for socialism, and others aren't so good. Nu? We're OK. We've got nothing to be ashamed of. We've got nothing to shed before we're entitled to be socialists. Most Marxists I know go to theatres, concerts, sometimes eat fish and chips and swear in English. None of which is superior to singing Yiddish songs, reading about Auschwitz and calling people *shmoks*. We don't have to apologise for anything. We don't have to reduce ourselves to "I'm hated, therefore I am." We could say: "I *fress*, therefore I am," or "I've got *chutzpah*, therefore I am."



# Backwards to basics

Religious leaders and movements are posing a fundamental challenge to our self-definition, argues Julia Bard.



In synagogues all over Britain curtains are going up to hide the women so that the men can concentrate on their prayers. As more and more ultra-orthodox rabbis are appointed to head United Synagogues, once considered mainstream with their peculiarly British pronunciation of Hebrew and style of service, fundamental – or rather, fundamentalist – changes are being introduced which are beginning to skew the whole community's view of itself.

Posing as an alternative to the alienation and identity crises experienced by many Jews, born again Judaism offers a warm, secure setting where a troubled, lonely search for understanding can be replaced by a set of moral certainties. Under the guise of an intellectual challenge to the painful conflicts of the modern world, religious fundamentalism has taken on the language of the left, of feminism, of antiracism and of multi-

culturalism to offer answers to every question a sceptic could ask. Indeed, it asks the questions itself; a sleight of hand which dictates the course of the debate without any genuine input from outside. Each answer generates a new question, creating a closed, self-sufficient, unassailable system. For example, *Lubavitch UK* magazine (September 1990) asks: "Why should Jews, Chassidim, be concerned with the 'Feminine Mystique' [they're familiar with basic feminist texts]? What's it got to do with *Yiddishkeit* [literally, Jewishness, but implying cultural familiarity, homeliness]? Let's take a look at it from a Jewish perspective. G-d [sic] created the first man and woman and told them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and master it.' ... That's a pretty big order! Why did He create a man and a woman? Well obviously so that there can be children."

"But why did He create a world in such a way that in order to have children there has to be a man and a woman? Why couldn't it be two men or two women [this, presumably, to pre-empt the questions of lesbians and gay men]?"

After two pages of this cat and mouse game designed to divert any basic arguments about the existence of God, the purpose and role of religion, we are offered this: "The Feminine Mystique means being open to G-dliness, beyond rational reason, bringing G-dliness into the world that is infinite, beyond rational reason. This eventually brings the world into perfection so that Moshiah (messiah) can come and we'll stop suffering from all the other dragons that need to be slain."

This is certainly beyond "rational reason", but merely ridiculing it will not challenge the increasing influence of the Lubavitch Hassidim in the Jewish community, which derives as much, if not more, from the way they operate and the type of structures they are infiltrating, as from what they are saying. Many of the people such fundamentalist cults attract today are too young to remember Marshall McLuhan, but the Lubavitchers use their understanding of "the medium is the message" in the form of *Mitzvah* vans and cars adorned with massive *menorot* to spread the word. They know how powerful is the image of a Jewish mother, her face and those of her 10 children glowing in the light of the Sabbath candles. They know as well as the Reverend Moon that a display of warmth, love and unconditional acceptance is so compelling for an alienated person, who, like so many of us, feels excluded from his or her community, that it overrides the ridiculousness of their ideas.

Who would worry if it was simply a matter of their hijacking the United Synagogue? They'd be welcome to it, Chief Rabbi and all. But the importance of the current spread of fundamentalism is that it has shifted views rights across the community of what it means to be a good Jew. Hassidim have always thought they were God's gift to humanity but most other Jews were less impressed. Now we're hearing not only mainstream, synagogue-going Jews but even secular, otherwise progressive Jews saying, as one of my socialist friends did recently: "They are *real* Jews. I was brought up in a completely secular home, but I admire them for being so upfront about their religious activity because it puts them right in the front line against antisemitism." This sees Jewish identity as a function of the degree of antisemitism experienced and it carries an implication that we must support their views in order to defend them against persecution. Opposition to antisemitism becomes conditional on our agreeing with the targets of that

antisemitism. But an effective challenge to antisemitism and other forms of racism depends on its being unconditional. We must oppose all manifestations of racism, and not only do we not have to agree with the victims, we have an obligation to challenge their oppression of others.

One step on from the secular Jew who thinks only religious Jews are the genuine article is this: "I love that tradition in Judaism which separates men and women, because I'm a radical feminist and a separatist and so therefore Jewish practice which separates women and men I think absolutely wonderful" (Miriam Metz in *Generations of Memories* by the Jewish Women in London Group, published by The Women's Press). This is a novel interpretation of "radical", "feminist" and "separatist", all of which normally denote aspects of the struggle for equality and autonomy and not an acceptance of patriarchal institutions which impose apartheid.

Symbolism – the use of a simple and powerful image to represent a compelling set of ideas – has been used by fundamentalists to create new orthodoxies in many religious, ethnic and national communities across the world. This has been achieved partly by their laying claim to a progressive politics. Though Iranian feminists bitterly opposed women being compelled to wear the *chador* (veil), for instance, "traditional Islamic dress" was effectively promoted as an assertion of national cultural identity by the new Iranian leaders after their successful struggle against the Shah and American imperialism. The suffering of the women, and the violence against them endorsed by the new regime, were covered up as effectively as their bodies.

The death threats against Salman Rushdie by the mullahs have pulled into line Moslem communities the world over. Gita Sahgal of Southall Black Sisters and a founder member of Women Against Fundamentalism says: "The Rushdie affair has become a kind of benchmark of whether you're a proper Moslem or not. You certainly risk being called not a proper Moslem if you don't abide by certain ideas, one of which is that *The Satanic Verses* is deeply offensive. I don't want to argue that all Moslems in Britain, or even all orthodox Moslems, think that Rushdie should be killed, but certainly a large number are saying so without vocal opposition." Southall Black Sisters is an autonomous women's group offering advice, counselling and support to women from the local Asian communities – Sikh, Hindu and Moslem – particularly

women facing domestic violence. In *Against the Grain*, a report on their work from 1979-1989, they talk of the difficulty outsiders have of even perceiving Asian people as secular and Asian groups as existing without permission from religious bodies. They say: "The Rushdie affair has had the odd effect of turning us into evangelicals. We have already seen some of the effects of the rise of religious fundamentalism in Southall as young men, particularly, are attracted to Khalistani movements. Now we see a world being constructed before our eyes which bears no relation to the one we actually inhabit. We have always argued that we will not remain confined without our 'traditions' and 'culture'. Today in the public mind they are narrowing even more so that the only legitimate identity is a newly constructed religious one."

Southall Black Sisters' consistent support of Rushdie has shown them clearly the extent to which this issue has been an effective device of the fundamentalists in claiming a sole right to define who does and who does not have a right to a voice in the community, and this led to their key role in the setting up of Women Against Fundamentalism. Gita Sahgal says: "In Bradford there are a number of people who have traditionally not had much to do with the mosque, who have come out of a tradition of left, secular organising through the Workers' Associations and Trades Unions ... they are the people who would hate what the Mosque and the Mosque leaderships represented, though they consider themselves to be good Moslems. But they haven't spoken out on this issue. In fact, one of them rang us up when we issued our statement in support of Rushdie last March and told us that we'd put ourselves outside the community, that we'd betrayed the whole community, by which he meant not only Moslems but Asians in Britain."

