

JEWISH SOCIALIST

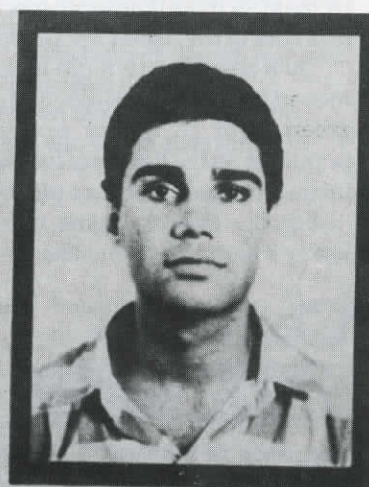
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— The magazine of the Jewish Socialists' Group —

Fighting for a future – *Soviet Jews after the coup*

Also in this issue:

- Bundist victims of Stalin
- Violence in the name of religion
- Jews for Jesus: the missionary position
- The communists of Israel and Egypt



**ИЛЬЯ МАРАТОВИЧ
КРИЧЕВСКИЙ**

АРХИТЕКТОР
1963–1991

БЫВШИЙ СОТРУДНИК И ТОР...
ПОГИБ В НОЧЬ 21 АВГ...
ПРИ ЗАЩИТЕ БАД...

Editorial

Summer 1991 failed to provide the traditional 'silly season'. Frightening, alarming, exciting... these words better express the tremors, large and small, that have been felt across the world in the last three months.

Eastern Europe has been the theatre for the most explosive developments, with the escalating war between Serbs and Croats, and the dramatic Soviet coup followed by restoration of the constitutional leadership, the unearthing of the symbols of dictatorial power and the crumbling of the Union itself. The mass demonstrations from below in support of these changes are heartening, but many people are disturbed by the sight of an ascendant Boris Yeltsin defending democratic institutions by autocratic decrees and open political bullying of rivals.

The dramatic upheavals in the Soviet Union have, at least temporarily, torpedoed the projected superpower-based Middle East peace conference for which there was frantic preparatory activity through the summer. The odds were already stacked against a just outcome, and with the relatively increased international hegemony now enjoyed by the USA there is little prospect of the conflict being ended in favour of the region's poor, oppressed and dispossessed.

On a smaller and more local scale, British politics has moved firmly into pre-election gear, giving the customary green light to empty opportunism and dangerous populism. In the depths of recession and rapidly increasing unemployment there are plenty of reasons to be fearful.

Equally close to home two events disturbed Anglo-Jewry's summer calm. The first was a much publicised

wrangle over sexual abuse within north London's ultra-orthodox community. The ugly scenes of terror directed against those that suffered the abuse testify to the new found confidence of fundamentalist forces within and outside the Jewish community. These forces can only derive succour from the second major event - the installation of a new Chief Rabbi who seems to reserve his most glowing praise, after God, for the leaders and followers of the fundamentalist Lubavitch movement.

In all these changes, great and small, we are witnessing major clashes of interest which to a considerable extent are being fought out in a battle for the hearts and minds of the mass of ordinary people.

The confusing and contradictory nature of the events are opening governments and peoples to new ideas and influences, as well as making them vulnerable and endangered. Among religious fundamentalists, political opportunists and demagogic 'liberals' there is an unseemly rush to extract the maximum advantage in extremely fluid circumstances. David Cesarani (p10) describes the attempts by ultra-religious Jews and right-wing Zionists to decide the fate of the millions of Soviet Jews, but he has faith in their strength to resist these pressures. Whether we have the strength to resist such forces in our own community is the deadly-serious focus of Paul Collins's lighthearted New Year musings (p8).

The next 12 months promise to be anything but dull, and we wish you, our readers, a very happy, healthy and socialist New Year.

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Cover: Protesters carry placards of Ilya Krichevski, Russian Jew murdered defending the Russian Parliament, August 1991: Simon Pirani

Speaking in tongues

The reintegration of Soviet Jews into world Jewish affairs received a boost when the World Congress for Yiddish decided to hold its sixth session in Moscow this summer.

Despite decades of cultural repression under Stalin and his successors, which limited public Yiddish activity to a few tightly-controlled outlets, there are still many Yiddish-speaking Jews in the Soviet Union. Under glasnost and perestroika, Yiddish activists have received a measure of positive help from central and local Soviet authorities in their efforts to rehabilitate and revive Yiddish culture, but in an atmosphere in which popular antisemites are also exploiting new freedoms.

However, just at the point when Soviet Jews can start to have a freer exchange with Jews elsewhere, they are increasingly exposed to the struggles by religious and Zionist interests to impose their priorities on all aspects of Jewish life. Yiddish culture has historically posed a problem for both these interests since it has a strong secular and internationalist tradition.

Writing in *Lebnsfragn* - a Yiddish journal published by Bundists in Israel - Yitzhak Luden admits he will be going to Moscow with *gemishte gefiln* (mixed feelings). Instead of looking seriously at ways to improve the position of Yiddish in the various countries where it is spoken, he feared that the congress would lecture the Soviet Jewish delegates on the achievements of the World Congress and tell them how

Israel alone was the creative centre of Yiddish culture. He envisaged that this problem would be compounded by the Congress's continuing failure to abide by simple democratic norms. It normally records the views of the chair but not the opinions expressed by the delegates. For Luden both these fears were epitomised in the congress committee's refusal to allow Y Shargal, a prominent Israeli Yiddishist, to speak on the struggle for Yiddish cultural rights in the Jewish state, which would have meant revealing decades of sustained discrimination that has only recently been partially relaxed.

Luden believes that Yiddish culture needs not only the active support of the Congress, but also government resources in the countries where there are Yiddish-speaking Jews, including both the Soviet Union and Israel.

Postscript: The United Jewish People's Order (UJPO) - a left-wing cultural organisation active in Canada for 65 years - has issued a statement condemning discriminatory practices by the World Council for Yiddish which excluded the UJPO from the official participation in the congress. Their statement says that 'Discrimination against the left ... is continuing ... despite the fact that the left/secular groups have a proud record of contributing substantially to the promotion and preservation of Yiddish and Jewish culture in its deepest humanist and progressive sense. This discrimination is intolerable given the weakening of the cultural base of Yiddish ... it is also intolerable strictly in terms of civil liberties.'

Contested history

One would think that the first-time publication in Britain of a detailed memoir of one of the command group that led the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising would be warmly welcomed by the Jewish community and by anti-fascists. Not so.

The publication of Marek Edelman's *The Ghetto Fights* (see review in JS22) by Bookmarks - the publishing outlet of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) - with an introduction by SWP activist John Rose, has inflamed a bitter controversy. Rabbi Julia Neuberger (writing in the *Jewish Chronicle*), *Searchlight* magazine and Stefan Grayek (President of the World Federation of Jewish Fighters, Partisans and Camp Inmates) have all waded in to attack the publication, the publishers and the editor's introduction.

The book itself is a stirring account of the daily struggles against Nazi terror inside the ghetto, the equally testing fight against despair, and the political

fight against conservative communal leaders for mass physical resistance. Edelman highlights the role of his party - the explicitly socialist and anti-Zionist Bund - and this in itself is controversial because Zionists have grown used to claiming the full credit for the uprising for themselves. Edelman though is scrupulously fair in celebrating the role of all who resisted, including Zionist parties, despite the negative and acquiscent role of Zionists, Left and Right, throughout the 1930s when the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party led the fight against antisemitism in Poland.

The Zionists do not return Edelman's generosity. Writing in *Searchlight*, former student activist David Herman penned a venomous piece, more suited to a Union of Jewish Students' propaganda sheet than Britain's leading anti-fascist magazine. Showing little evidence that he had even read Edelman's account, Herman defended and

elevated the role of Zionists and criticised the Bund for allegedly having a stand-offish approach to unity in the ghetto. One of his major sources is Grayek, who entered the fray later in the letters column of the *Jewish Chronicle*, repeating the anti-Bundist allegations.

Interestingly though, Grayek's account of events is contradicted by Yitzhak Zukerman, a left-Zionist also in the ghetto command, who had stood consistently for unity among the Jewish fighting forces. In his posthumously published memoirs, in Hebrew, *Zukerman criticises Grayek and three other colleagues for themselves opposing unity with the Bund and the communists*.

Jewish socialists can take a positive view of these events. The publication of Edelman's book brings to light an inspiring and important historical document for anti-fascists that also provides a counter-weight to accepted Zionist historiography. We may also

hope that the interest shown by the SWP in Edelman will lead to a more thorough assessment of the politics of Bundism, which previous SWP publications have treated less than favourably.

Shared care

The Romani-Jewish Alliance has been formed to recognise the special relationship shared by the Jewish and Gypsy (Romani) peoples. Linked together for centuries by persecution and oppression during separate diasporas in Europe, now we are joined together in solidarity against the related forces of anti-Gypsyism and antisemitism. Recognising our bond in the past, we are committed to combating stereotyping, discrimination and persecution in the present.

Further information from the International Romani-Jewish Alliance, PO Box 325, Cashmere, Washington 98815, USA.

Israel's treatment of Palestinian detainees has again come in for severe criticism recently with the publication of a report by Amnesty International. Published in July this year, the report is entitled *The military justice system in the Occupied Territories: detention, interrogation and trial procedures*. It covers every aspect of military justice, from initial arrest to the conclusion of the trial, and includes a 30-page section on torture.

This is the third investigation in the last year into allegations of torture of Palestinian security detainees during interrogation. In the summer of 1990 an independent British researcher carried out research into the treatment of Palestinian women security detainees in interrogation (as yet unpublished), and last March the Israeli human rights organisation, *B'Tselem*, published a report entitled *The Interrogation of Palestinians during the Intifada: Ill-treatment, 'Moderate Physical Pressure' or Torture?*

The Amnesty report looks at the military justice system as a whole. It is based on information gathered over several years, during which its delegates regularly visited Israel and the Occupied Territories. They observed trials, met lawyers, defendants, and Israeli officials. Extensive field research was done in late 1990.

It concludes that the 'odds are stacked against' Palestinian civilians getting a fair trial in the military courts because of fundamental flaws in the system. These include the use of prolonged incommunicado detention of prisoners following arrest, often for periods of 20-30 days. Many defendants claim that false confessions are obtained from them during this period by the use of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. In addition, Israeli government policy sanctions both 'non-violent psychological pressure' and 'moderate physical pressure' during interrogation, and the military prosecutors rely on confessions as their primary evidence. Judges have been reluctant to exclude confessions when the defendant claims that they have been obtained under duress, and defendants are subjected to additional pressures – such as the offer of a shorter sentence – to enter into plea bargains. The result, Amnesty says, is that a 'vicious circle is created between the practice of plea bargaining and torture or ill-treatment. The pressure to plea bargain and therefore not to raise

Moderate physical pressure

any allegations of torture or ill-treatment encourages the use of torture or ill-treatment to extract confessions.' In addition, Amnesty criticises various ways in which defence lawyers are obstructed in their work.

The *B'Tselem* report and the unpublished report on women both focus on the experience of detainees in interrogation and its legality. They draw extensively on interviews with detainees and ex-detainees. *B'Tselem's* 41 interviewees had been interrogated variously by the General Security Service (*Shin Bet*), by the police and by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). Almost all of the 19 women interviewed for the second report had been interrogated by the General Security Service (GSS). They included two Jewish Israeli women peace activists interrogated in the infamous *Derech Hanitzotz* case. Both reports suggest that remarkably similar methods are used by all

prolonged periods of painful confinement in small specially constructed cells (the 'closet' or 'refrigerator') and severe and prolonged beating on all parts of the body, resulting sometimes in injuries requiring medical treatment.

The report on women finds that, while many of the same methods are used with detainees of both sexes:

the GSS have developed certain techniques specifically for women. These include sexual harassment, manipulation of the Arab notion of 'female honour' and manipulation of mothers' concern about the welfare of their children... At the same time as the detainee is becoming weak from a combination of sleep and food deprivation with physical abuse, she must also cope with a barrage of verbal sexual taunts, sexual threats and, in some cases, sexual assault.



interrogators. To quote *B'Tselem*: *A number of interrogation methods appear to be common, even routine, in the group we interviewed. Virtually all our samples were subject to: verbal abuse, humiliation and threats of injury; sleep and food deprivation; hooding for prolonged periods; enforced standing for long periods, sometimes in an enclosed space, hands bound behind the back and legs tied (al-Shabeh); being bound in other painful ways (such as the 'banana' position);*

It seems that no allegations of actual rape during interrogation have been made since the start of the Intifada. However, in a society where a woman's honour is her most precious possession, the impact of the threat of rape must not be underestimated. The interviewees who were mothers said that they found threats against their children, and allegations that their children were suffering in their absence, were harder to bear than beatings and other forms of maltreatment. The Jewish Israeli women were not subjected to physical maltreat-

ment but to severe psychological pressure.

In 1987 an official Israeli inquiry into GSS methods by High Court Judge Landau recommended that 'psychological and moderate physical pressure' should be permitted in interrogations of security detainees. A secret appendix to the Landau report contained guidelines on what was permissible. *B'Tselem* sent a copy of their report to Judge Landau, with a letter inquiring if there was some connection between their research findings and the nature of these guidelines. In his reply, Landau strongly denied this and reminded *B'Tselem* that his 1987 report had found that 'false complaints ... are frequent, as part of a systematic campaign being waged by terrorist organisations against the GSS...'. Landau went on to accuse *B'Tselem* of 'aiding those who seek ill for the state...'. *B'Tselem* has caused prejudice and hostility towards the Shabak interrogators – as if torturing detainees were their bread and butter – and the wholesale defamation of a service, whose job it is to protect the inhabitants of the state and the territories (Jews and Arabs alike) from mass and individual acts of terrorism' (letter in *Ha'aretz*, 10 May 1991).

Given Judge Landau's response, it is interesting that shortly after the *B'Tselem* report was published a new official inquiry was set up to check its findings. This consists of the State Prosecutor's Office, the GSS, the Police and an army officer. An inquiry into the internal workings of the GSS is also taking place. It is also worth noting that on 16 July 1991 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), whose representatives are the only people allowed to visit detainees during the interrogation period, took the unusual step of issuing a press release announcing their concern about the treatment of detainees. After complaining about the lack of response by Israel to 'numerous previous reports and representations', they appealed 'to the Israeli authorities to give special attention to the treatment of detainees under interrogation and to implement the recommendations ... [the ICRC] has already made'.

TERESA THORNHILL

HUNGRY for peace

Veteran Israeli peace activist Abie Nathan has carried out a personal campaign in defiance of the 1986 law which prohibits contact between Israeli citizens and representatives of Palestinian organisations. In October 1989 he was jailed for six months for meeting Yasser Arafat. He served the full term, rejecting the alternative of community service and refusing to appeal. (Several other Israelis convicted for meeting the PLO in Romania appealed to the High Court in order to challenge the validity of the law; the judges adjourned their appeal in 1989 and the convicted people are still awaiting a decision.) Since his release Abie Nathan has consistently continued his insistence on dialogue with the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, the PLO, in order to explore, as an Israeli citizen, the possibility of a just peace.

Recently he stepped up his courageous campaign with a hunger strike which was finally called off after 41 days, after

he received messages of support and appeals to stop the hunger strike from hundreds of Israelis, including a special appeal from Israeli President Herzog, as well as from 70 political prisoners in Gaza, 80 rabbis, and from Yasser Arafat. These appeals argued that the hunger strike had served its purpose in raising a clear message of opposition throughout Israeli society to this unjust anti-peace law, and that his life would achieve more than his death.

As soon as he ended the hunger strike, he arranged a further meeting in Tunis with Yasser Arafat and Abu Mazen of the PLO. Initially, 64 prominent Israelis agreed to join him but they all pulled out, leaving him to go on his own to be warmly received by Arafat.

The mainstream of the Israeli peace movement, particularly the leaders of the supposed parties of peace, Ratz and Mapam, was cool in its response to Nathan's hunger strike. This turned to

hostility at his subsequent meeting with the PLO. It is not difficult to see that they are being drawn into complicity with the Israeli government's determination to exclude the PLO from the proposed peace negotiations. There can be no just peace while Israel denies the Palestinian people the right to be represented by the PLO (and also makes unreasonable demands to circumscribe any other form of Palestinian delegation). Abie Nathan and other Israeli groups and citizens who uphold this right as self-evident are exposing the international moves to impose a settlement over the heads of the Palestinian people.

The law of 1986, carrying the accusation of treachery, of being a traitor, an informer, is ludicrous in relation to people seeking peace. Whatever Abie Nathan and Yasser Arafat talked about, there should be no law against it. In fact, an examination of the text of their last meeting shows Abie Nathan asked clear and important questions regarding a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and was given direct answers by Arafat. This is precisely the dialogue that should be carried on by the Israeli government instead of creating legislation with the aim of obstructing peace.

Abie Nathan's commitment to challenging the law of August 1987 and to a genuine dialogue for peace, including being prepared to lay down his life, has won considerable popular support, despite the reaction of the mainstream Israeli left parties. In a statement in *Ha'aretz* (3 July 1991), the Association of Tel Aviv Writers, Artists and Academics welcomed Abie Nathan on his return from meeting the PLO, saying: 'Abie Nathan, blessed is your return home after your brave journey for peace. Your fight against the anti-democratic and immoral law and your efforts to pave roads to reconciliation between the two peoples in this land are a personal example to us all.'

It is important for campaigners here to recognise the work and commitment of Israel's peaceniks and to demand that the Israeli government stops victimising the real peacemakers like Abie Nathan who meet the PLO openly in a search for justice and reconciliation, and repeals the law that makes such dialogue an imprisonable offence. Letters protesting against the 1986 law which makes contact between the PLO and Israelis illegal can be sent to the Israeli ambassador.

SIMON LYNN

Internazional

Argentina

May 1991. 110 tombstones in a Jewish cemetery were destroyed and a bomb exploded at a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires. These attacks are linked to the growth and growing confidence of openly antisemitic parties in Argentina. The Nationalist Workers' Party, which, according to its leader, Alejandro Biondini, claims to have 25,000 members, has recently adopted a swastika as its official symbol

and plans to field candidates at legislative elections in October. At present a federal court judge has refused them registration.

Literature from another group, The National Socialist Movement of Frederico Rivanero Carles, was found on the two men arrested for the cemetery attack. According to the Argentine daily newspaper, *Clarín*, this group has been particularly involved in a burgeoning 'holocaust revisionism'.

Poland

Friday 2 August 1991. Tombstones were overturned and defaced with antisemitic slogans at Warsaw's Jewish cemetery. A memorial to Jewish soldiers who died defending Poland in the Second World War was also attacked. President Lech Walesa condemned the incident as 'the worst kind of hooliganism'.

Yugoslavia

Sunday 18 August 1991. Two powerful bombs exploded at a Jewish community centre and cemetery in Zagreb. No one was hurt.



Growing pains

Gay and Lesbian Jews from many countries recently met in San Francisco at their twelfth biennial International conference. James Baaden and Jeremy Killingray were there.

The first International Conference I attended was in Washington in 1985; then came Amsterdam in 1987 and Chicago in 1989. Six years ago, 200 people took part and I was the only person from the UK, representing London's Jewish Gay Group. This year's conference was attended by nearly 500 people, and the UK contingent numbered 20, even though this was the farthest ICGLJ site from Britain to date. Now the Jewish Gay Group is the Jewish Gay & Lesbian Group: its membership has nearly doubled since 1985 and is far more mixed in gender – today the chair is a woman. Meanwhile, two other Jewish gay/lesbian projects in Britain have joined the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organisations, the umbrella body which sponsors the conference: the Jewish Lesbian & Gay Helpline, a twice-weekly phoneline, and Hineinu, a group for young lesbian and gay Jews. All three groups were represented in San Francisco and all three will jointly host the next conference – set for 1993 in London.

These changes show the extraordinary growth in the international Jewish lesbian/gay movement since the mid-80s. There have been many other remarkable

developments. The World Congress has grown from under 20 organisations to over 30, with an impressive range of new member groups outside of the United States – in Toronto, Berlin, Paris, Stockholm and Vancouver, for instance. Women have increased from less than a third of ICGLJ participants to nearly half. In 1985 there was but one out gay rabbi; last year, America's Reform rabbinical assembly resolved overwhelmingly that sexuality could not be used to bar anyone from the rabbinate, and this spring nearly 30 gay and lesbian rabbis signed an open letter to the US Jewish press. There has been a rich crop of gay/lesbian Jewish writing (Sarah Shulman, Larry Kramer, Lesléa Newman, Harvey Fierstein) in the US, and here in Britain several notable Jewish public figures have come out (Antony Sher, Lionel Blue, John Schlesinger). Jews Against The Clause took its place prominently in the struggle against the iniquitous Section 28.

And there have been losses. Each conference is preceded by a World Congress board meeting of the delegates from the member organisations. I shall never forget my sense of perfect inspiration and discovery as I sat at a table in Washington in 1985 with delegates from 15 Jewish gay and lesbian groups – I saw the same wonderful processes unfold for first-time participants in San Francisco. Yet this year I chose not to attend the delegates' meeting, for in my mind I constantly recalled that of those 15 back in 1985 – nine men

and six women – four of the men are now dead. And though I wish the whole Jewish people would mourn their loss, I need only open the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* to remind myself that many of my 'co-religionists' would be more likely to smile with gloating contentment. All the same, I knew those four men, and I know that they set the most admirable standard in their commitment to values of justice, liberty and equality; they made it possible for others to find liberation and solidarity today. May their memory be for a blessing.

JAMES BAADEN

Most conferences I have attended usually take place in musty community centres where I am more preoccupied with arriving late to avoid being asked to shift furniture; needless to say, the 'International Conference of Gay & Lesbian Jews' held at the opulent Holiday Inn in San Francisco was a far cry from what I have become accustomed to in Britain. North Americans sure know how to throw a party, but I suspect that some delegates from more humble environments were awestruck to the point of distraction, inhibiting their ability to participate as equals. This was not the culture shock I had expected to feel. I had prepared for a sense of isolation as a result of my being a non-Jewish participant among 500 Jews.

I was aware, however, of a certain amount of political isolation. Many of the workshops were geared towards developing personal growth strategies for dealing with

problems that European socialists would prefer were debated under the rubric of political economy. Here the conference mirrored North American society which appears to have unburdened itself of literature and debate which might encourage a class oriented analysis. This is surprising considering that the US has a prison population that is disproportionately black, and an infant mortality rate far higher than any of the other 'Group of Seven' states.

Despite this, the red carpet treatment afforded by our hosts was gratifying and perhaps we in Britain could learn something from this. The business of strategy planning and debate appeared of secondary importance to partying. This was a pity as lesbian and gay Jews have much to discuss, particularly if, as a European, one has witnessed the latest round of attacks on Jews by the resurgent far-right.

A workshop I attended on lesbian and gay parenting had little to say about the problems experienced by those outside of California – where incidentally there are notable efforts to integrate children into gay synagogue life; this issue being one of the few agenda items specifically relating to Judaism. The minimal attention paid to religious affairs, as distinguished from issues of 'congregational' development, perhaps aided my welcome, but I was left wondering if North American culture has been so completely colonised by materialism that all other concerns, spiritual or global, have become incidental.

JEREMY KILLINGRAY

East Europe update

BY DONALD KENRICK

At the time of writing, fighting is still going on between Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia. The basic problem is not Croatian autonomy but the fact that (in spite of the massacres of Serbs during the German occupation of Yugoslavia during the Second World War) there is still a substantial population of Serbs on what the Croats consider to be their territory. The battle is really about the size of the new Croatia. Can it include a sizable Serbian minority? Will Serbia annex a large part of historical Croatia? Or will the Croats drive out the remaining Serbs?

To the outsider the differences between Serbs and Croats are small (as are those between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland). The Croats are Catholic and use the Latin alphabet while the Serbs are Orthodox and use the Cyrillic alphabet. I could put a tenuous case for a class distinction on a pan-Yugoslav scale but the reason for the bitterness is historical rather than actual.

The Serbs have not forgotten the terrors of the Croatian Ustashi – fascists who operated under the protection of the German occupying forces and killed thousands of Serbs in the most brutal fashion. The concentration camp at Jasenovac saw the same horrors as Belsen and Auschwitz. Although Tjudman, the leader of present-day Croatia, fought against the Germans, he won the recent elections on an avowedly antisemitic and anti-Serbian platform. He has recently accused the Jews of killing some 20,000 Gypsies at Jasenovac, denying that this was the work of the Croatian Ustashi.

Elsewhere in eastern Europe a large number of British skinheads were seen recently in Prague at heavy metal concerts. Skinheads have beaten up Gypsies and Asians in Bohemia as well as Hungary and east Germany. There are also extreme right-wing ultra-nationalist parties in all the ex-communist countries.

Apart from the Soviet Union itself the Jews are outnumbered by the Romanians (Gypsies) and it is the latter who bear the brunt of attacks both physical and in the media. They are the scapegoats for economic failure. But antisemitism is only beneath the surface and the Chief Rabbi of Romania, for example, has warned that it may return.

The Jewish population of Bulgaria numbers between six and ten thousand. The older members are mainly communists who decided not to go to Israel after 1945. (The Bulgarian Jews were amongst the few in Europe not to be the victims of Nazism but most took the opportunity to emigrate after the war ended.) Their children and grandchildren try and learn Hebrew and support the anti-communist forces. There are now two organisations, one communist, renamed Shalom, and the new Zion, which has as its aim the restoration of the synagogues and the setting up of Jewish schools. This small population provides half a dozen MPs. One of these, Leah Cohen, was recently appointed to be ambassador to Brussels and a Jewish journalist appointed press attaché, leading one newspaper to comment that they hoped the business of the embassy would be conducted in 'pure Bulgarian' and not Ladino.

Paper tiger

New *Jewish Chronicle* editor Ned Temko promised that his newspaper would take a non-exclusionary approach to issues and individuals in the Jewish community when he addressed a lively meeting of Jewish Socialists' Group London branch in July. He saw the *Jewish Chronicle's* role as informing, not preaching, and as a forum for discussion.

Since they heralded a change in policy, his opening remarks were met both with encouragement and with scepticism about whether such a change might prove merely cosmetic.

During the discussion people made a number of points and put straight-

forward questions which, unfortunately, Temko evaded. He was asked: To whom is he responsible? Who controls the *Jewish Chronicle* financially? Would the paper consider appointing an ombudsperson, as others have done, to protect the right of reply? When would space be given to critics of Zionism from within the Jewish community? What was his profile of the 'typical' *Jewish Chronicle* reader to whom the paper addressed itself?