In Gaza the benchmark has become the *hijab* (headscarf). Though it is generally recognised that the Intifada has enabled Palestinian women to take more control of their own lives and to take a central role in the institutions and social structures which have grown up during the struggle, there has been an opposing and, at times, violent campaign, particularly in Gaza, to force women to wear the *hijab*. In *Middle East Report* (May-August 1990) Rema Hammami describes how the religious campaign started with graffiti exhorting "Daughters of Islam" to wear a distinctive form of dress, and continued with religious youths breaking into classrooms demanding that the girls

wear the *hijab*. For any Jewish woman who has visited the ultra-orthodox area, Me'a She'arim, in Jerusalem, there is a clear echo of the sign across the street telling "Daughters of Israel" to dress modestly, as well as of the rocks thrown at those who break the rules of the Sabbath in the vicinity of "their" streets.

Using the same arguments as the feminist who supports the separation of men and women in orthodox Jewish sects, Rana Kabbani, author of *Letter to Christendom* (Virago), claims that women's "choice" to wear the *hijab* is politically progressive. "The women who decide to put on the *hijab*, that flag of Islamic commitment, are not retreating from ground won by their grandmothers. Just as it was a political choice fifty years ago to remove the *hijab*, a choice freely made and of great consequence, so the decision today to put it on again is equally momentous and equally political."

"These women are not withdrawing to an archaic past, nor do they wish to stay demurely at home... Wearing the *hijab* can be a liberation, freeing women from being sexual objects..." (quoted in "The portable cage" by Dena Attar in *Trouble & Strife*, Summer 1990).

In Gaza the *hijab* has been promoted not simply as a "flag of Islamic commitment" but of commitment to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Rema Hammami says: "What was most problematic for many women was that this social pressure [to wear the *hijab*] accompanied an attempt to 'nationalise' the *hijab*... The *hijab* was promoted (and to some extent became understood) as a sign of women's political commitment, as women, to the Intifada. The most prominent redefinition made wearing a headscarf a sign of respect for martyrs... Another nationalist argument was that the headscarf was a form of cultural struggle, an assertion of national heritage." All these manifestations of religious fundamentalism are attempting, as fundamentalism must, to change the very terms in which individuals understand themselves in relation to their communities, in which communities organise themselves internally and in which they interact with the wider world outside. While they may use the language of the left – of liberation and equality – they are actually sabotaging the struggle, withdrawing options and establishing themselves as having a sole right to the moral and ideological, if not institutional, leadership of their communities.

Christian fundamentalism has



made enormous gains in this respect in the late 1980s. Whereas in the early years of Thatcherism the New Right was focusing on nationalism, now many political debates are being argued in explicitly Christian terms. An international congress on the family held last July was mockingly reported in the liberal press for its plethora of plastic fetuses and preoccupation with natural "family planning", but the government's policy on the family is based on the same assumptions of what "family" means as those that were being promulgated by those Catholic fundamentalists and other Moral Right campaigners. That is not to say that we should expect progressive policies on the family from the Conservative Party; but, by overtly basing their social policy on assumed Christian values and concepts, they have set the terms of the debate, and the Labour Party is now arguing over the same territory, trying to prove by its policies that it is more supportive of "the family", more "moral" and, by clear implication, more Christian.

If socialists and feminists fail to challenge all forms of religious fundamentalism, they will not only remove one more option from those women who want and need to run, some-

times for their lives, from the patriarchal institutions which define and confine them; they will also inevitably be drawn into accepting fundamentalist definitions of identity and community, of right and wrong, and consequently of what their political tasks are. The call of the Mosque leaders for Moslems to unite in their opposition to Rushdie, with its implicit threat of excommunication, has silenced debate even among many previously outspoken antiracists. The imposition by Islamic fundamentalists of particular forms of dress on women in Gaza is in danger of redirecting the struggle of all the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Rema Hammami says of the few women in Gaza who remain committed to their refusal to wear the headscarf: "These women were ... all asserting, within the context of the Intifada, the fundamental linkage between gender liberation and the possibility of a progressive and democratic future."

Their struggle ... was not against the *hijab* itself but about what the Intifada would lead to. While they struggled on a daily basis to maintain their right to choose and their right to a better future, they received little support from either progressive men

or the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising who waited one and a half years before addressing the *hijab* campaign."

Gita Sahgal describes increasingly hard sermons being preached in the mosques with "much more straightforward attacks on secularism ... a very beleaguered feeling that the whole world is against you and you have to pull together." This will sound familiar to Jews. It is hard to challenge those who emphasise a sense of threat in order to create unity within a community without appearing to abandon that community. But a spurious unity derived from fear cannot serve the needs nor address the diverse and often conflicting concerns of the groups and individuals that make up the community. It can only subvert their attempts to take control of their own destiny.

For more information about Women Against Fundamentalism write to BM Box 2706, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 071-571 9595.

Against the Grain, published by Southall Black Sisters, is available from 52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middlesex, price £7.50 (institutions) £4.50 individuals, £1.50 unwaged.

had to be broken on rather spurious cultural grounds, causing we know not what psychological damage.

But that's the trouble with inflexible rules. In this case the rule was that foster parents could never adopt. They could stop fostering, then adopt a different child! Despite the bond that had developed, and although the fosterers were fit to adopt, that particular council would never tolerate it. It would be easier on the child if the social workers could ethnically match foster parents too, but imagine how difficult that would be in an emergency, which these cases often are. I believe, in these cases of toddlers fostered since birth, that the child's stability, and not ethnic matching, is paramount.

How does a council find a family to match all the mixed-parentage permutations they will find unless they lump all these children together as "black" and disregard the other side of their parentage? One child in my nur-

sery had a Turkish father and English mother. His mother had another child whose father is Caribbean. If those children had to be fostered, would they be split up? Another mother I know has five children. The oldest two have a black father, the youngest three's father is white. When she had a breakdown the emergency social worker fostered the two oldest in one place, the other three elsewhere. If she really couldn't find a home for all five then they should have been split differently, with one of the oldest mixed-parentage boys accompanying his two youngest siblings. Luckily, this family was soon reunited with their mother.

My son's former childminder is Spanish. She has a son whose father is part Spanish, part Carib-

bean. She split up with him and returned to Spain with her son. I suspect that had the child gone into care the council would have insisted on a black foster family, although the boy spoke Spanish and that was his main cultural background.

These mixtures might cause complications to social workers but not only do they enrich our society, they are very common. About a third of Afro-Caribbeans in relationships have white partners. Mixed-parentage children are a large proportion of those in care. If the local authority makes ethnic matching paramount then the children really will wait much longer in temporary homes. They will, especially if very young, develop very close bonds with foster parents and will suffer

psychological damage if these bonds are abruptly severed.

I know a white couple who adopted a Pakistani boy about 25 years ago. They say the most telling factor was not the boy's ethnicity (which all three recognised) but dealing with his extremely disturbed behaviour caused perhaps by his traumatic experiences since birth. Race might be important outside the home, but inside other emotional issues might be dominant.

So while adoption agencies have a duty to match on ethnic grounds, it is unfair on the children in crisis to make them wait, even languishing in children's homes, until the correct family is found. Principles are very fine, but life is too complicated for strict rules.

We have all been worried in recent months by the upsurge of organised attacks upon the Jewish communities in Britain. What makes a racist spend a night in a Jewish cemetery daubing gravestones, or derive pleasure from attacking Jewish youngsters on a *Shabbat* afternoon? I believe part of the answer lies in the subtle and sinister process by which Jews, born and bred in Britain, have come to be viewed - again - as un-British: a foreign intrusion into the British way of life. The gravestone dauber believes that he or she is responding to an almost respectable view, which argues that British Jews are nonetheless aliens and fair game for attack. I also believe that the anti-shekhita lobby has played a disproportionate part in the projection of this view.