He did manage to answer a question about the paper's policy on gays and lesbians. It was pointed out that the *JC* had refused to take adverts from Jewish gay and lesbian organisations unless they advertised

events taking place on synagogal premises. Temko claimed that the current policy did not concern venue but confirmed that the paper only accepted adverts from gay and lesbian groups if the event had a religious element. This policy as a whole, he said, was under review. *Jewish Socialist* urges its readers to demand that a paper which considered it serves the community should accord gays and lesbians equal treatment with all other sections of the community. We also urge our readers to take the *Jewish Chronicle's* proposed new liberalism at its word and to keep sending letters expressing our perspectives.

DAVID ROSENBERG

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Jewish Chronicle
Editor Geoffrey Paul

ZIONISM
RULES OK

OLD CHIEF RABBI
TALKS SENSE

Jewish Chronicle
Editor Ned Temko

ZIONISM
RULES OK

NEW CHIEF RABBI
TALKS SENSE

DID YOU FIND IT?

Fundamentally unsound?

The Jewish New Year is enough to make anyone old before their time. For those who made their annual visit to a synagogue, competition between the cantor's walls and commercial laments across the aisles stressed how God suffers in a recession. And, when families break the Yom Kippur fast, non-observers receive lethal glares from relatives fresh from repenting pride and prejudice. Now, with anus 5752, the community's establishment has touched bottom.

The omens hung clear in the ether days before many impotent men blew their ram's horns. 'Jews anoint sex,' proclaimed the news bulletin. From Pinner to Prestwich radio listeners choked on their chopped herring. Liberals assumed some reference to a poll which shows large numbers of people use food during yentzes. Shmaltz producers rubbed their hands with the stuff at the prospect of a *Last Tango* remake.

Imagine the beating of breasts, therefore, as the reporter, lacking a grammar school education, pronounces the S-word: 'Sacks'. Denying themselves salt beef and lokshen pudding seemed the ultimate sacrifice. To face decades of his spiritual abstinence from real Jewish values proved too much to stomach. One Redbridge cabbie moaned: 'Not that geezer! Them Wreath lectures were fit for Rainham Cemetery... Call that a tip?'

Granted, there is no deafening chorus to restore Wacko Jakobovits. Any more than even diehard Thatcherites wish to reinstate Mad Cow disease. Immanuel may have seen a college named after him, but on Britain's social and economic issues a dunce's cap would have been more apt. His continued presence in the Lords, holding

the first peerage for a Chief Rabbi, is the best advertisement for scrapping the upper house.

Yet in the latest prying doctor Jews are saddled with the worst of both worlds. Buried under the huge media hype is his pamphlet for the Social Affairs Unit whose politics the Blessed Margaret often dismissed as deranged. Sacks' enthusiasm for Rabbi Schneerson, the big chief of the Lubavitch movement, and his tolerance for fundamentalist sexism and separatism, demands another sick bag. In one breath, Sacks embraces all Jews. Next, the irreligious are branded as beyond the fringe.

Given his Golders Green base, a curious thought lingers. The fixed smile and pretentious voice... Maybe the Saatchi pair doubled him up with another image job in nearby Finchley? Like her, Sacks talks 'unity' but, at least so far, has failed to back Jakobovits' limited support for Palestinian justice. Jewish traditions of fairness and freedom appear likely to be left in the fumbling hands of the Board of Deputies and unaccountable financiers.

Happy Rosh Hashana? Not for progressives, under Dr S. The reality is, however, that he will be presented as leader of the whole community. All the more reason to promote our alternative. Constant pressure could force him to atone for his ideological sins 12 months hence.

PAUL COLLINS

Community affairs

Flicking through the wadge of Israeli advertising in the latest edition of an earnest young magazine called New Moon we came across the following service advertised on a 'help' page:

Jafa

Jewish association for the fostering and adoption of children. Infidelity advice also offered.

We always thought Jafa sold oranges until we discovered...

The Nottingham Group wish fellow Jewish Socialists a happy new year and a good inscription in the Book of Socialism

To all my relatives and friends, all comrades of the Jewish Socialists' Group, all Bundists everywhere, a happy and prosperous new year, from Major Bogdanski.

Paul Collins and Lydia Melleck wish all Jewish Socialists a radical new year but don't wait for 'the messiah' - Neil Kinnock. Organise.

Yitshak Shamir wishes a terrible new year to all the antisemites who won't give me \$10 billion.

L'shana tova to Jewish Socialist readers from staff at Index Books, 10-12 Atlantic Road, Brixton, and 28 Charlotte Street, W1. Nu, don't be a stranger!

Julia Bard, David Rosenberg, Reuben and Jacob wish a glorious new year to all their friends and relations, and *gehakte tsores* on all their enemies!

Public meeting

'5752/1992 Israel/Palestine prospects for peace'

Speakers: Afif Safieh (Head of PLO delegation, UK) and Gershon Baskin (Co-ordinator, Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information)

7.30pm Thursday 17 October, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 (opposite Euston Station)

Organised by the Jewish Socialists' Group

'The new nationalism in Eastern Europe and Soviet Jews after the coup'

Eyewitness reports from Bulgaria and Russia from Donald Kenrick and David Cesarani

7.45pm, Thursday 24 October, Central Club, 16 Great Russell Street, WC2

Organised by the Jewish Socialists' Group

DYBBUK'S DIARY

BUSINESS AS USUAL

While the Royal Navy was keeping powdered milk and medicines from Iraqi children, Saddam Hussein's military were unpacking more deadly cargoes sent with the blessing of the British government. I don't blame the civil servants at the DTI. Her Majesty Thatcher's government hadn't let the gassing of Kurds at Halabja interfere with massive City loans so Iraq could buy British for its air force or with RAF training for the pilots. So why stop? Business is business, it's what the war was about!

Israelis wondering where the next Scud would land could have cheered themselves with the thought that if Saddam's 'super-gun' ever landed a nuclear warhead in an Israeli city, it would be thanks to Israel's technological co-operation with South Africa. Killing Dr Bull was shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted. Iraq got 200 G5 Howitzers, tested in Angola, from the South Africans. And we all know who supplied them with this weapon!

Reminds me of a pre-World War II David Low cartoon entitled *Super-Patriotic War of the Future*, depicting British Tommies crouched in a trench. Over their heads poured huge enemy shells, each clearly marked 'Made in England'. Maybe the G5 shells could be proudly marked in Hebrew, 'Totzeret Ha'aretz'.

TWO BY TWO

Where does the rabbinate stand on so-called 'virgin births'? Does the 'sin of Onan' not count as such if you're assured the seed isn't spilled but going to a good Jewish home? My thoughts are prompted by Rabbi Shmuel Boteach's warning to the Oxford LeChaim Society, reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*.

He says there are only 92 Jewish men for every 100 women. 'Thirty-seven of the 92 married out while eight were gay.' Gosh, these rabbis are clever, I'd never know that just looking around at a kosher function... but what about the women, aren't some of them likely to be lesbians? Maybe like Queen Victoria, nobody has told rabbis about lesbians. And

anyway nice Jewish girls couldn't be, could they?

Still, talking of kosher functions, Rabbi Shlomo Levin reassured the audience: 'There's nothing wrong with sex...' You can say that again, Rav. It's better than bacon (whoops, wrong joke). Mind you, he claims Judaism looks for expressions 'other than the physical'. What, 'Go forth and sublimate'?

CHANGING FACES

Socialist Organiser, a Trotskyist paper, recently ran an article by one Dave Rosenberg from the JSG. It is not uncommon for Dave to write for particular left papers (indeed Rosenberg followers will have noticed that he'll write for anybody), but we'd like to know where *Socialist Organiser* found the photograph, reproduced here,

Jewish socialist.
speaks out!

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which announced the article. Our Dave is pale and bearded (put a suit on him and he'd make a good rabbi) possibly as a result of spending every *Shabbes* in a political meeting. He seldom wears head-scarves.

TINKER, TAILOR, CHIEF RABBI?

At a recent meeting in Leicester our Bundist comrade Majer Bogdanski was asked whether he still held his pre-war socialist beliefs. Majer replied that he was an egalitarian and that each person's work had as much worth as the next. He gave as his example that the Chief Rabbi needed the work of tailors like Majer otherwise the Chief Rabbi would have to go about with no trousers. Dybbuk believes Majer has the line wrong. Any tailor's work is more important than the Chief Rabbi's and we think the Chief would look lovely with no trousers.

A PEACE OF THE WALL

Speaking of Leicester, it has long been known that Leicester has a bit of Roman wall called the Jewish wall. Recent excavations there now find that there was a Jewish quarter in the city during Roman times. Is this the chance for a breakthrough in the Middle East peace process? Let the Palestinians have East Jerusalem; Israel can have North Leicester.

SCHWEIG!

After all the groups that keep moaning they don't get 'more publicity', it's a pleasure to hear of one that prefers less. Not the Mafia or the Camorra, *ken einer hora*, but oddly enough, the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, or as it's known for short, AIPAC (of lies).

According to Lloyd Grove in the *Washington Post* (24-30 June), 'A lobby is like a night flower,' AIPAC foreign policy director Steven Rosen once told staff, 'it thrives in the dark and dies in the sun.' Not that AIPAC's methods suggest shrinking violets, with an army of right-wing Zionist fanatics and pop-eyed Christian armageddon-freaks bombarding Capitol Hill with letters, and ready to descend battalion-strength on any Congress person who questions bombing Baghdad, or giving Israel more aid than Africa.

The article went on to say: 'AIPAC's president, Mayer Mitchell, an Alabama businessman, has a policy of simply not speaking to the press.' Others are apparently told not to. AIPAC was particularly upset a couple of years ago when reporters got hold of two memos. One urged local action committees to send money to pro-Israel candidates (orchestrating donations could be seen as breaking the rules). The other memo recommended planting news stories attacking Reverend Jesse Jackson's 'extramarital affairs'.

It was supplied by disgruntled former AIPAC communications director Barbara Amouyal. During her work for AIPAC she had to try to keep some stories out of the news. 'Once, she pleaded with two Jewish newspapers not to print an item about a birthday party for Steven Rosen, during which a stripper performed on AIPAC premises.' Not so much public, more pubic, affairs I suppose.

Cut-throat competition from Zionist and religious organisations is threatening Soviet Jewry's efforts to set up the institutions which will serve its own needs. On his visit during the recent attempted coup, David Cesarani found that there is growing resentment among Russian Jews.

For 40 years, the Jews of the former Soviet Union were a prop in the eastern theatre of the Cold War. The silent allies of democracy behind enemy lines, they were a living testament to the oppressiveness of communism. For the Zionist movement 'Soviet Jewry' was a validation of its ideology. When most other indicators pointed to the movement's spiritual bankruptcy and its inability to fulfil the 'ingathering of exiles', the struggle of refuseniks to emigrate to Israel was vital to its morale and *raison d'être*, not to mention fundraising.

During the 1960s and 1970s most activity on behalf of Soviet Jewry was premised on their enforced or voluntary passivity, a notion encapsulated by Eli Wiesel in the title of his book, *The Jews of Silence*. They were the objects, not subjects, of history, but their 'plight' had a multifaceted utility. Jews in the west mobilised to 'help' them: their servitude was the validation of our liberty. This 'help', largely confined to campaigning for *aliya* (emigration to Israel), was proof both that Soviet rule was oppressive and that Israel was the haven for all Jews.

Life in the Soviet Union certainly was ghastly, yet the caricature of the USSR in western propaganda flattened the subtle changes that were occurring, not least within Jewish society. During the mid-1970s a transformation occurred in the Jewish national revival which had been underway since 1967.

Partly as a result of the Yom Kippur War, and partly due to news about life in Israel that was filtering back from the Soviet Jews who achieved *aliya* in the period of détente, the rate of *neskira* or dropping out climbed steadily. In 1974, 18.8% of Jews with visas to leave the USSR for Israel dropped out; by 1982 this proportion had risen to 70.7% – a trend that was only reversed after the USA began restricting the entry of Russian Jews.

Parallel to this process there was a split within the Jewish underground movement between 'politicals' and 'culturalists'. The former were dedicated to emigration: for them, the study of Hebrew and Jewish culture was a function of *aliya*. The latter group privileged the cultivation of Jewish traditions for their own sake and regarded *aliya* as the by-product of a Jewish cultural renaissance. Their activity first came to the notice of western observers in the late 1980s when, under the dispensation of *glasnost*, Jewish Cultural Associations began to spring up all over the USSR.

Indigenous organisations

In May 1988, a Jewish Cultural Association (JCA) was established in Moscow and the first attempts were made to forge links with similar bodies in Lvov, Kiev and Vilna. A year later, a major conference of more than 40 cultural associations, Jewish theatrical, literary and artistic circles was held in Riga. Later that year, the *Va'ad*, the umbrella body for Jewish institutions and communities in the USSR, was founded in Moscow at a conference attended by the representatives of around 200 Jewish organisations. To the astonishment of many western commentators, far from accelerating *aliya*, the conditions of perestroika and *glasnost* had unleashed pent-up forces for a rebirth of Jewish life in the USSR.

The events of 19-21 August 1991 brought this unexpected development into even sharper focus. Jewish activists associated with the *Va'ad* and the Jewish Cultural Associations played a distinctive part in the defence of the Russian Parliament and the defeat of the putsch. The leadership of the *Va'ad* counselled Jews to follow the legally constituted authorities; the Jews were the first national minority to openly support the Russian leadership. Jewish journalists working on the *Va'ad* paper joined Yeltsin's emergency press centre in the White House where they used their contacts with Jews around the union to give Yeltsin a valuable picture of responses to the coup in the regions and the republics.

The death of the Jewish architect, Ilya Krichevski, on 20 August, killed with two other Muscovites resisting the putsch, was the tragic, but richly symbolic, culmination of this co-operation between Jews and Russians. His burial as a Jew and a hero of the revolution signified the willingness of a section of Russian Jewry to throw in its lot with the new forces shaping Russia. At this moment of struggle and amity, a door opened for the Jews of Russia: suddenly they gained the space to define their future within the constellation of national, ethnic and religious groups comprising the Russian Federation and the new Union.

The *Va'ad* represents the most promising attempt to provide overall leadership for Russian Jewry. A pluralistic, inclusive and federative body, its objectives are to establish normal conditions for Jewish life to flourish in all its aspects and to reintegrate Russian Jews into both Russian society and world Jewry. As well as facilitating emigration, it defends Jews against antisemitism at home. It is also demanding membership of the World Jewish Congress as the representative of a separate Euro-Asian bloc on a par with Latin American Jewry.

However, the *Va'ad* faces numerous internal problems and external challenges to its authority. To begin with, its constituency is as fissile as the USSR was. Its claim to represent Jews in the inde-

pendent Baltic states has already been undermined: Jews wishing to demonstrate their loyalty to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have little incentive to subordinate themselves to a Moscow-based institution. The same dilemma applies, more or less, to the Jews in the Caucasian republics. By contrast, the small Jewish populations in the predominantly Muslim republics of Central Asia crave the protective mantle of a central representative body.

Struggle for Jewish souls

The *Va'ad* is self-consciously pluralistic and sets out to encompass all tendencies within Jewish life, but this lofty goal is more easily proclaimed than achieved. It is rivalled by the Union of Congregations which networks synagogues and the three(!) Zionist Federations operating in the former USSR. The synagogues are the prime target of the Lubavitch movement, Habad, which deploys considerable financial and organisational resources in order to establish its ultra-orthodox and messianic brand of Judaism as the norm of Jewish religious life. Habad, present in the USSR since the 1970s, has succeeded in establishing a powerful base in many small Jewish communities. Religiously progressive Jewish groups have also entered the race for the soul of Russian Jewry and several congregations have been set up.

Needless to say, Jews are bewildered by the zeal and competitiveness of these outfits which operate with the same level of sophistication as Christian missionaries in 'Darkest Africa'. According to one prominent participant, during a seminar at Zagorsk in early August 1991, 150 Russian Jews were lured into a Sabbath service by means of a crude deception. This event, it should be noted, was supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture – the creation of Nahum Goldmann, an outstanding Jewish secularist.

Zionists over-represented

The Israeli Zionist parties have also penetrated the USSR in pursuit of their own Eldorado. First of all they hope to claim the enrolment of thousands of Russian Jews and so inflate (even more grossly) their representation at the World Zionist Congress. Secondly, they want to lock Russian Jews into the Israeli system of party patronage even before they step onto the tarmac at Ben Gurion airport.

Perhaps the most equivocal influence on the development of Russian Jewish life has been the Jewish Agency, with massive funds and over 80 *shlichim* (emissaries from Israel) at its disposal. Although its perspective (and its funding policy) is now changing, the Agency is hostile to much of what the *Va'ad* represents. Reluctant to see any advance of non-Israeli Jewish culture, its teachers

and *shlichim* propagate Hebrew, Israeli folk-dancing and Israeli songs as the normative expression of secular Jewish culture. Naturally, they also dispense a Zionist interpretation of Jewish history. This constructs the Holocaust as the inevitable consequence of diasporic existence and the creation of the State of Israel as the logical, and redemptive-compensatory, outcome of the *Shoah*.

Despite the fact that in many parts of the old union there are young adults who grew up in Yiddish-speaking homes, there is almost no external support for Yiddish studies. Indeed, the weight and the scale of investment in Israeli-Hebrew culture amounts to a conscious effort to throttle Yiddish culture before it can create the institutional structures and obtain the funding necessary for a full revival.

A substantial portion of Russian Jewry is too sophisticated to take either the dogma of Habad or the doctrine of Zionism at face value. The influence of both tendencies is mitigated by the size, diversity and high level of education of Jews in the big-city communities. But in smaller cities and towns, Jews who have lost one comprehensive *weltanschauung* find it easy and attractive to move over to another. Sometimes this conversion occurs with the same degree of insincerity and opportunism that characterised the practice of Soviet culture. If Habadniks can deliver the vodka and wurst, so what if you have to wear a silly hat and mumble in Hebrew? Dancing the hora around the camp fire and singing Nomi Shemer songs during a weekend organised by Betar in the Moldavian countryside is, after all, not so different from the rituals of the Young Pioneers or Komsomol.

Growing resentment

Whatever the motives for the take-up, institutions whose ideology is fundamentally averse to the creation of secular Jewish culture in the diaspora are making a massive investment in the territories of the former USSR and as yet there is precious little to counterbalance their influence.

The leaders of the *Va'ad* resent the way in which Russian Jewry is exploited as a reservoir for *aliya*. They object to the manner in which it has become a happy hunting ground for the Joint, the Jewish Agency, Zionist parties, B'nai B'rith, Habad, the Reform and Conservative movements, all of which have parachuted personnel into Russian cities, set up offices and built networks that cut across or usurp those being established with painful slowness by Russian Jews themselves.

Jews in Russia are fed up with being spoken for, patronised and bullied by the well-established and well-heeled Jews in western Europe and the USA. They demand partnership, on equal terms, in the political institutions of world Jewry. They seek co-operation with the funding agencies for

the rediscovery of their own traditions and heritage, and not simply for the purposes of evacuation.

Of course, all prognoses for the Jews of eastern Europe must be to some extent provisional and cautious, and there are persuasive arguments for restricting assistance to emigration. No one is more aware of the dangers than the Russian Jewish leadership, and no responsible Jew in the west can ignore their wariness.

Yet the *Va'ad* is acting on the assumption that even in the worst scenario 3 million Jews cannot be evacuated in a year or even a decade. In this case, and more optimistically in the hope of a more favourable turn of events, it is vital to create the structures for the continuity of Jewish life in the Union of Sovereign States. Until these bodies are securely established and Russian Jewry is able to fund them from its own resources, this will entail aid from Jews in the west.

We must offer Russian Jewry our skills and

experience in setting up the totality of communal organisations: Jewish kindergartens and schools, departments of Jewish studies at universities, Holocaust education projects, welfare facilities for young and old, representative bodies and lobbying agencies.

If Russia recovers and prospers – and with its vast potential wealth there is good reason to suppose that it will succeed economically in the long term – Russian Jewry will become a rich, powerful and dynamic community. It will constitute a decisive force in the counsels of world Jewry, balancing the Jews of the USA and Israel. This is a prospect which perplexes the many vested interests at what are currently the two poles of Jewish existence and they are doing their best to establish control over Russian Jewry at the instant of its regeneration. Those Jews with a commitment to a free, pluralistic diaspora Jewish life should respond generously to the call of Russian Jews for partnership and co-operation.

Purged from history

In December 1941, when the German armies were just a short distance from Moscow, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, two leaders of the Jewish Socialist Bund in Poland, were shot in Soviet Russia. As we approach the 50th anniversary of their deaths, Majer Bogdanski writes about their lives.

Henryk Erlich came from a Hasidic background. He joined the Bund when still at school. After studying at various universities he obtained a degree in law. Owing to his talents he soon became one of the leaders of the Bund and a member of the Central Committee. He was arrested a number of times for revolutionary activities. After the overthrow of Tsarism in February 1917 he was elected to the Executive Committee of the All Russian Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet. Stalin once wrote of a meeting: 'The only sensible speech in the Central Executive Committee was that by Henryk Erlich.'

The Bolshevik revolution in October made it impossible for him to remain in Russia so he moved to Warsaw. Poland had just regained its independence. He became a member of the Central Committee of the Bund in Poland and the chief editor of the Bund's daily newspaper. In 1919 he was elected to the Warsaw City Council. He remained a councillor until the outbreak of war. Of the 120 members of the council, he was the only one to speak out publicly against Pilsudski's march on Kiev in 1920, against war and for an immediate peace with the Soviet Union. Reactionary forces demanded that he be put on trial for treason to the state. He was arrested, but released after three months.

He was active too in the Jewish Kehilla (community) where he revealed the hypocrisy of the Jewish establishment and its reactionary

policies towards the Jewish masses. Every day there was an editorial by him in the Bund's daily *Folkszeitung* dealing with both Jewish and international questions. It was a time fraught with antisemitism which hit the Jewish working masses the worst. The struggle for the right to work was a daily affair. Jewish shops were picketed by gangs of hooligans forbidding non-Jews to enter them.

It was in this atmosphere of increasing anti-Jewish hatred, particularly after Hitler's coming to power, that two Zionist leaders, Grynbaum and Jabotinsky, came to Poland. The former proclaimed that there were 'a million Jews too many in Poland' and the latter that 1½ million Jews ought to be 'evacuated' from Poland. With an iron logic Erlich, in his daily articles, knocked to pieces such suggestions, explaining how dangerous, stupid and irresponsible they were.

When under his leadership the Bund joined the Second International, he became one of the two Bund representatives on its executive.

Victor Alter was born in 1892 in Mława, Poland. He also joined the Bund while still at school, under the influence of his elder sisters. His revolutionary activities soon brought him into conflict with the police and school authorities. He was thrown out of school with a 'Votchy Bilet', which meant that he was forbidden to attend any school or university in the entire Russian Empire. With the police hard on his

heels he fled to Belgium where he studied electricity and mechanics in Liège.

In 1912 he came back to Warsaw and was active in the Bund. Arrested again, he was deported to Siberia from where he escaped again to Belgium. After the German invasion of Belgium he escaped to England. He worked in a factory and was active in the Bund groups in London and in the British Socialist Party. He was opposed to the war and took part in the campaign among Jewish immigrants to resist conscription.

He returned to Russia at the outbreak of revolution. He was active both in the Ukraine, where there were many Jewish workers, and later in Moscow where he was elected to the Central Committee of the Bund. In 1918 he moved to Warsaw and soon became a member of the Central Committee of the Bund there as well.

His main interest was the Jewish trade unions which he helped unite into one national federation. He chaired this until the outbreak of war in 1939. The Jewish unions were an autonomous part of the general trade union movement in Poland which was affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions. He became a member of the Executive of the IFTU. He also played an important part in the Warsaw City Council of which he was a member right up until the outbreak of war. He intervened with the authorities on behalf of the Jewish poor. He was also editor of the Bund's daily Polish language paper and was the other Bund representative on the executive of the Socialist International.

On 6 September 1939 the Polish government evacuated Warsaw. The Central Committee of the Bund left the capital for Brest, leaving behind a smaller committee to organise the underground movement against the German occupation. On 17 September the Soviets invaded Poland from the east. When they marched into Brest they demanded to know where Erlich and the Central Committee of the Bund were. A Jewish communist who recognised Erlich denounced him. He was arrested and deported to the Butirki prison in Moscow where he was brutally tortured. He gave written answers to all his interrogators' questions. In this way he wrote a sizeable book about the ideology and history of the Bund. His hope was that if one day the archives of the NKVD should be opened, it would be possible to see his answers written in his own hand.

He was tried by a military court. No witnesses were called and the prosecutor said nothing. Only Erlich himself made a speech, again in order to leave a document, to which there was no reply. The court found him guilty of sabotage against the Soviet Union and sentenced him to death by shooting. There was no right of appeal but he was entitled to apply to

the Supreme Soviet for clemency. Although he made no such application, he was told 11 days later that the Supreme Soviet of its own accord had commuted his death sentence to one of 10 years in a labour camp.



Victor Alter was in Kovel when the Red Army marched in. Together with leaders of the Polish railway union he issued a declaration to the Soviet authorities in which they expressed the hope that the Soviet Union would help the people of Poland to free themselves from Nazi oppression. All the signatories to the declaration, including Alter, were arrested by the NKVD. Alter was taken to the Butirki prison. He put up a struggle, demanding that the inmates be given conditions at least comparable with those in Tsarist times. He staged a number of hunger strikes, 40 days in all, during which he was forcibly fed. However, he was allowed pen and paper to write a treatise in which he tried to formulate the laws of non-Newtonian physics. He demanded that it be sent to the Soviet Academy of Sciences to see if there were any scientific merit in it. This request was granted.

The interrogators had a hard time with him. To all their accusations he had only one answer: 'This is a lie.' To soften him up they put him in a special cell with a ceiling so low that a person of average height could not stand erect (and he was a tall man) with reduced food rations. He was tried in August 1941. Having entered a plea of not guilty he maintained a scornful silence. He too was sentenced to be shot for 'sabotage against Soviet Russia' and was given 10 days in which to apply for clemency. He used this time to write a second chapter of his treatise on physics. On the eleventh day he was told that his death sentence had been commuted to 10 years in a labour camp.

On 12 and 13 September 1941 Erlich and Alter were set free as the result of an agreement signed between the Soviet government and the

Unofficial commemorative stamp published by Solidarnosc in 1988

Polish government-in-exile, then in London. Soon afterwards they were visited at the hotel where they were staying by Colonel Volkovisky, Commissar Beria's right hand man, who told them to regard their two years in prison and their death sentences as a mistake. 'Now', he said, 'we are in a common struggle against the mortal danger of Hitlerism [the German army was advancing on Moscow] and we must fight together forgetting the past.' He suggested that they should take on the leadership of a World Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. They agreed at once. They worked out a constitution and plan of action for this committee. They were then invited to Beria who told them that only Stalin could make a final decision. They therefore wrote a letter to Stalin in which they expressed their ardent desire to help Soviet Russia by participating in the fight against Hitler's Germany. They outlined their project for the Anti-Fascist Committee and asked for his go-ahead.