As a member of the *Shekhita* Committee of the Board of Deputies, and Political Adviser to the Campaign for the Protection of *Shekhita*, I make it my business to keep an eye on provincial press coverage of *shekhita* matters. Consider a letter, printed in the *Western Morning News* (Plymouth) on 25 February 1990, from one Reginald Warmington who declared, on the subject of "ritual slaughter": "It is about time this Christian country stood up against these Moslems and Jews, who seem to be able to do whatever they like in the name of religion." Here the implication is quite clear: British Muslims and British Jews are undermining Christian values. On 25 April the editor of the *Rochdale Observer* saw fit to publish, over the safely anonymous signature "Animal Lover", the following piece of dangerous nonsense: "In 1933 a law was passed which made it obligatory in Britain to slaughter animals in a humane way using pre-stunning... Unfortunately this law is no longer enforced, as such enforcement would offend Muslims and

## Matchpoints

In *Jewish Socialist* 20 Neil Collins spoke out against transracial adoption. Bernard Misrahi responds.

Neil Collins is right to insist on the principle of same race adoption. I agree that local authorities, given sufficient effort and resources, could recruit enough adoptive parents from the black and other ethnic minority communities. However, I do wonder whether social workers will have to try so hard to match ethnically that they won't also be able to take into account that adopter and child are compatible temperamentally, and right for each other in other ways.

But it's not so easy to place mixed-parentage children. I don't agree with Neil that the non-black side of the child's heritage doesn't

really matter if the child is visibly "black". When children have a Jewish parent should they not identify as Jewish at all? Is the Celtic heritage of children whose parents are Irish/Scottish and Caribbean worth preserving?

This issue hit the press a year ago when a South London council removed a 17-month-old toddler from his white foster mother. Another foster mother wrote to *The Guardian* to report a similar experience, although she had not contested the removal but later wished she had. As in the South London case, she'd fostered the child from birth and was a different "race" from him. The local authority insisted on a Spanish home for this part-Spanish child. It had taken so long to find such a home that the baby obviously developed a close bond with his foster parents. This bond

## Shekhita - the knives are out

The campaign against Jewish and Muslim methods of slaughtering food animals, *shekhita* and *halal*, has become the spearhead of a campaign against Jews and Muslims themselves, argues Professor Geoffrey Alderman.

Do you keep kosher? If you do, you will probably know that over the past few years there has been a concerted attack upon *shekhita* in Britain, spearheaded by the so-called animal rights lobby. The aim of this lobby has been and still is to bring about the prohibition of British *shekhita*. If you don't, you may know little about this campaign, and care less. I want to try and show why all Jews, from the ultra-orthodox to the lapsed atheist, need to be united in opposition to this lobby, and why its malevolent activities threaten us all.

I am not concerned in this article to investigate the claims of the lobby that *shekhita* is inhumane. Nor do I believe, incidentally, that all opponents of *shekhita* are anti-Jewish. My family and I eat kosher because that is part of our religious creed: *shekhita*, like circumcision, is an aspect of religious liberty. If you don't like it, too bad. I am prepared to engage in an intelligent and rational dialogue with rational opponents of *shekhita*. What I will not tolerate is the use of anti-*shekhita* arguments as a cover for blatant anti-Jewish propaganda. And that, at bottom, is what the anti-*shekhita* lobby has become.



Jews..." The argument here is even plainer: the British Parliament legislated to prohibit slaughter without prior stunning, but it is not enforced in order to appease the Jews and the Muslims, who are therefore undermining British democracy. In fact, the 1933 Slaughter of Animals Act specifically permits *shekhita*, which is therefore part of the law of the land; no law has been allowed to lapse in order to satisfy Jewish religious precepts.

It is a fair point to ask how, in the name of responsible journalism, such rubbish was printed at all. But the editors of the *Rochdale Observer* and the *Western Morning News* are not alone in permitting their newspapers to be used for the dissemination of views which can only deepen and broaden racial and religious hatreds in the UK. On 23 February the *Camberley News* carried a letter from Nora Whiting of Crowthorne complaining that the Muslim community in Peterborough was lobbying for *halal* meat to be served in schools. "These people", Nora declared, "should conform to our laws." And she asked: "Who are they anyway - where did they come from? Do we have to have them?"

In an article in the *Jewish Quarterly* (Summer 1989), Brian Klug examined in some detail the dis-

course of the campaign in this country against Muslim and Jewish slaughter, concentrating on *Agscene*, published by Compassion in World Farming. Mr Klug concluded that *Agscene's* rhetoric "effectively makes British Jews foreigners in the country of which they are citizens". This rhetoric has in fact taken several stages further the polemic once used by the RSPCA, which in 1968 was threatened with legal action in respect of a sentence in its pamphlet on *Ritual Slaughter*, drawing attention to "people whose practices contravene the moral requirements of the host community" (see Tony Kushner's article in the *Jewish Quarterly*, Spring 1989).

Unfortunately, but indisputably, this rhetoric has now permeated far beyond the specialist anti-*shekhita* lobbies, and is being used as part of the weaponry of those whose aim is to portray Jews and Muslims as both un-British and anti-British, at odds with and indeed undermining the values of the society in which they were born and live.

This type of argument was the stock-in-trade of the Nazis who succeeded in delegitimising German Jewry through attacks on *shekhita*. We shall ignore these signs at our peril.

## Past masters

### No exaggeration

The past needs no "sensationalising". IG Farben not only helped Hitler's war, they made it their war right from the start. Wherever the Wehrmacht's tanks rolled, and often ahead of them, went the IG Farben men, seizing what could be plundered, what exploited. This huge company not only supplied the gas, and some of the gas chamber engineers, for Auschwitz, it ran part of the camp, as a slave-worked commercial enterprise.

Born of Germany's rapidly advancing chemical industry at the end of the last century, the Big Three companies which came together as IG Farben acquired a near monopoly - and pre-eminence on a world scale - in artificial dyestuffs (*farben*), fertilisers, pharmaceuticals and, through Agfa, photography.

To meet the 1929 depression, Farben forged further links with other chemical giants like ICI in Britain and Standard Oil in the United States, forming world-wide cartels to control production. Through cleverly negotiated patent agreements the German combine assured itself protection for artificial rubber (buna) and synthetic oil production. At the height of the Battle of Britain every gallon of aviation fuel bought by the RAF from Standard Oil included in its cost a loyalty payment for IG Farben Industry - helping to keep the Luftwaffe flying!

During the First World War, Carl Duisburg of Bayer chemicals com-

bined patriotism and profit by turning his factories over to make explosives and poison gas, and persuaded the other manufacturers to join in forming IG Farben. Fritz Haber, who had pioneered the synthesis of ammonia and nitrates, ran tests of gas on the enemy at the battlefield, and, together with Walter Rathenau in the War Ministry, convinced the stubborn General Staff of the importance of the chemical industry to the war effort. Perhaps the only man to be nominated for a Nobel prize and named as a war criminal in the same year (1920), Haber, the patriotic German, was a baptised Jew and had to flee in 1933. He died in exile within a year. Rathenau, also Jewish, was murdered by right-wing officers in Berlin in 1922.

### Labour movement

Poison gas was not the only new tactic tried out in World War I. As more men were conscripted, while industry was trying to increase production, Carl Duisburg protested to the War Ministry that labour was short and wages too high. He demanded that the army "open up the Belgian labour basin". In November 1916, reports from occupied Belgium spoke of troops smashing their way into homes and forcing men at bayonet point on to cattle trucks destined for Germany. Over 66,000 Belgians were transported, though they proved a reluctant and troublesome labour force. Duisburg also campaigned for strict wage controls and the outlawing of strikes in Germany. This "captain of industry" is credited with coining the phrase, before the "little corporal" made it famous, "*Fuehrerprinzip*".