At half past midnight on 4 December 1941, as they were sitting drinking tea, they were called away. They were never seen again. The news of their arrest reverberated throughout the whole world. All enquiries as to their whereabouts remained unanswered. Petitions on their behalf from prominent people were ignored. On 23 February 1943 the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Maxim Litvinov, wrote to William Green, the chairman of the American Federation of Labour, to tell him that Erlich and Alter had been shot. No date was given; it is believed that it happened the same night as they were called away. As a ghastly coincidence, at about this time the gas chambers in Auschwitz became operational.

What can one add 50 years later? When I was

a prisoner in a Gulag I once asked an armed guard for permission to go a few steps away to relieve myself. He refused and told me to do it on the spot among the other prisoners. I could not bring myself to do this so I took down my trousers and had only walked a few steps when I heard a shot and felt a bullet just miss my ear. I instinctively ducked out of his line of fire. I realised that he had shot to hit me. I was trembling and felt that my heart had stopped. My fellow prisoners thought that I had been hit and was dying. When I heard the news of the murder of Erlich and Alter I was in the army. I felt my legs tremble in exactly the same way and my faced turned the same ashen colour. I felt that the bullets which had pierced their brains had been aimed at my head too; but I had been out of the line of fire.

They were leaders not only of the Bund but of the whole Jewish people in Poland. They never distanced themselves from their followers. With them in a demonstration we felt uplifted. They helped us to find a way to a new world of love in which all human beings would be respected. Both came from the very midst of the Jewish people and devoted their lives to them. They were always the first target of communist attacks. Yet many communists owed Erlich a debt of gratitude (the Communist Party was then proscribed) for thanks to his skilful and devoted defence as a lawyer – often for no reward – they got shorter prison sentences than they would otherwise have got and in many cases won complete freedom. Now 50 years later, when the Bolshevik system is nothing but a mound of rubble, one is comforted by the thought that one had the good sense and luck to have been aligned with Erlich and Alter.

The changing contours of racism within and between different societies have defied simple explanation. Michael Heiser describes a new attempt to develop anti-racist theory in France – the hothouse of the new European racism.

If examination or publishing were enough to solve a problem, we need worry no longer about racism. From pioneering analyses of prejudice, such as the *Authoritarian Personality*, to work concentrating on the experience of black minorities; from dissections of fascism, like Michael Billig's *Fascists*, to those of antisemitism – what more can be said?

Missing is any sense of overarching theory. Past theories seem discredited. Some Marxists considered racism to be mere economics, a skein of

false consciousness thrown up by capitalists to divide workers. That analysis seems able to explain the presence of racism in some societies, but not in others. The analysis linked with the Institute of Race Relations seeks to weld race firmly to class. In a racist society, class is the mode through which race is felt. Again, this seems to omit or reduce non-economic forms of racism.

Given that any analysis implies judgment, weighting some factors, giving less attention to others, can an analysis of racism be made which does not construct, however well-meaningly, hierarchies of oppression? What is wrong with analysing prejudice apart from physical racism, anti-black racism apart from antisemitism, racism apart from fascism, if all have different manifestations?

Unfortunately, racism, fascism and antisemitism, in their various forms, do not wait for anti-racists to catch up with them. In France the National Front combines all three. It has caught French anti-racists napping precisely because the movement appears unable to fight all three at once, beyond mouthing platitudes. Many who protested at the Carpentras outrage ignore the daily racist attacks suffered by north Africans.

France is the western European country where organised racism has made the most ground. It is, therefore, encouraging to see a new French book which attempts to make connections between different forms of racism. Michel Wievorka's *L'espace du racisme* is refreshing for its focus on political racism.

He is not afraid of distinguishing different levels of racism in societies where the determining factor is the degree of support for racist movements and ideas, notably by the government and state. What he calls 'sporadic racism' brings real discrimination against minorities in, for instance, housing and employment. But this is distinct from systematic racism, including racist attacks, engendered by an active racist movement. The ultimate level is attained when the racist party becomes a governing party and puts its theories into practice, like Hitler's Germany or apartheid South Africa.

Wievorka goes on to distinguish between two distinct forms of racism. One he calls 'differentialist' and the other 'inegalitarian'. Differentialist racism is the kind Martin Barker identified in his book, *The New Racism*. It asserts that different groups of people have different characteristics and should receive different treatment. Inegalitarian racism says one group should be treated more favourably than another.

As Wievorka recognises, one is rarely present without the other. The differentialist racism of apartheid theory becomes inegalitarian racism, with the lawns of Johannesburg suburbs versus Soweto. The differentialist racism of keeping Jews

in ghettos can precede inegalitarian racism, deportation and ultimate extermination. But he considers it useful to distinguish between the two in examining how racism creates its political 'space'.

During the past century, universalist movements – in particular, the workers' movement – were, by definition, non-racist. They appealed to universal values, irrespective of ethnic or national group. It does not mean that, in this period, the socialist and communist movements have not, at times, contained racist practice. But their theory does not validate racism.

Both in France and in eastern Europe workers' movements are becoming weaker. The space they vacate is being filled by social movements based on differentiation – nationalist, ethnic or religious. Wievorka sums these up in the term 'communalist'. Since Wievorka's book was published early this year, this process has made a gigantic leap forward in the Soviet Union. The presence of these movements creates the space in which racism can thrive, according to Wievorka.

It can take the form of racism against a 'visible minority' – north Africans in France or Vietnamese in east Germany. It can also produce a scapegoating racism, where there is a deep tradition of hostility to the minority concerned. The minority does not have to be 'visible', or even, in an extreme case, present – as with antisemitism in Poland.

An analysis which links prejudice and political racism, fascism and antisemitism commands respect. Yet are all movements active within particular communities creating the space for racism? Does this even apply to anti-racist and socialist movements? Should we be active as specifically Jewish socialists?

Wievorka is the scion of a renowned French Bundist family so it would be surprising if he argued himself to this conclusion. The book ends by paying tribute to those struggling for 'universalist' ideas, such as socialism, within particular communities. They can, he says, effectively challenge narrow and sectarian movements within these communities.

Wievorka's analysis may, at first, seem more relevant to France and eastern Europe. There, the decline of communism as an organised working-class force has created the 'space' where nationalist and racist movements can thrive. Though such movements do not have to be racist, the 'space' has nonetheless been created. But his linking of 'visible' and 'scapegoat' racism can go some way to explaining the persistence of antisemitism and racism in Britain. It should also cause us to redouble our guard against organised racist and fascist movements. The 'space of racism' – in the specific political sense used by Wievorka – may appear to be less evident at home than abroad. But continued racist attacks and racist discourse at official level means that it is a constant threat.

Racing ahead

Ruth Lukom and Karen Merkel risked their reputations by attending a meeting of Jews for Jesus.

Those who think the suffering of the Jews is a historical phenomenon have not met Jews for Jesus. This American-based evangelical group has come to London 'to bring the gospel to Jews'. Not content with blaming us for crucifying Jesus, they're now expecting us to embrace him as the Messiah. Jews for Jesus are everywhere. You probably see them at central London stations. They're wearing blue T-shirts with 'Shalom' written in Hebrew and they're smiling at you. Our suffering as Jews must continue. Let the revisionists say it's an elaborate deception. I've been to one of their meetings. I know what suffering is.

In a church in Burdett Road, Hackney, two Jewish socialists sit among a congregation of nearly 120 people – black, white, single, families, but not too many easily recognisable Jews. There are seven people on the stage (sorry, altar): three men and four women, all playing musical instruments. The music sounds very Israeli.

Robyn, the flautist, microphone in hand, 'gives testament'. Robyn's parents are practising although not orthodox Jews, but Robyn was constantly searching for 'real' love and fulfilment. She went to college and shared a room with Janice who insisted on telling her about Jesus. Instead of moving her bed into the boiler room, Robyn began to listen and wonder. She asked God for a sign. One day her English tutor gave her an assignment entitled: 'How I got the devil'. Robyn pauses. The congregation murmurs and nods. I'm still waiting for a sign – a clap of thunder perhaps. Or just an essay: How I got the clap. But Robyn felt she had been given her sign and she finally asked Jesus into her heart.

She went to Florida and told her parents. Her parents were not happy and there were many arguments. One day, while bathing, Robyn was stung by a

jellyfish and nearly died. For the first time I begin to feel strangely moved by love, but we hear no more about the jellyfish. Robyn's father, meanwhile, said he'd rather have his daughter alive as a non-believer than dead as a believer. That's what he said at the time. I wonder, after several years of leaflets, smiling and the love of Jesus, what he'd say now. Robyn's story has ended and there is more singing. Karen thinks the organist looks like the girl in 'Hairspray' (no – not Divine).

Now Alexandra gives testament. Alexandra is Greek which enables her to use the line: 'What's a nice Greek girl like me doing in a group called Jews for Jesus?' There is affectionate chuckling from older members of the audience. And so Alexandra's story continues – more semi-religious parents who don't take Jesus seriously enough. More emotionally disturbed college room-mates who rant and rave all night.

We then have the story of Jonah performed with drums and cymbals to represent the storm. Ruth draws the women's costume. The men's costume is similar, except of course for the skirt. The men wear black trousers and look like waiters in a Greek restaurant.

After Jonah, we're asked: 'What better place to bring the gospel than to Jews?' Fill out your forms and get a free newsletter. There is then a collection. My idea of sticking my hand in and stealing money to give to the striking bus workers in Walthamstow is rejected after I see the tattoos on the arm of the man with the money bag. The money, we are told, is going towards the new London branch to be run by Richard Harvey.

We are also told of a book called Jesus for Jews – a book of testimonies of how Jewish people came to Jesus. This book is free for Jews. We pray for Richard Harvey. Then, as the girl from Hairspray plays gently on the organ, the speaker begins to recite the Shema. The speaker translates: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.' But the speaker is filled with sadness as he

Cross purposes



JEWISH PEOPLE ARE COMING TO Y'SHUA!*

Throughout the ages, there have always been some Jews who've believed in Jesus. But now, more than at any time since the Jewish apostles of Jesus ministered 2,000 years ago, Jewish people are finding grace and salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

If that news excites you and if you realize that this is of God, read on:

*The Jewish way to say Jesus.

Evangelism directed specifically at Jews has a long history. Nowadays it is meeting with a mixed response from mainstream organisations in the Jewish community. Then relentlessly respectable Council for Christians and Jews (CCJ) (patron HM the Queen) takes a low-key approach, reflecting the traditional low profilism of the Anglo-Jewish establishment. The CCJ, while acknowledging that missionary activity and Christianity are inextricably bound together, appeals to Christians to recognise 'heightened Jewish sensitivities to any appearance of pressure' which have resulted from 'centuries of enforced conversion and persecution of Jews by Christians'. The Council emphasises 'the need for mutual trust', which does seem a rather mealy-mouthed

response to the Christian churches' declaration of a Decade of Evangelism.

Rabbi Arkush, spokesperson for Operation Judaism, prefers a position of mutual mistrust. Managed jointly by the Chief Rabbi's office (the Chief Rabbi is also a president of the CCJ), the Lubavitch Foundation and the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Operation Judaism has a budget of £18,000 a year to persuade people that Judaism is more beneficial to them than Christianity. But this is merely substituting one form of evangelism for another, backed by fundamentalist forces within our own community. What remains to be challenged is the inherently manipulative, deceptive and irrational nature of all kinds of missionary activity.

recites these words as 'our people' (he is Jewish) 'don't know God'. He asks us to bow our heads in prayer. He then says: 'If you would like to receive Jesus for the first time as the Messiah, raise your eyes and look into mine.' Karen's head plunges between her legs but Ruth looks around. The only raised heads are those of the speakers, the organist (well she has to play, doesn't she) and a young boy gawping like me, waiting for the first punter. But no one comes forward. The Messiah strikes out. For tonight anyway.

The speaker goes for the consolation prize instead. 'If there are any believers who want to be closer to God will they raise their hands.' I count about five raised hands. More singing and then the seven leave the altar. The meeting has ended.

Listening to seven hearty Jewish Americans in fancy dress singing the Shema interwoven with a version of the Lord's Prayer to the rhythms of Israeli music was definitely not an ecumenical act of praise. In spite of the liberal use of 'new age' language, I had a growing sensation that we were listening to a message about fundamentalism. It was certainly charismatic, in the way that things can be even when you feel revolted by them.

The uproar caused by *The Satanic Verses* kept coming into my mind, only this time I was thinking about it from a wholly new perspective. I felt horrified by what felt like utter cynicism on the part of the speakers – though I am a secular Jew. However, this performance was so carefully constructed that it demanded attention – but who was it for? Was it for Ruth and me, who appeared to be two of the three Jews in the audience/congregation? Or was this event for the many others there, all of whom, judging by their warm responses, seemed to be Christian?

My sense of intrigue grew as, in that huge, packed church, we watched a piece of stage-managed, scripted, rehearsed and

directed theatre. Four women with the brightest smiles and three only slightly more serious men effervesced their message to the gathered throng. Their whiter than white leg o' mutton-sleeved blouses sparkled along with their enthusiasm. It was no surprise to discover they were American. There is a certain quality which combines heartiness, sincerity and affirmative voices that only ever emanates from the States. But will it really go down here? My conclusion is that it is at present a tiny organisation that is out to make big.