At first wary of the upstart Hitler, whose street-corner boys used to attack IG Farben as "international finance capital", the chemical bosses eventually decided, as those in coal and steel had done before them, that this was their man. On 20 February 1933 Baron Georg von Schnitzler of IG Farben joined the Krupps, Thyssens and others gathered at Hermann Goering's country house. Hitler addressed them, promising to crush the "Marxists" and rebuild Germany's military strength. Herr Baron von Schnitzler pledged 400,000 marks from IG Farben for Nazi Party funds - their biggest single donation.

### Aryanising Austria

Hitler readily grasped the importance of Farben's synthetic rubber and oil-from-coal hydrogenation process for his war plans. Farben collaborated with Goering in developing the new Luftwaffe, in contravention of the Versailles Treaty. With the military

leaders, IG Farben took part in the *Vermittlungstelle Wehrmacht*, a central bureau planning supplies and conquests.

Shortly after Nazi troops occupied the Rhineland, in 1936, IG Farben representative Paul Haeffliger went to Vienna and told the directors of Austria's biggest chemical concern, Skodawerke-Wetzler, that the Fuhrer had just begun. They should come in with IG Farben. At first they resisted. Skoda was partly owned by the Rothschilds, partly by the Czech National Bank. After the Anschluss, Farben got its way. A document prepared by IG Farben for Goering called for all "non-Aryans" to be dismissed from the Austrian chemical industry. Skodawerke general manager Isadore Pollack was stamped to death in his home by Nazi storm-troopers. Erwin Phillips, president of Dynamit-AG Austria, had already been murdered in Prague. Skodawerke was acquired cheaply and merged with the other two big Austrian chemical firms to form Donau-Chemie AG - owned by IG Farben.

Czechoslovakia was next. Then Poland. IG Farben's "sales" team went in, but they didn't bring back orders; just a detailed, up-to-date survey report, presented to the *Vermittlungstelle Wehrmacht* in June 1939, on "The Most Important Chemical Plants in Poland". Even before the Nazi troops had taken Warsaw, Baron von Schnitzler was sending cables to Berlin from the Boruta coal-tar works, urging that IG Farben be allowed to take over the Polish industry. The Boruta plant was stripped down and shipped to Germany.

### A profitable friendship

Late in 1940 Otto Ambros, IG Farben's expert on Buna rubber, was told that there must be a big increase in production, for which the Nazi state would give "all suitable assistance". IG Farben then assigned him to survey Polish Silesia for a site for a new plant. Ambros found a site where the confluence of three rivers offered ample water, and which had a coal mine nearby and good rail links. What's more, the SS was building a camp that would provide cheap labour. It was near a Polish village called Oswiecim - in German, Auschwitz.

Anticipating huge profits to come from Hitler's "*Drang nach Osten*", IG Farben's directors approved 900 million Reichsmark to establish IG Auschwitz, a complex that would include the Buna plant under Otto Ambros and a coal hydrogenation plant under Heinrich Buettelisch. In March 1941 Buettelisch, who was also a lieutenant-colonel in the SS, met with Major-General Karl Wolff,

whom Himmler had appointed SS liaison officer, and they agreed that Farben would pay the SS 3 Reichsmark a day for each camp inmate, 4 for skilled workers. Later the SS undertook to supply children at one and a half Reichsmark.

To reinforce the SS guards, it was decided to bring in professional criminals, selected for their sadism, as overseers, *Capos*. A report to IG Farben headquarters complained that the *Capos* were severely flogging the weakest inmates on the site and this was disturbing some of the Polish and German workers, so management had requested that floggings be carried out back at the camp. However, as Ambros wrote to Fritz Ter Meer, head of the Buna division, "Our new friendship with the SS is proving very profitable."

Soon IG Auschwitz's weekly report was saying: "The work, particularly of the Poles and inmates, continues to leave much room for improvement... Our experience so far has shown that only brute force has any effect on these people..." By the end of the year, the report could ignore the floggings and strike a festive note: "On December 20, representatives of the IG took part in a Christmas party of the Waffen SS, which was very festive and which ended up alcoholically gay." So one Jew's birthday was celebrated in Auschwitz.

### Maximum exploitation, mass murder

To get from the main Auschwitz camp to the IG Farben site was four miles march in all weather. Sometimes prisoners escaped in the fog. Sometimes they arrived too weak to work, or carried their dead workmates back and forth to meet the roll call. IG Farben decided on a further investment - its own concentration camp on site, Monowitz. The SS would provide the guards, and IG Farben feed and house the inmates. "All the inmates must be fed, sheltered and treated in such a way as to exploit them to the highest possible extent, at the lowest conceivable degree of expenditure," was the order. Over the camp gate was erected the sign: ARBEIT MACHT FREI.

Also erected were watchtowers with searchlights and machine guns, electrified barbed wire around the perimeter and a gallows, from which a body or two would hang as a warning to the prisoners. If the *Capos* didn't get enough work out of their team to satisfy the IG foreman, they got beaten at night. "Once the inmates were assigned to the Farben Meister, they became his slaves," a former inmate recalled at Nuremberg. "We would see the lorries carrying the sick

The company which produced gas for Hitler's death camps is back in business, says David Dorfman

It's not only the swastikas that have reappeared. The name which, more than any other, came to symbolise the Nazi military-industrial complex and its empire of mass murder is being heard again on the multinational business scene. Just when West German companies and scientists stand accused of helping Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons programme, it has been reported that IG Farben, the company which did most to develop horrific nerve gases like Tabun and Sarin, and supplied the Zyklon B used to gas millions of people in Hitler's death camps, is back.

The prospect of German reunification has reawakened this spectre, it seems. Farben, which most people thought had been laid to rest after Nuremberg, broken up into three constituent parts (Hochst, Bayer and BASF), was not liquidated. Although it's still banned from manufacturing, Farben's shares have been rising. It is claiming £2 billion in assets that were taken over in East Germany.

In a deal partly set up by NM Rothschild, another British merchant bank, SG Warburg, through Mercury Asset Management, took a 10% holding in IG Farben in July. "Jewish merchant bank revives Nazi gas

chamber firm" was how Murdoch's *Sunday Times* told it (29 July 1990). With increasingly overt British hostility to Germany as a business competitor, some of the right-wing, jingoistic, middle-class readership will have frothed at the mouth at the savour of "Jewish money-lenders" being involved, although the writers were presumably just finding the piquancy in a business story. SG Warburg was founded by a Jewish refugee from Germany, but nowadays it has a board of directors, most of whom are not Jewish.

Nevertheless, some Jews have apparently said they see nothing wrong in buying shares in Farben. Evidently they either do not know or do not care about its history. The Board of Deputies of British Jews, for whatever reason, feels it unwise to raise the matter of Farben (*Jewish Chronicle*, 10 Aug 1990), while from the elite Anglo-Jewish Association there was a call, albeit acknowledging the crimes of IG Farben, to concentrate on encouraging "our neighbours and friends" in the Federal Republic, in their endeavours for democracy and "reconciliation", rather than "sensationalising the past" (*Sunday Times*, 12 Aug 1990).



MILLIONEN  
stehen hinter mir



inmates away and the fellows who worked with them would never see them again," said a British POW.

At their trial, the IG Farben bosses needed their memories jogged. Fritz Ter Meer denied he'd ever heard of Monowitz. Reminded that he'd been there, he still didn't remember seeing any barbed wire and watchtowers or passing the gallows. As to people being exterminated, they hadn't known. "I am just a chemist," insisted IG Auschwitz boss, Otto Ambros.

Other witnesses told it differently. Former British prisoner of war Leonard Dales was asked what he meant by saying the inmates became the IG meisters' slaves. "They were told that if they didn't work to his satisfaction, he would report them to the SS who would see that they got gassed," he replied. Another British prisoner, Charles Coward, testified: "Everyone to whom I spoke gave the same story—the people in the city, the SS men, the concentration camp inmates, foreign workers. All the camp knew it. All the civilian population knew it. On one occasion they complained about the stench of burning bodies. Even among the Farben employees to whom I spoke, a lot of them would admit it. It would be utterly impossible not to know."

IG Farben supplied the gas. Auschwitz camp commandant Rudolf Hoess testified that having seen the use of carbon monoxide for killing people at Treblinka, he felt it was too slow. "So when I set up the extermination building at Auschwitz, I used Zyklon B, which was a crystallised prussic acid which we dropped into the death chamber from a small opening. It took from three to 15 minutes to kill the people in the death chamber, depending on climatic conditions. We knew when the people were dead because their screaming stopped. We usually waited about half an hour before we opened the doors and removed the bodies. After the bodies were removed our special commandos took off the rings and extracted the gold from the teeth of the corpses."

Produced at the Bayer, Leverkusen, works and distributed through an IG Farben subsidiary, Degesch, Zyklon B had been supplied in small quantities to the SS for vermin control. It normally contained an indicator, an unpleasant odour to warn that it was poisonous. Now in 1942 Degesch was asked to supply Zyklon B odourless; and following the Wannsee conference directive to exterminate the Jews, orders soared, and with them Degesch profits doubled. In 1943, 90% of the Zyklon B went to Auschwitz.

Of those who did not go straight to the gas ovens at Auschwitz, 300,000

were sent to slave for IG Farben on a starvation diet, in inhuman conditions, under a sadistic regime. Nearly one in 10 was worked to death. Unlike classical slavery, where the slave was fed and maintained as a piece of capital, in the Nazi, IG Farben, version they wound up as raw material—gold for the Reichsbank, hair for mattresses, fat for soap.

#### Back in business?

Despite the damning evidence, the trials of senior IG Farben management ended in sentences which, in the words of angry prosecutor Josiah Du Bois, were "light enough to please a chicken thief!" For plunder and spoliation, Paul Haeffiger got two years. Heinrich Buetefisch, found guilty of slavery and mass murder, was sentenced to six years. Fritz Ter Meer, for plunder, slavery and mass murder, got seven years. Otto Ambros, for slavery and mass murder, eight years. When he came out, there was a directorship waiting for him.

The trial had been dogged by official sabotage, missing documents, and a barrage of abuse against the prosecution from back home in the States. Southern Senator John E. Rankin attacked the trials as a "saturnalia of persecution", declaring: "...a racial minority, two and a half years after the war closed, are in Nuremberg not only hanging German soldiers but trying German businessmen in the name of the United States."

From Michigan, Representative George A. Dondero claimed in the House that communist sympathisers had taken over key jobs in the US military government in Germany, and named deputy chief prosecuting counsel Du Bois as a "known left-winger from the Treasury Department who has been a close student of the Communist Party line". Du Bois challenged Dondero to repeat it outside Congress, which he wouldn't. Du Bois speculated on any connection between the congressman's attack on the trials and his representing a district with a large Dow Chemical plant—one of IG Farben's old cartel partners.

"Replace IG by ICI for England, or Du Pont for America, or Montecatini for Italy," argued an IG Farben defence lawyer, "and at once the similarity will become clear to you." Far from being outraged by such a comparison, some big business chiefs seem to have sympathised. But then, powerful companies like Standard Oil, ITT and Ford all had links with IG Farben to think about. Besides, wasn't communism the enemy now? Pretty soon, West Germany would have to rearm.

IG Farben's American business lawyer, John Foster Dulles, became Secretary of State in 1953. His brother, Allen, headed the CIA. In May 1955 the Federal Republic of Germany became a sovereign state under Konrad Adenauer. A few weeks later, IG Farben stockholders were told that the combine would not be liquidated yet. The following month, one of the successor companies, Hoechst, made convicted war criminal Friedrich Jaehne a member of the board. By September, he was chairman. Fritz Ter Meer became chairman of Bayer the following year.

IG Farben back in business? Or, were they ever out of business? US attempts to break up the giant into a host of smaller firms were a utopian project, doomed to fail by the objective laws of capitalism as much as by business lobbying and political indecision. From a proposed 47 enterprises, it emerged as seven, and then just three—Hoechst, Bayer and BASF—each of which grew by the mid-1970s to rival Du Pont or ICI, and each of which is today bigger than the old IG Farben. Short of a social revolution throughout Germany—which was certainly not an Allied war aim—what else could have been done?

While eyeing up its claimed £2 billion assets in the East (and in Poland, too?), IG's present investors deny any connection with the past (*Sunday Times*, 5 Aug 1990), and its liquidators say they are under no obligation to compensate ex-prisoners of war who slaved for Farben. In a strong, united (and capitalist) Germany, will IG Farben feel obliged to adhere to post-war restrictions? We are entitled to study the past.

We welcomed the Wall coming down; but a "democracy" so fragile it must be sheltered from the past is not very convincing. We are entitled, no, obliged to pay attention to the past. With our comrades of the German Left, there is no need to preach to us of "reconciliation"—we were often enough on the same side of the wire. With the Right, the racists, the murderers and those who profited from slavery and murder, we can never be reconciled, no matter how many dirty, bloodsoaked Deutschmarks are proffered. Besides, when we hear again of socialists having to fight Nazis in Leipzig and Berlin, and we see the swastikas on our memorials, we know the past is still with us—and not only in Germany.

#### Further reading

Historical material was drawn from *The Crime and Punishment of IG Farben* by Joseph Borkin (André Deutsch, 1979) and *Generals in Grey Suits* by JE Du Bois (Bodley Head, 1953).

## Thoughts of a voluntary exile

Being in exile means:

Not being able to have steaming Falafel made by the sweaty and hairy hands of the Romanian immigrant,  
Class of '47 with the numbers on his arms, each bite spiced with the buses' fumes as they emerge, howling,  
from the central bus station in Tel Aviv, delivering ecstatic children to all corners of the Promised Land.

I was five years old when Jerusalem became again a subject of a changing status. The city that had championed many and washed in the blood of even more, once again is claiming a bitter price for her liberation by one army from the occupation of another.

As a five year old it didn't make a great deal of sense.

Days of turbulence that linger into months of dislocation.  
Like the buried bud during the long cold winter I too know that the time of thawing will come, that the natural rhythm of life will not pass me by. But a darkness of suspicion never lifts dreading that out of the slumbers of now only rot and decay will evolve, mocking the long months spent in long patience.

Here, the cities of the West sprawl out into green. There, cities merely sprawl abruptly reaching an invisible line that me, and the like of me, are forbidden to cross by our conscience and fear. Over there, the "countryside" is where the Palestinians grow our tomatoes. Every time an Israeli bites into the juicy fleshy vegetable he must think of the hand that buried the seed in the soil the same hand that would be holding a stone on the following day. The same hand that could be lying dead, rubber bullet and all.

"Biting the hand that feeds" acquires a new meaning in the *Moledet*.

The *Moledet*.  
It means, the country of birth, or more loosely, the Motherland. But I was born here, in the west, in the not-so-green Stoke Newington.

So where is my *Moledet*? Perhaps in Lom by the Blue Danube, where my dad spent his first fourteen years? Or in the spacious house in Salonica, where my baby Mum gazed onto the humid street?

Or is it in the dusty army camp on an arid hill somewhere near Jerusalem, where I spent the bitterest Yom Kippur, truly atoning the sins that made me a soldier?

The Orthodox synagogue in Nottingham didn't believe my Jewish authenticity one grey Yom Kippur, as I stood outside, wrapped up, seeking warmth amongst my ancient "brethren". I didn't have a ticket...