All the time we were being testified to, sung to and performed at, there was a strange sleight of hand going on. Why 'Jews for Jesus'? Why not 'People for Jesus'? Why did this particular magnificent seven still identify as Jews? It is more easy to understand that to a Christian (or a 'believer' as they would say) Jews for Jesus represent successful concerts and so they are probably more than welcome to the fold. But why bother to target Jews particularly? And who really cares whether they are Jewish? Precisely how this group attempts to reach Jews raises interesting questions but, more to the point, is why are they bothering?

One of their pamphlets, *Some pointers on witnessing to your Jewish friends*, tells the reader: 'In no way let him come to the misunderstanding that you only care for him in order to convert him.' And later on: 'Encourage your friend to communicate with Jewish Christians. Such a meeting might be painful, but it does bring persons to the place where they realise that Jesus is for Jewish people too!' The reader is told '...a person doesn't have to relinquish his Jewishness to accept Jesus. Remember that your Jewish friend has been taught that he will be committing spiritual treason even to consider the claims of Christ.' The pamphlet's final piece of advice: 'Ask for a decision. As a general rule, it is not good to press for a decision,

but you will know the timing on the matter. Don't forget to ask the person for a decision.'

One of the questions in their book, *Questions and Answers from Jews for Jesus*, is: 'So if you're still Jewish, do you carry out the Law of Moses?' Their own answer is along the lines of 'a little bit of this and a little bit of that'. For example: 'Well, some of us carry out different parts of it more than others do, because some of us are more observant than others – just as it is in the larger Jewish community, but those of us who do observe the precepts of Torah do so recognising that the Law of Moses is no longer binding as such upon Israel.' They say that most

of us do not realise that 'even the Law of Moses was not an unchanging monolith... Laws pertaining to the tabernacle or temple are no longer possible to observe; and few people would think of stoning someone who failed to keep the Sabbath.' They state very reasonably that '...it never was, and is not now, possible to keep the God's Law completely or perfectly.' Their answer to this 'problem' is that we obtain God's forgiveness for failing to keep his laws by trusting in Jesus as our atonement for sin.

On reflection, both Ruth and I feel that Jews for Jesus are clearly just another facet of the funda-

mentalism moving across the globe, only they are using designer-religion language – soft, oh so reasonable, easy and convenient. It won't take them long to adapt their quirky American approach to win over the British audience. They'll soon have tapped into Euro New-Age speak and instead of the live theatre, tambourine and accordion package they'll be using spiritual videos, whale music and dance. Not surprisingly, it was impossible for us to find out how they are financed. But somehow, whilst they may still be small here in numbers, it doesn't seem overly paranoid to suspect they are *very* big in dollars.

An abuse of power

The defence of 'community honour' is exacting a high price from women and children inside and outside the Jewish community. Julia Bard reports.

Many people in the Jewish community would like to write off the recent victimisation of an ultra-orthodox family who dared report to the police that their children had been sexually abused as an extreme reaction only to be expected from religious maniacs who insist on living like medievals in a modern world. But the weapons – physical, financial, social and legal – that were used to silence the family raise broader questions about autonomy and religious and cultural rights, and about the relationships of individuals to their communities, to the wider society and to the state.

The accusation shouted at the family each time any of them appeared in public and chanted by the 200 demonstrators hurling

bricks and other missiles outside their home at Stamford Hill in north London was *Moisser!* (informers!). The grievance of the community was not that the parents had made a *false* accusation but that they had many *any* accusation outside the communal boundaries, even one that the parents made in good faith after they had tried every alternative within the community and were satisfied that there was no other way of protecting their children.

The price this orthodox family have paid is to be chased out of their community by a combination of ostracism, humiliation, threats, pseudo-legal decisions and physical violence which went on for more than a year. Despite his being hospitalised for three months suffering from post-traumatic stress, their 11-year-old son was only 'allowed' to go to his religious school if he had no contact whatsoever with his family. Women ostentatiously dragged their children indoors or held their noses when the family

walked past. Shopkeepers refused to serve them. A nephew living in Israel had his arranged marriage called off. CS gas canisters were let off outside their house and bricks and rotten eggs were hurled at their windows. Members of the mother's family received death threats, as did professionals and friends who offered support.

There are parallels to this sect's response to 'informers' among its members, not only in other closed groups but also more broadly among immigrant communities whose own leaders have an interest in keeping their image respectable. The new Chief Rabbi claimed that these events were 'very untypical indeed' and described this community as having great piety and a strong sense of citizenship. How he can tell whether it is 'untypical' when people are forbidden to speak out is a conundrum which perhaps his religious learning will enable him to resolve. All the research seems to show that whatever the incidence of mob violence, sexual abuse is worryingly common in

all communities. Indeed, in the big wide patriarchal world, women and children are persecuted daily for 'informing' against violent and abusive husbands and fathers; and the media splashes 'overzealous' social workers across the front pages, only to desert the press benches in the subsequent enquiries which reveal the true extent of sexual abuse.

Those who define informing per se as a crime are using a curious morality: that all members of a group should be loyal to each other regardless of whether their actions are right or wrong. This might be a justifiable strategy in specific situations if the group were democratic, with every member equal and accountable in making decisions, and if the group were open so that people could make a free choice to join or leave. But the ultra-orthodox group to which this family belonged is neither democratic nor open, and its internal 'legal' structures, far from protecting wronged individuals, have been used to shield wrongdoers and preserve the powers of the community leaders.

Eventually, after months of threats and mob violence, Rabbi Hanoch Padwa, the chief spokesperson for all the ultra-orthodox communities, condemned 'all acts of intimidation and violence that have been perpetrated against the family'. But a few days later he, with six other rabbis, issued a further statement condemning the parents as 'irresponsible people' who 'wished to degrade and deride the holy people of Israel' (though these particular people of Israel feel no responsibility to live up to the holiness they claim).

What this family's future is, adrift from the only community they know or want, is unclear, but their chances of emotional survival are undoubtedly improved by the support they have had from professionals – doctors, social workers and therapists.

Feminists who, in general, have a clear understanding of the politics of sexual abuse often feel reluctant to campaign in cases like this, where the community concerned is itself vulnerable to hostility from racists. Southall Black Sisters, who for more than 10 years have worked with Asian women facing domestic violence, argue that this failure to speak out plays into the hands of communal leaders whose control over their communities would be threatened by anyone claiming that the safety of women and children overrides the honour of individual families or the community in general. Colluding with the pressure to keep the community closed off from its surroundings only makes powerless members more vulnerable to abuse.

The mother of this orthodox family felt at least once that she would have been killed by the mob had help not arrived in time. That help didn't come for a 19-year-old Palestinian woman from Kufr Ikhsal in the Galilee, who was murdered a week before her wedding day because she had 'desecrated family honour' by becoming pregnant out of wedlock. Indeed, few people would have bothered about her death if the recently formed Palestinian feminist movement, Al Fanar (Lighthouse), hadn't broken the silence to demonstrate in the streets of Nazareth and campaign in the media – actions which aroused controversy not only in the religious and traditional establishments, but also in the secular left, none of whom had the nerve to turn up to the demonstration. Manar Hassan, a founder member of Al Fanar, accuses the authorities of taking a soft line on those who murder to 'protect family honour'. She tells of police officers who have handed over young women who 'have fallen under some suspicion' and of occasions when murderers have been pardoned by the state president.

The brave stance that Al Fanar

have taken in the face of rumour-mongering, hostility and death threats that sound uncannily similar to the experiences of the orthodox Jewish family in Stamford Hill must be supported by feminists outside the Palestinian community. But the persecution of women and children must also be clearly challenged by socialists, men as well as women. Expressing anguish about the violence which has for once come to light in the orthodox community, as many progressive Jewish people have done, may salve their consciences but it doesn't help those who have been, or will be, violated. What they need is public campaigning in defence of their rights and an understanding that the community leaders are cynically using fear of antisemitism, racism or state oppression to extinguish such campaigning. Antisemites and racists have not been waiting for child abusers or wife beaters to 'justify' their activities against Jews or Asians any more than the Israeli government needs the murder of young women to back up their policies on Palestinians.

Manar Hassan believes that it suits the government to turn a blind eye to such murders: 'The regime wishes to maintain good relations with our traditional leadership, even at the price of the abandonment of women. This serves its interests as rulers. The establishment wants us to remain a backward society.' It certainly doesn't serve the interests of communities as a whole to collude with communal leaders whose power to define problems, mete out justice and speak for their people rests on their efficiency in silencing opponents.

If you want to be kept in touch with campaigns on these issues, please write to Jewish Socialist, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX, or Women Against Fundamentalism, BM 2706, London WC1N 3XX.

Reaching the parts

Opening a debate on Jews and Socialism in the '90s, Adam Lent suggests some ways of breaking out of the ghetto.

1990 should be seen as the earliest indication of a watershed for Jewish socialism. The loss of Thatcher and the collapse of the economic policies that had been designed to benefit the lower middle and upper working classes, the largest sector of British Jewry, have both damaged the conservative Jewish establishment's hegemony.

Perhaps the most important effect of these changes was the multiformed political attack on the Board of Deputies, kindled by an atmosphere of perceptibly rising antisemitism. The large-scale derision that faced the Board last year should be of vital interest to Jewish socialists; it not only showed that a firm critical faculty still resides in the community but it also illustrated the great difficulties for our community 'leaders' when this faculty is actively exercised. This suggests that the post-war consensus dominating the Jewish community, that reached its peak in the '80s, is beginning to show the earliest signs of ideological and economic fatigue. The question is: how can Jewish socialists use these early changes to best advantage?

Organisations like the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG) have for many years shown themselves eminently capable of converting socialists who are Jews to the cause of Jewish socialism, persuading people that there is not only value in promoting socialist ideals and principles within the community but that it is also vital to recreate a progressive Jewish identity that differs from the Zionist affiliations which now predominate. However, if Jewish socialism is to remain true to this project by becoming a truly dynamic and effective force, it must start reaching out to others less con-

vinced of the values of revolutionary socialism and anti-Zionism. Jewish socialists must diversify their activities in order to match the diversity within the Jewish community and to allow for a widening of the campaign sphere to reach out to non-radical Jews. This does not mean abandoning the traditional constituency of Jewish socialism nor does it mean weakening the radical message of our grassroots appeal; this is not a *Marxism Today* capitulation! It is a tactical programme aimed at providing more political space for a marginalised set of ideas and organisations. The mutually exclusive distinction between tactical, political work in the broader community and radical, organisational work on the radical left is false. The traditional constituency, the radical message, and the grassroots appeal are all ultimately strengthened by successful campaigns that challenge the ruling orthodoxy, buoy confidence and, most importantly, carry out the most fundamental political and organisational groundwork in the whole Jewish community. Jewish socialists have to start inserting a whole variety of political and ideological levers into the thin cracks appearing in the wall of community consensus before it can expect to gain anything beyond minority support. To do so we must ask three vital questions: To whom can we appeal? Upon what issues should we appeal? And by what methods can we appeal?

Appealing to whom?

There are three main sectors of the Jewish community that Jewish socialists should now be targeting. Firstly, the mass of Jews who work in the public services. Often

employed in education, by local authorities or care organisations, they have been the silent sector of British Jewry throughout the '80s. At the sharp end of Thatcherite vandalism, they have been alienated by the praise heaped on the British government by the Chief Rabbi, the *Jewish Chronicle* and various figures on the Board of Deputies.

Secondly, there are the lower middle and upper working class sectors of the community. This large group has been consistently underestimated in importance by the Left and the Right, as the post-war myth of 'ever-upwardly mobile Jew' was peddled by liberal meritocrats and Jewish community leaders alike. This sector has benefited from new access to company shares, health care, property and self employment that sprung up in the last decade, but it now faces new economic insecurities as the recession deepens. The international rise in antisemitism of last year heightened this sense of vulnerability. It is hardly surprising that it was from these people that the Board of Deputies received its most hostile criticism.

Finally, there are youth and students. A tendency towards liberal attitudes on both Israel and general social issues is more widespread amongst Jewish youth and students than within the community in general.

What are the issues?

Even though these three sectors would benefit politically, socially and culturally from the acceptance of both radical socialism and anti-Zionism, there can be little doubt that neither of these canons of belief are close to being adopted by any substantial portion of the Jewish community. Like a large

Reuben Hood looks at life for secular Jewish socialists in the 'provinces'

Outside London, Jewish life is often restricted to shul-based activities or Zionist fundraising – in many places the two are synonymous. This hasn't always been true but as the provincial communities have dispersed from localised Jewish areas to the suburbs, secular life has diminished. Londoners, with their Spiro Institute, Yakar, the Jewish film festivals, the delis and restaurants can still lead a fully Jewish life without ever seeing a *yarmulka* or a blue box – how lucky they are!

In consequence, non-religious young Jews in the provinces who also eschew supporting dodgy Israeli governments soon find themselves adrift from the community. In their angst-ridden thirties, they find themselves thinking, 'I'm Jewish, I don't know a synagogue from the Salvation Army, people hate me because I'm Jewish, what does it all mean?'

Recently, we've had cause to think more on this. Last summer Nottingham

Jewish Socialists' Group organised a large public meeting on antisemitism and many non-religious Jews attended. In the winter we helped organise a similar large meeting in Leicester. Many Jews from the formal community were surprised to see all the unaffiliated people. Even more to the point, a Nottingham 'Evening of Jewish Culture' with Michael Rosen, Jewish food and books, and the Royte Klezmores band attracted 160 people (with many more having to be turned away), including Jews from as far afield as Birmingham, Leamington and Leicester. The audience included a woman whose father was Jewish but who had never been to any Jewish event before, a man who had had no contact with the community for 20 years though he came from a very traditional background, a gay Jewish man who had been unaware that there was anything more to being Jewish than religion...

In both Nottingham and Leicester good contact has been built between the Progressive Synagogues and the small secular groups who organised these events and we are perhaps lucky in this, but the scattered individuals are being found by leafleting in libraries,

bookshops and other public places. Locally it seems that the JSG has been able to reach some parts of our community who would eventually lose their Jewish identity. The JSG could perhaps benefit by organising more large local events within the provincial communities, enabling people to be Jewish in a cultural and political context. As a by-product we may also find greater understanding for our critical views on the community leadership and on Israel within the mainstream community, who might come to recognise us as a genuine part of the community rather than snipers from outside.

Hopefully, through drawing in people who are wanting to regain their cultural heritage, we can also give them enough confidence to challenge Zionist and other orthodoxies from within the community rather than assimilating into Left groups or wandering into the wilderness. The danger is, of course, that the distinct politics of the JSG could themselves be diluted too far. Away from the hot-house politics of London this inevitably happens to a certain extent, but there must be limits on how far we can drift.

section of British society, British Jewry has achieved a greater degree of economic security and political influence than it has ever known. As a result it accepts the establishment options of Labour and Conservative as choice enough. Any lingering fears about antisemitism or loss of identity have been soaked up by the ever-increasing commitment to a Zionist ideology. This does not mean that a new radicalism can never be reborn; it can. However, it must be built through a war of attrition and position against the dominant forces in the community and alongside real social changes within British Jewry.

Any high-profile attempt to win the hearts and minds of the community to anti-Zionism should, for the moment, be scaled down. Room exists in the community to campaign for Palestinian rights and against Israeli brutality, but it does not exist for the intricate, and often Marxist-oriented, debates concerning Zionism versus anti-Zionism

versus non-Zionism.

A campaign to win Jewish support for Palestinian struggle could learn something from the right-wing Zionists, especially in youth and student work. BIPAC (British-Israel Public Affairs Committee) has provided speakers and information kits on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for youth movements and student bodies with great success by presenting apparently factual material in accessible and attractive ways, often under the guise of impartiality.

Inevitably, an organisation such as BIPAC has the common desire for Zionist self-justification on its side, but if factual material about Palestinian issues could gain some circulation it would begin to counter the weekly propaganda fed through the *Jewish Chronicle* and may challenge accepted myths about Israeli history. If myths are evenhandedly challenged in this way then the seemingly impenetrable armour of Zionist hege-

mony may begin to weaken.

Many Jews feel inclined to defend Zionism and Israel against all criticism. They often regard an attack on these as a direct attack on both the Jewish people and its identity. As a result, appeals to ideological or political reason are either ignored or rejected as veiled attempts by antisemites to discredit Jews. Only on a moral ground are many Jews still susceptible. But before a substantial group can become aware of the national rights of Palestinians or of the fundamental racism underlying Israel's social and political system, they must be given access to information about specific injustices the Palestinians have faced historically. Especially within the youth and public service sectors, many Jews do have doubts about Israel's behaviour. However, they often feel at a disadvantage in argument, without information and well-structured political responses to hand. Amongst such people, impartial information will not

only be snapped up but more complex arguments about the origins of these injustices may receive a sympathetic hearing.

This does not mean that anti-Zionist work should be completely shelved, but its present audience will most likely be those on the Left already actively engaged in ideological debate on Israel. There is a stronger imperative to carry out more clearly targeted political groundwork amongst the broader body of British Jews.

It is time to challenge directly the structure as well as the ideology of the Board of Deputies. The Board has only a nominal concession to democracy, in the form of monthly meetings which

political rights, but from all those the conservative leadership would rather did not exist and who are denied an autonomous and audible voice in the community.

A recent poll has already shown that there is a swing back to the Labour Party amongst British Jews, but Jewish socialist must continue to re-encourage stronger commitment to the principles and structures of the Labour movement. Though many Jewish socialists are leaving the Labour Party to strengthen the independent socialist sector, it would be foolish to allow this important work to blind us to the value of centring other activity around the Labour Party. For the majority of British people, let alone Jews, Labour and its affiliated organisations present not only the sole alternative government but also the sole alternative arena for political allegiance and activity. A shift to support for Labour in the community would open up areas of debate, making them more accessible to radical Left intervention and may encourage some individuals to become politically active within the Labour movement. This would place them in a political and ideological arena within which they will be brought into closer contact with the views and the activities of Jewish socialists.

The impending general election presents an excellent opportunity for such campaigning. A provisional movement aiming to gain support for the Labour Party in all three sectors outlined above will be of vital importance for the future of Jewish socialism.

So four basic campaigns could open up new opportunities for Jewish socialism: a campaign for Palestinian rights; a campaign for democracy and pluralism within the Jewish community; a campaign for a Labour victory at the next election; and one must add to this the ongoing struggle against racism and anti-semitism.

How can Jewish socialism appeal?

Firstly, a strong emphasis must be placed upon networking through the campaigns to establish good communication and relations with a large number of individuals and organisations. Last year's spontaneous and hastily arranged anti-fascist demonstrations were often poorly attended, especially by Jews – a sad fact considering that the marches were mostly in response to desecrations of Jewish cemeteries. Although some people undoubtedly have an aversion to demonstrations, a much better attendance could have been assured if more Jews had simply heard about the protests in time. Information circulated exclusively on the Left is not going to reach the mass of Jews.

Secondly, if any activity of these campaigns is publicised widely within a specific sector of the community, well in advance, and is linked to cultural activity and entertainment, then there is no reason why they should not prove successful. A case in point is Hackney JSG's 'Day of Jewish Culture and Resistance' last year, which was widely publicised amongst Jews in education, the public sector and in the locality. Organised with imagination and enthusiasm, its popularity exceeded anyone's wildest dreams, attracting hundreds of people.

The 1980s have been a time of marginalisation and introspection for Jewish socialists but, as cracks appear in the New Right façade and in the Zionist, enterprise hegemony in the Jewish community, there are opportunities to be grasped in the 1990s that open the way for a multiplicity of political activities that will build and benefit our constituency.

● Jewish Socialist invites its readers to take this important strategic and practical debate further. We invite responses, up to 800 words, to be received by 17 November.

Stranger in a strange land

As the British Government tightens the law even further against refugees, Marian Shapiro heard Esther Brunstein describe her experience as a refugee entering Britain after the Second World War.

At a meeting in West London earlier this year, Esther Brunstein told a packed room of her experiences as a refugee in England after the Second World War. Brought up in Lodz, Poland, in a Bundist family, she survived Auschwitz and Belsen before arriving in England in 1947. She spoke movingly of her alienation as a foreigner and as someone who had experienced traumas that people in her adoptive country were unwilling or unable to understand. After liberation from Belsen she was taken to Sweden and spent nearly two years there. 'They were very nice to us. They didn't understand. There was no such thing as therapy and trying to help you emotionally but they were interested in your physical well-being and with the rest you had to cope... After a while I found out that my brother was alive and in England... In 1947 I arrived and have been here ever since. It was not easy here.

'My brother and I decided that we were going to live and try and make the best of it. This is what our parents would have wanted... In the darkest times we said, we have to live because we have to tell the world what happened. And even then we said, but they won't believe us, they can't believe us because even while we were experiencing it we thought it can't be happening. Things like this don't happen to people.'

There were many obstacles: the refugees had to learn a new language, and find housing and a means of support. Those who had been children during the war had to cope with the effects of a disrupted education. 'So it wasn't easy, I wanted somehow to continue some sort of education. My education was cut short at the age of 11. So we had to fight as best we could, learn English and go to work... We have two daughters... Both are fine people, both have worked within the welfare field. This is something I wanted. I wanted to become a nurse but it was not to be.'

Contact with the English was difficult, and it was not much easier with English Jews: 'It wasn't easy even here in England to make contact with English Jews. I found it very difficult. I think it's because of their way of questions.' She found it very difficult to understand their reactions. It could not have been ignorance: 'I certainly

went to the cinema. In 1947 they were showing Belsen, they were showing other things... Even the man who brought me finally over to England, a very fine man... an ardent Yiddishist. He would come up occasionally with something and he'd say, 'If you were here during the war I would have done very well.' He was in business. I looked at him and I said, 'Do you know what you are saying? We were being slaughtered and you think I could have helped you during the war?'... He had quite a large family and they would ask silly questions. They would say, 'Did the Germans, did they interfere with you?'... I was only a young girl and it was a kind of morbid curiosity. What they meant was were you experimented on in Auschwitz? Were you raped by some Germans? And these were the questions they were asking.'

As well as dealing with ambivalent feelings about the host country, Esther Brunstein also has an ambivalence towards Poland: 'I grew up in Poland. Despite everything, no matter what people say, I was happy. A child when it is surrounded by love, no matter what, is happy. And I had my parents there, all my friends,

Despite government attempts to the contrary, refugees still come to the UK. The current Government is entertaining proposals to restrict further the rights of refugees seeking asylum in Britain. These are rightly causing concern. At the moment, appeals often take so long to process that by the time applicants are refused asylum, they have established their lives here and are allowed to remain on humanitarian grounds. The proposed legislation aims to close this 'loophole' by setting up a 'fast track' appeal process. Ostensibly, this is to make the process quicker and less painful for applicants. In practice, however, it would

mean that applicants have less time to establish their lives here and therefore less chance of using humanitarian grounds to appeal against deportation.

Also in the pipeline are plans to restrict refugees' access to judicial reviews and to set up new Immigration appeals panels which will be headed by adjudicators chosen by the Lord Chancellor. The government is also trying to restrict sources of help to agencies such as UKIAS (United Kingdom Immigrant Advisory Service) and Citizens' Advice Bureaux. To their credit, both organisations are resisting these proposals.



JSG public meeting on antisemitism

all Deputies, several hundred, can attend. Apart from the fact that some of these Deputies are appointed rather than elected by the shuls and organisations they represent, these meetings are notoriously controlled and manipulated by a tiny clique. The Board also has a reputation for blacklisting certain groups and individuals. If we add to this the monopoly on information held by the tacky and politically narrow *Jewish Chronicle*, we are left with an array of issues offering themselves to a campaign for democracy and pluralism in the community. Such a campaign would find itself not only gaining support from those Jews working in the public sector, who traditionally have a strong sense of

life was meaningful. But so much happened on that soil that you can't help feeling angry too. I want to read you something: "To Poland. Poland, Poland, my longing for you, I sat in mourning, like a *shiva*, too much pain to remember and too much horror to forget." And that's how I feel about Poland. So we did go back twice and our daughters came with us and it was important. It was therapeutic... What is important is that our stories ought to be known. Along with the strength we felt, the will to live and the will to survive. How threatened we feel by the reunification of Germany and other things. I know I could never set foot on German soil.'

Because of the attitudes to Jewish refugees, she felt great pressure to deny her origins: 'Obviously, as soon as I open my mouth, you know I'm not English... People would say: "Where do you come from?" and I would just say, "I come from

Poland." I could never lie. I know people who refused to say they come from Poland who would say: "Don't say that"! I would reply, "All that hell and you tell me not to say I come from Poland, are you crazy?" They said, "You shouldn't say it because some of the young men don't like it." ...I just found it impossible to get into the mentality. Absolutely impossible.'

Prejudice against refugees manifested itself in a variety of ways: 'There was a Yiddish newspaper, *Di Tzeit*... They had a *Shiddikhen binkel*, a matchmaking corner. There was an advert: "A young man wants to meet a young lady, and she should be tall, slim, good looking, intelligent, not a refugee"! That was in 1947. I remember laughing. I said, "It's no good for me." But can you imagine how hurtful this was? This was very very sad for us that after this bloody war, with so much loss and so much suffering, that people didn't want to know.'



Child deportees from Lodz 1941-42

Talking 'bout my generation

Yiddish music is enjoying an exciting revival through a new generation of Klezmer musicians in America. Stephen Ogin reports on the role of 'Klezcamp' in fostering this cultural renaissance.

The first *Klezcamp*, six years ago, attracted about 200 people, almost entirely musicians. This year, 450 people attended *Klezcamp*, with over 100 people turned away. As the numbers have increased, so have the range of activities. Currently

each of the four days is divided into four one-and-a-half-hour sessions, with a choice of six or seven activities each session. For example, in session three you can choose from Yiddish (Intermediate), Yiddish (Advanced), Theatre and Art Song, Hasidic Dance, Foodways, Orchestration and Ruth Rubin (the eminent ethnomusicologist) on Yiddish Folk Song. Klezmer music (including Yiddish song) is still central to *Klezcamp* but classes in Yiddish, ethnography, art, comedy (the analysis of), food and dance are also available. Altogether an exciting

mixture of people with a very wide range of age and interest – a Yiddish cultural paradise for a week.

About 40 children from three to twelve years old took part in this year's *Klezkids* programme. During the week, the children painted and decorated their own stage props to illuminate stories; a one-line story for the younger ones, a small playlet for the older ones. The children also performed excerpts of Yiddish songs as a chorus. Some of the children are fluent Yiddish speakers. One child spoke her first Yiddish words

at two and joined a class for Yiddish speaking children when very young. The children's show lasted about an hour on the final evening and included a performance by the world's youngest Klezmer band – the OOM-CHICKS – which received the most rapturous reception by the audience of any ensemble.