The recital of *Shema Israel* convinced them that I had no intention of blowing the place up so I didn't get arrested by the bemused policeman who was looking forward to a bit of action on that dull day. But admission I did not gain.

I spent the rest of the day trying to explain to a gentle lover why I still felt a part of the Jewish people.

And still I know it is true: There is a dream I share with some multitudes here and everywhere.

A dream, a memory, a hope, that it hasn't all been in vain, the screams of the victim, the songs of the pioneer, the whispered prayer of the devout, the spoken anguish of the intellectual, that one day the *Moledet* for some shall not be an exile for others.

Rony Alfandary

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# Party lines

Is it safe to enter? Yes. Thank Christ they're not here yet. I walk in and join the people with their backs up against the wall. Some of the men are drinking whisky from Nana's egg-cup shaped glasses with the gold leafing. There should be a set of six but I broke one years ago at a *Pesach* gathering.

"You're a very, very naughty girl," said Nana, wagging her finger and speaking in slow motion. That woman never lost the ability to make me wither. *Olevesholem*. Uncle Harry sees me and grabs my wrist, drawing me over to one of the whisky glasses.

"Joe - this is Sylvia and Jack's youngest, Jane." He turns to me. "You remember Joe, don't you? He used to come round here with the little dog, Trixie. You remember Trixie?" I don't really, although I have a vague memory of a black terrier that yapped a lot and frightened me.

"Yes, hello. How is Trixie?"

"Oh, she died many years ago," says Joe. "Are you the one with the husband?"

"No," says Harry shortly.

"That's Annette. He's in systems analysis."

"What?" says Joe.

"Martin is a systems analyst," I say. "Computers."

"Harry," says Auntie Edna from the doorway, "did you bring that bulka bread in with you?"

"It's in your bag," says Harry.

"It's in the car?" asks Edna.

"It's in your bag," says Harry. Edna turns from the doorway saying, "I told him to bring it in." Harry turns to Joe. "If it wasn't for me she'd have left it at home." Joe nods in agreement.

I edge over to the window where Uncle Abe is sitting with one arm resting on his stick. He grinds his jaw in recognition.

"Hello, Uncle. Can I get you some tea?"

"No," he gurgles, "I got, I got." He gestures to the tea cup on the chair beside him.

"How's Auntie Hettie?" I ask. His face brightens.

"She's having it off on Wednesday."

"Really?" I say, searching his face for a clue to his meaning. It can't be amputation, he looks too happy. Maybe it's sex.

"Oh, she's looking forward to it," says Abe with feeling. A vision flashes through my mind of Auntie Hettie in a black negligée leading Arnold Schwarzenegger across her Axminster. She's gazing into his eyes.

"I hope you've wiped your feet," she whispers.

"She'll have to go to hospital for physiotherapy and she won't be able to lift anything heavy for weeks." Of course! Hettie broke her wrist at Christmas. Her arm is in plaster.

I hear greetings sound from the doorway and my heart misses a beat. They're here and I'm going to be trapped in a room with them. I see Annette's head through a crack in the doorway and I breathe again and go out to see her.

"I rang you this morning to offer you a lift," she says.

"I was staying with a friend in Streatham. I came straight from there."

"Ah," Annette pauses and looks at me. "Is that the woman you were telling me about?" she says in a low voice.

"Yes," I smile.

"So you decided to ring her back?"

"Ring who back?" says my mother, puffing from the stairs and too many bags.

"Sylvia," says Edna from the kitchen, "what have you brought? I told you I was going to Marks."

"It's not much," says my mother, pushing past us into the kitchen.

"They're only bits," Edna pulls out some cream cheese and twiglets. "I got already," she says, hurt.

"You don't know how many people are coming," says my mother. "If it's too much I'll take it

home again." She turns to face us and give what Annette calls one of her "Why-do-I-bother" looks.

"Are you all right?" she asks, stroking my cheek. "You look tired. I tried to ring you last night."

"Hello, Sylvia, how are you?" says Harry, appearing at her shoulder. "Edna," he bellows in my mother's ear, "more tea for Abe." Martin arrives and he and Harry discuss parking and potholes in Hackney.

"What time are Marvin and Nancy going to be here?" I ask my mother.

"Why?"

"Because I'd rather leave before they get here."

"You don't have to get into arguments. You can just ignore them." And there, on cue, Marvin and Nancy arrive at the front door. They move forward greeting and kissing. I take a deep breath and smile. They push past and don't look at me.

Later, after the prayers and two large tumblers of whisky, Marvin is standing in the middle of the sitting room bemoaning the declining standards in the British music industry.

"Of course, you were very lucky with your success," says Joe. Marvin swivels round. "It wasn't luck. It was bloody hard work." He pauses for a moment. "And talent," he adds. Echoes of Marvin's one and only song-writing success drift through my memory.

"Cuddle up and be my poodle Cuddle up and be my dove When we're together, honey I'm just a soppy pup."

Eighth in the 1972 Eurovision song contest. Even Norway came higher.

"Bloody jungle music. You know what I think? They should stick to selling drugs. That's what they're best at." In the kitchen I see Nancy listening with sweet concern to something Edna is telling her. She

nods slowly.

"Well, of course you do," she murmurs. I stand alone in the hallway and recite softly.

"Bernard Manning, Richard Branson, Julie Burchill."

"What are you talking about?" asks my mother.

"It's my list."

"What list?"

"It's my thank-God-they're-not-Jewish list. Neil Kinnock. The couple in the Gold Blend advert. The couple in the Lloyds Bank advert. The Royal Family."

"Go into the kitchen and help Edna and stop being stupid."

"Oh God, do I have to?"

"Go on. Annette and Martin are leaving soon. You can go with them." Nancy watches me as I enter. I feel like a bag lady who can't stop scratching.

"Where are you living now?" asks Edna.

"Brixton," I say.

"Black enough for you?" snorts Marvin behind me. Nancy tosses her highlights and smiles.

"I hope you're careful when you go out at night," says Edna.

"Doesn't matter where you live these days. They're everywhere," says Marvin.

"They roam around in gangs now," says Nancy. "It's just like New York. You see them hanging around Chigwell station on a

Saturday night."

"As if there isn't enough dirt on the streets," says Marvin.

"If they're dirty they'll feel at home in Chigwell," I say. There's a silence. Marvin looks at me for the first time.

"I've seen you," he snarls, "demonstrating with all the rest of the communists and socialist scum." He smiles. "You and your lesbian friends."

"Jane," snaps my mother from the doorway, "Annette and Martin are ready to go."

I stand there trembling, knowing at two o'clock in the morning I'll have an answer for Martin. The kitchen is suddenly very busy as Edna and my mother rustle bags and bang drawers very loudly.

"Here," My mother gives me a bag and drops sandwiches and crisps into it. Edna opens the fridge and looks crestfallen.

"I forgot about the chopped herring." My mother is tight-lipped and still bustling.

"Take it home with you," she says without looking up.

"It gives me acid," says Edna, rubbing her cleavage and looking nauseous. "I'll be up all night."

"Sylvia," says Nancy warmly, "why don't you and Jack pop over on Sunday? We're having a barbecue."

"We're busy," says my mother,

collecting her bags. She stops at the doorway. "And I hate barbecues." We load up the car and set off down the street.

"Who am I dropping off first?" says Martin.

"Come home with me," says my mother. "Your father will give you a lift tomorrow morning."

"I can't," I say. "I have to go to Streatham."

"What's in Streatham?"

"A friend," I pause. "A girlfriend."

"Do what you like," says my mother and turns to stare out of the window.

"Mum..." I start to speak.

"Not now, Jane," says Annette, "we're all very tired."

"I don't know what your grandmother would have said," mutters my mother to the window.

"I told her," I say.

"What?"

"I told her I was a lesbian."

"What did she say?"

"She said she didn't care what I ate as long as my bowels were regular." Martin and Annette shriek with laughter.

"Your grandmother," says my mother, shaking her head. "I had conversations like that with her all the time." The car goes quiet.

"*Olevesholem*," says Martin.

RUTH LUKOM

# Marshal law

As a French Jew born just before the Second World War, who visited the French concentration camp of the Struthof in 1947, when I was 7 years of age, and has been steeped in stories about the condition of Jews during the War, I do not pretend to be an impartial reviewer of Paul Webster's book; rather, a sympathetic if critical one.

Paul Webster has written a fair journalistic account of the French government's responsibility in the genocide of the Jews of France in the Second World War. During that period, Petain was the Head

of State of the Vichy government, which ruled over the southern half of France from June 1940 to September 1942. His responsibility for sending Jews to their death is thoroughly and convincingly documented by Paul Webster. The author describes the discriminatory and racist legal framework established by the French government against Jews from 1940 onward prior to their imprisonment, then deportation to German concentration camps or their murder by order of the French government, with the full knowledge of Petain. The whole pro-

cess had not been forced on Petain or his government by the Nazi government. It was his choice. In this respect, Petain shared Hitler's ideology with regard to Jews defiling the purity of the "national stock". In his own way, he also had the same practice. Only their end differed. Petain was tried, sentenced to death, then pardoned by De Gaulle. He died in his bed, albeit in a French jail.

The book is good descriptively, adequately researched for documentary evidence, and it makes effective use of stories and comments by survivors. The chapters

*Petain's Crime: the full story of French collaboration in the Holocaust*, Paul Webster, Macmillan, £18.95 (hbk)



are short and very often so are the paragraphs, making it easy to read.

But the book lacks depth and breadth in its historical analysis of the causes of the genocide of the French Jews. It is unacceptable to trace the roots of anti-semitism in France merely to the late eighteenth century, and only briefly mention the role and influence of the Catholic Church in France, when for centuries Christianity had spread an anti-semitic message which had become part of the cultural values of French people, as enshrined in many linguistic expressions.

Webster's description of social struggles and changes relate to struggles for political power. There is virtually no evaluation of socio-economic trends and changes in French society and their possible connections with the evolution of the ideology of each socio-economic grouping or class in that society, their moral values and consequently their support for or opposition to anti-semitic practices.

This is typified by his description of life in the province, in the first page of the book: "Like so much of the Midi, the pace of life has not changed over the centuries. Noe illustrates the lasting traditions of contented French provincialism." Such ahistorical platitudes, not to say stupidities, curtail the book's value as a study committed to understanding the factors that brought about the genocide of the Jewish communities in France.

The book's weaknesses come further to the fore when dealing with the post-War period. The official cover-up of the crimes committed by Petain and part of the French bourgeoisie against the Jewish communities in France is attributed to a lack of moral fibre and courage. In reality, it reflects the desperate need of French bourgeoisie in the post-War period to remain united in order to retain its hegemony as a ruling class, and direct political power.

Furthermore, his analysis of the Jewish community's development in France between 1945 and

1968 bears little resemblance to the reality as lived by its members (I was one of them). The Jewish community did not need the creation of the state of Israel to restore its self-confidence. The main impact of the state of Israel's creation was to displace the focus of Jewish life from the internal needs of the community to the needs of the state of Israel.

Despite its weaknesses, this book is worth reading for the factual information and exposure it contains about the antisemitism and genocide practised by the Petain government towards the Jewish communities in France. Last, but not least, Paul Webster's book contains some graphic accounts of the armed struggle waged in France by Jews against their oppressors between 1940 and 1945, be they French or German antisemites. A revealing book despite its shortcomings about a period of French history which clings to its participants like a tunic of Nessus.

ALAIN HERZMANN

## The Jewish question

Why did the Heavens not Darken? by Arno Mayer. Verso, £12.95



In spite of its title, this book does not try to explain why the heavens did not darken at the time of the Holocaust; that is, why neither God nor humanity intervened to prevent it. The author, an American historian who escaped from occupied Europe as a child, does however have his own interpretation of what he calls the Judeocide, namely that the Nazi leaders did not plan to kill the Jews, only to deport them from Europe. Arno Mayer sees early Nazi policy as aimed at frightening the Jews into emigrating, a plan stopped by the refusal of other countries to accept them. The Polish Jews were put into ghettos to make their eventual deportation easier and they would have been deported to Madagascar if Britain had not been in control of the seas, and to the eastern USSR if the Soviet Union had been defeated quickly. The final solution proposed

in 1942 at Wannsee still involved eventual deportation. The killings which followed were not deliberate policy but born out of the frustration of the failure of the campaign against the Soviet Union. The SS killed Jews at Maidanek because they could not kill Soviet soldiers. The gas chambers were constructed only as a means of disposing of the dying more quickly. Women and children were selected for death at Auschwitz only because the French fascists had sent them along with their menfolk in order to make up the numbers. The Hungarian Jews were to be killed to implicate Hungary's leaders so they would not sue separately for peace.

Mayer has read some 500 of the standard works on the period and some sections of the book are very illuminating. He is good on the campaign against the USSR, the collaboration between German

industrialists and the SS running the concentration camps, and very good on Hitler's linking of the Jews with "Bolshevism", from his attacks on the "Jewish" doctrine of Marxism in *Mein Kampf* to his final diatribe before his suicide against "international Jewry, the universal poisoner of all nations". So, too, Hitler's views of himself as a modern crusader, illustrated for example in his choice of the code name Barbarossa for the attack on the Soviet Union, after

Barbarossa (Frederick I) who took part in the Third Crusade.

Well argued as his thesis is, I do not find it convincing. Can the burning of Jews alive in synagogues in 1941 just be attributed to localised "Judeophobia" and Babi Yar an outburst of frustration because Kiev held out so long? Mayer himself quotes the Guidelines for the Conduct of Soldiers in Russia issued in 1941 which speak of "a ruthless and energetic drive against... Jews", while

leaflets dropped in Russia promised "the decapitation of the Jewish comintern". The author too admits that the four extermination camps "defy explanation".

Every Jew has to come to terms with the Holocaust in their own way and this book (which, you should be warned, is not an easy read because of the style rather than the subject matter) may help the reader to a better understanding of the warped logic of Nazi policy. DONALD KENRICK

## The body politic

Disability, Education and the Classroom, by Micheline Mason and Richard Rieser. ILEA

"The issue is that you might belong to a group of people who are heavily disapproved of and discriminated against."

A book written and edited by disabled people represents a significant leap forward in the world of disability politics. This book contains the most comprehensive collection of writing to date by disabled people who are actively involved in the struggle against the discrimination of disabled people in this country. It provides an opportunity to become more familiar with the many issues that need to be addressed within a larger political framework -

charity vs rights, disability culture, segregation vs integration, language, sexuality and disability, independent living and stereotypes.

The book is written for teachers in an attempt to improve the quality and appropriateness of the education provided to disabled people and improve their experiences of education. Enclosed at the end is a resource pack covering useful exercises which could be adapted by teachers in a variety of settings. Many issues are addressed which should be of great use to teachers, for example the planning of school trips,

harassment, learning resources and communication skills.

The authors rely mainly on the use of personal anecdotes to put across the variety of different political issues. Whilst their experiences are valid, the reader may be left somewhat frustrated and needing a follow-up book which deals more strategically and directly with the political issues and debates facing educators in the 1990s. These issues are complex and those such as integration or segregation need further debate.

MERAV DOVER

### FIFTH COLUMN

Be part of the Fifth Column. Deadline for listings in the next issue of *Jewish Socialist* is 14 December. Please keep listings as brief as possible (50 words max) and send them to *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC1N 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. The next meeting is on 13 Nov. Contact Myra on 0602 603355 for details.

**Manchester Jewish Socialists** Contact Adrienne on 0204 591460.  
**Bristol Jewish Socialists** Contact Midge on 0272 249903 (5-6pm & 8-9pm).

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

**The New Spectre of Antisemitism**, speakers Mel Read MEP and Gerry Gable. 2 Dec at 7.30pm, Friends House, Leicester. Details from Myra on 0602-603355.

**The Jewish Lesbian & Gay Helpline** and the **Northern Region Jewish Gay & Lesbian Group** can be reached on 071-706 3123 Mondays and Thursdays 7-10pm. Information, counselling and advice.

**Prison Notebooks**, by Antonio Ronson, c/o Lord Jakobovitz Open Prison. Proceeds to Herring International (not a fishy business!)

**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.

**Israeli Mirror**: Monthly digest of news translated from the Hebrew press. Details: 21 Collingham Road, London SW5.

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

**Red Rabbi** offers services: for naming ceremonies; secular bar/bat mitzvah celebrations; commitment ceremonies; weddings; divorces; funerals; as well as counselling and home tutoring - all with an egalitarian, humanistic and progressive approach. No job too small! Fees negotiable. Phone Michael Feinberg on 081-346 8890.

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**The Fondation Marcel Liebman** is a group committed to the tradition of critical thought and discussion of socialism past and present. Next activity: a course on the political and social history of Palestine given by two researchers at Birzeit University. Contact: Fondation Marcel Liebman, CP 124, Avenue Jeanne 44, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium, telephone (322) 642 33 86.

Support a film on 3 elderly Jewish women refugees. Partly funded by GLA, more funds needed. Contributing organisations will be credited. Write to Gill Daniels, 40 Moray Rd, London N4 3LG.



# 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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## 6th JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

**Monday 15 October at 8.40pm • KORCZAK** Dir Andrzej Wajda, Poland, 1990  
A tribute to the legendary protector of the Warsaw Ghetto's orphans.

**Wednesday 17 October at 8.45pm • SHOOT AND CRY** Dir Helene Klafsky, Canada, 1988  
Israelis and Palestinians talk about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.  
**Plus • TALKING TO THE ENEMY** Dir Mira Hammermesh, UK, 1987  
Shot in Israel, the Occupied Territories and the USA, this documentary explores the politics and the feelings of people living in enmity.

**Thursday 18 October at 6.30pm • SHADOW WOMAN (Donna d'Ombra)** Dir Luigi Faccini, Italy, 1989  
An insight into the role of the Jewish father.

**Thursday 18 October at 8.15pm • SPECIAL EVENT**  
Filmed testimony of World War II, made for educational purposes, plus discussion.

**Saturday 20 October at 8.45pm • THE LAST BUTTERFLY** Dir Karel Kachyna, Czechoslovakia/France/UK, 1990  
The true story of a French mime, who is blackmailed into performing at Terezin concentration camp in order to mislead a Red Cross team.

**Monday 22 October at 6.20pm • A WOMAN'S PALE BLUE HANDWRITING (Eine Blauschwarze Frauenschrift)** Dir Axel Corti, Austria, 1984  
1936, as the Austrian government is threatened with a German takeover, many Austrians reveal their willingness to collaborate with the Nazis.

**Monday 22 October at 8.45pm • A SENSE OF BELONGING PART ONE** Dir Paul Morrison, UK, 1990  
First two of four films on British Jewish identity: *Jewish Sons*, *Jewish Daughters* and *Exile*.

**Tuesday 23 October at 6.15pm • HIDDEN MEMORY (La Memoire Effacee)** Dir David Andras, France, 1990  
Hungarian Jews looking at their Jewish identity and questioning the antisemitism around them.

**Plus • AT THE CROSSROADS** Dir Yale Strom and Oren Rudovsky, USA, 1989  
New York Klezmer musician Yale Strom journeys through Eastern Europe.

**Tuesday 23 October at 8.55pm • A SENSE OF BELONGING PART TWO** (See 22 October)  
The third and fourth films in the series: *Exodus*, on the theme of freedom, and *The Wilderness*, on the search for spiritual fulfilment.

**Wednesday 24 October at 9.00pm • CHARLOTTE** Dir Franz Weitz, The Netherlands, 1980  
A drama tracing the life of artist Charlotte Solomon (1917-1943).

**Thursday 25 October at 8.15pm • SPECIAL EVENT**  
Director Harriet Wisnitch will show her video, *Ewa - My Grandmother's Story*, a first-person account of her life in Poland.

**Sunday 28 October at 9.00pm • CHASING SHADOWS** Dir Naomi Gryn, UK, 1990  
Rabbi Hugo Gryn returns to his home town, Berehovo, in Czechoslovakia.

**Plus • THE LONELY STRUGGLE** Dir Willy Lindwer, The Netherlands, 1988  
Marek Edelman, one of the few survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and now a leading figure in Solidarity, gives an insider's account.

**Monday 29 October at 6.15pm • HALF THE KINGDOM** Dir Francine Zukerman and Roushell Goldstein, Canada, 1989  
Can women change age-old religious and social structures?

**Plus • ROOTLESS COSMOPOLITANS** Dir Ruth Novoczek, UK, 1990  
A wry look at the myth of the Jewish princess and the Jewish family.

**Tuesday 30 October at 6.00pm • THE WANDERING JEW** Dir Maurice Elvey, British, 1923  
A film based on the "semi-allegorical" figure of the Jew condemned through the centuries for an act of alleged blasphemy. Followed by a discussion.  
**Plus • THE WEDDING OF ROSE CARMEL TO SOLLY GERSHOWITZ** Home movies, 1925, British

**Thursday 1 November at 6.30pm**  
**PASSPORT** Dir Guerogul Danelia, France-USSR-Israel, 1990  
A timely and humorous film about the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel.

**Thursday 1 November at 8.15pm • SPECIAL EVENT**  
*The Yidische Gauchos*, the story of Jews escaping from Eastern Europe to Argentina - plus discussion.

**Saturday 3 November at 8.30pm • REVOLT IN SOBIBOR** Dir Lily Van Den Bergh, Pavel Kogan, USSR, 1990  
The feelings and experiences of survivors of the daring prisoners' revolt.

**Sunday 4 November at 4.00pm • TELEVISION EVENT**  
Programme makers discuss where Jews "fit" on television.

**Sunday 4 November at 7.40pm • THE SHLEMIEL, THE SHLEMAZL AND THE DOPPESS** Dir Jack Gold, British, 1990  
A broad look at Yiddish. Filmed in England, Israel and America, including the East End's own Friends of Yiddish.

**Plus • NEXT TIME DEAR GOD PLEASE CHOOSE SOMEONE ELSE: Jewish Humour American Style** Dir Rex Bloomstein, British, 1990  
Joan Rivers, Billy Crystal, Jackie Mason and others reflect on their Jewish roots, while a new generation of comedians continues the tradition.

**Monday 5 November at 6.00pm • CURRENT EVENTS** Dir Ralph Artyck, USA, 1989  
Interviews with caring individuals searching for modern ethics.  
**Plus • CENTURY OF AMBIVALENCE** Dir Audrey Droizen, British, 1990  
The first programme ever produced by the Jewish Film Foundation, this is a timely account of the Jews of the Soviet Union, 1880 to the present.

**Monday 5 November at 8.45pm • SUNSET** Dir Alexander Zeldovich, USSR, 1990  
Tales of Jewish gangsters in Odessa after the Revolution.

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