At the other end of the age range, many of the older people had been, or are currently, involved in Workmen's Circle groups. Some told me about grandparents who had been revolutionaries in Eastern Europe. (I should also point out that *Klezcampers* come from a wide variety of political backgrounds. One neo-conservative was a bit put out when many stood up to sing a Bundist song during a singalong!) Some enjoyed the opportunity to speak Yiddish. Many revelled in nostalgia and reminiscence. Fortunately, at *Klezcamp* there is a general atmosphere of cultural vitality and development so that reminiscences for Yiddish-times-past are balanced by real hope for the future.

All age ranges took part in the music making, if they so desired. For a musician, the surprise and excitement of *Klezcamp* is the number of musicians wanting to play Klezmer music or sing and the high level of musicianship. As for the language itself, it was obvious that many of the musicians, both instrumental and vocal, are approaching the language and culture through the music – many don't know any Yiddish. This has amusing consequences. The Theatre and Art Song class was taken mostly by Adrienne Cooper, an inspiring teacher and a performer of note, but on the final day by musical director/arranger Zalmen Mlotek. When he complimented a singer for a change of feeling given to a folksong verse, he asked: 'Is that what you intended?' 'Let me check

my notes for that verse,' came the revealing reply. This relaxed attitude by the teachers is paying dividends. It is inclusive and enables people who have a feeling for the songs, but don't know the language, to sing and begin to become familiar with Yiddish. Both Adrienne Cooper and Zalmen Mlotek made it perfectly clear, however, that this was a temporary respite. They emphasised that performers simply *had* to understand the meaning of each word to do justice to the songs.

The spectrum of musicianship extends from the amateur amateur to the professional musician. At the professional end, there are professors of music, music teachers, professional arrangers/composers/performers, and many cantors and rabbis, mostly from the Conservative (roughly equivalent to British Reform) synagogues. Members of the original ground-breaking bands – Kapelye and the Klezmer Conservatory Band – were amongst the teaching staff, and some of them are now playing in other bands which performed during the week. The proliferation rate of Klezmer bands in America is very high.

Two of my favourite groups which typify the current cultural dynamism of American Klezmer at the moment are 'Brave New World' and 'The Klezmatics'. 'Brave New World' have recorded two tapes, of which their most recent has a number of original songs – with one about Chernobyl. This band benefits from the vocal abilities of singer/violinist/composer Michael Alpert – the doyen of 'dreydlech' in Yiddish folk music ('dreydlech' being a vocal ornamentation which is easier heard than performed).

'Brave New World' are advancing Yiddish music within the genre, with new songs and new instrumental arrangements on their most recent recording. 'The

Klezmatics' also have a basis in the traditional style but consciously incorporate other musical styles. Their arrangement of the Hasidic song 'Shnirele Perele' has, at times, a salsa/reggae feel and compels people to dance. The ecstatic and very emotional response given to this arrangement by an overwhelmingly secular audience may have been due to the ability of the Hasids to write a good tune or 'The Klezmatics' musical dynamism. However, at least one of the rabbis present felt there was more to it than this. Writing in the Yiddish weekly *Forverts*, Henry Sapoznik, who is not a rabbi but a major driving force behind *Klezcamp* and the Yiddish music



The Klezmatics

renaissance, described this piece as having a spiritual aspect. With luck, the sort of debate which their music could encourage will not be restricted to America – 'The Klezmatics' are coming on tour to Europe again this year – after playing at Carnegie Hall. Yiddish ethno-rock has arrived!

Now, so what does it all add up to? The secular Yiddish world, and the Yiddish music area in particular, is expanding rapidly in America, with Yiddish music developing and progressing in a number of directions. There is sufficient activity to produce a living culture, including the continual drawing-in of new talent and the education of a new generation. Is it not time for 'Klezcamp Europe'?

GRATEFUL RED

After Dave Rosenberg's article in JS23 about Messrs Gewirtz and Kalman, I feel bound to put in some words of gratitude for what these *makhers* did for me, and for the JSG.

In November 1980, watching the TV news one Saturday evening, I was angered to see the neo-Nazi thugs of the British Movement parading in west London and chanting 'Hitler was right'. What horrified me still more, after the scenes of street violence, was a so-called 'spokesman for the Jewish community' wheeled out to declare that, so far as we Jews were concerned, those left-wing anti-fascists who'd tried to stop the Nazi march were just as bad as the Nazis, since they too were threatening 'democratic' institutions.

'Who is this *shmok*?' was my reaction. 'Here's a bunch of guys who want to put me in a gas oven, and this fellow who says he's my leader thinks I should be worrying about the Left as a threat to "democracy"!' I grew up in a large Jewish community, listened to stories as a child about Jews fighting fascists and couldn't imagine any of the Jews I knew agreeing with this so-called 'spokesman'. The man on TV was the Board of Deputies' Defence Officer, Dr Jacob Gewirtz.

It so happened that I'd seen an advert that weekend for a meeting of the Jewish Socialists' Group. Although I'd previously toyed with the idea that maybe left-wing Jews should organise in some way, it was seeing what Dr Gewirtz had to say that tore away my hesitation. If we didn't want people like that

claiming to speak for us, we'd better speak up for ourselves! I decided to go to the meeting and give the JSG a try. I've been 'hooked' ever since, and enjoyed it, so thank you Jacob Gewirtz!

Trouble is, he's not unique. There were those neo-conservative Jewish intellectuals in American who condemned Jacopo Timerman because he'd upset the Argentine junta. There's the lady in the *Jewish Chronicle*, complaining that the TUC wants to do something about anti-semitism; she says Jews should have nothing to do with trade unions, they should either 'fit in' or go away and set up on their own. The more our opponents proclaim themselves the sole repository of Jewish interests, the more what stands out are their reactionary ideological conceptions and Tory class allegiance.

One last word on Kalman, though. After last year's ugly swastika rash, throughout which he insisted that whatever anyone else said, the Board of Deputies had everything in hand, there came the Board meeting when he was due to report, as Defence Chair. The House of Lords had just voted against war crimes trials, too. The Board of Deputies, our 'responsible' community leaders, allowed all of *five minutes* for reports on antisemitism. Refusing to give his report, Raymond Kalman stormed out in disgust, declaring: 'I've had enough.' Maybe that was when he decided to quit? I think it was the one occasion when he really did speak for all of us.

Charlie Pottins
London SW12

TWO ERRORS

I would like to correct two errors in my article on Iraq (JS23). The Iraqi refugees in southern Iraq are not Kurdish but almost all Arab. There may be some Kurds among the refugees who crossed into Iran from southern Iraq but their percentage would most likely be small. Southern Iraq is outside of Kurdistan but some Kurds may have settled there as a result of intermarriage, economic or other migration, or the ruling regime's policy of Arabising Kurdistan – a policy which included mass relocations of Kurds to other parts of Iraq (mostly western Iraq).

Secondly, most Iraqis blame the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein and not the allies for the catastrophic state that Iraq finds itself in as a result of the war, not to mention a previous war and 20 years of ruthless rule.

Ibrahim Samera'ee
London

HOLIDAY READING

The benefits of being on holiday have included the opportunity to read *Jewish Socialist* (No 23) from cover to cover. Having always shrunk from the phrase 'proud to be Jewish', I find myself pondering on whether this magazine has not transformed me into someone capable of pronouncing that I'm 'proud to be a Jewish Socialist', or at least a *Jewish Socialist* reader. My warmest thanks and appreciation to all involved in creating and contributing to a magazine which strengthens me in my own small involvement in the world of radical politics.

Francesca Klug
Dordogne, France

Don't ask the Rabbi

Dear Rabbi

During the recent attempted stoning of a family in Stamford Hill, I was gratified to see how the Hassidic community observed propriety with men at the front of the house and women standing by the side. If the family had emerged from the house, would the stoners themselves have to be segregated – ie men stone only men and women stone only women?

THE RABBI REPLIES

The Talmud gives clear directives on the correct procedure for a stoning. Men may throw rocks at men, women and children although they should avert their eyes from the

women they stone. (Talmudic scholars have long pondered on the difficulties of this.) Women may throw freely except when they are menstruating and thus unclean. They can continue to stone other women and children but must not throw anything at a man. This would be a sin.

Dear Rabbi

I have recently participated in a cartel to illegally purchase shares. As I write this letter in a car with members of the Serious Fraud Squad, I am contemplating rediscovering Judaism. Should I ask

for a Rabbi to visit me while awaiting trial or upon transfer to an open prison?

THE RABBI REPLIES

Both the Talmud and the Media require a period of serious reflection where you show contrition for your actions. During this period your wife should maintain a high profile in charitable activities. She should be photographed as loyal, suffering and immaculately dressed. Upon your release you should attend all charitable functions where you may encounter a member of the Royal Family. Your redemption will be complete.

Red sea change

As the Soviet Union is dismantled and western leaders declare communism dead, Clive Gilbert looks at the integrity and courage of Israeli and Egyptian communists caught between the millwheels of competing nationalisms.

All the familiar rules of the game in the Middle East conflict have changed. The influence of the Soviet Union has gone and, as a result, almost everyone of consequence is madly scrambling for a cosy niche within the Pax Americana which Bush and Baker are busily constructing. There are distinct indications of cracks in Fortress Israel as the US seeks to drag Shamir's government, kicking and screaming, to the conference table. Those tricky Arabs, even the PLO, seem to be serious about wanting a settlement. That really is against the rules!

Joel Beinin's *Was the Red Flag Flying There?* deals with a subject which at first sight might seem historically remote and even marginal to the present 'peace process'. The book records and analyses the development of Marxist politics in Israel and Egypt between 1948 and 1965 and its impact on those societies; hardly fashionable concerns given the death sentence pronounced on socialism by all and sundry these days. However, Joel Beinin has produced a serious, excellently researched, socialist study that at times is as exciting as any novel. Though the narrative essentially describes a tragic failure, the struggle of committed, often young, militants in both countries to maintain principled Marxist and internationalist positions in the face of widespread hostility, real danger and opposing social, economic and political trends, reads like a roll of honour.

The text is enlivened by incidental but recognisably human events such as the experience of the young Egyptian communist attending an international conference in Paris during the fifties, who was told he had no right to represent his comrades back home since the only reason he was in Paris was because his parents had sent him there to get him away from radical politics.

Received wisdom

In his introduction, Joel Beinin acknowledges his debt to Israeli 'revisionist' historians such as Simha Flapan and Benny Morris whose work has

contributed to demolishing the still widely believed myths about the origins and early history of the state of Israel. No one genuinely familiar with the history of the region can seriously maintain that the Palestinians became refugees of their own accord, or that brave, embattled little Israel constantly sought peace only to be met with total murderous hostility by all the surrounding Arab regimes.

The truth as established by the 'revisionists' and confirmed by Beinon is that Ben Gurion, in accordance with his vision of Zionist 'realpolitik', elaborately constructed a corporate state through institutions like the Histadrut and his own Mapai (the Land of Israel Workers') party. The first decade of Israel's history is marked by Ben Gurion's promotion of 'military activism' which in effect meant large-scale retaliation for small border raids by exiled Palestinians. Israel's apparent aggressive militarism served to discourage and provoke those Arab leaders (including Nasser at one point) prepared to negotiate on the basis of the 1947 UN partition borders and the return of some, if not all, of the refugees. However, the 'national consensus' in Israel, built and promoted by Mapai, regarded such proposals as a basis not for peace but for renewed war.

These are the circumstances in which the left in Israel had to operate. Beinon describes the relentless pressure, moral and material, exerted on the Israeli left in this period. The Zionist left enjoyed an apparently powerful champion in Mapam (the United Workers' Party) which united Hashomer Hatzair (the Young Guard) and Ahdut Avoda (the Unity of Labour), both based on the kibbutzim. In the 1949 general elections Mapam won 19 seats in the 120-seat Knesset (parliament) and was the second largest party. In the pre-state period, the left of the party had advocated a 'binational' Jewish-Arab state in all of Palestine, but changed its position when the Soviet Union supported partition and the establishment of separate Jewish and Arab states. The enormous prestige of the Soviet Union influenced Mapam as much as Maki (the smaller Israeli Communist Party), both of whom acknowledged the leadership of the Soviet party.

Beinin chronicles Mapam's sometimes gradual and sometimes spectacular retreat from socialist positions and from association with the communists. He ascribes it not, as others have often done, to an irreconcilable ideological gulf between Zionism and socialism, but explains it as a combination of political developments, including

the Cold War and the renewal of Soviet antisemitism, and of Mapam's material position in the state. For example, the party's power base, the kibbutzim, were mostly financially dependent on state institutions and benefited considerably from arbitrary seizures of Arab land, vacant due to the dispossession of the refugees. A peace requiring the return of the refugees was thus never popular with Mapam. Further, many of the young soldiers from Mapam kibbutzim, like Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Alon, were major exponents of 'military activism' and had taken part in 'clearing' Arab areas. Later, during Israel's first 10 years, Mapam, after a split, was absorbed into a coalition government with Mapai (and eventually became a very junior election ally). For nearly three decades, Mapam never seriously removed itself from within the national consensus.

Communist forces

In 1948 Israel's Community Party, Maki, was based on East European veterans and reinforced by defecting Mapam militants impressed by Soviet prestige. Later it received a welcome boost from the arrival in Israel of Iraqi Jews who had been active in the Iraqi Communist Party (so much for the jibe of 'reactionary Orientals'). The party attracted the support of militant urban workers during periods of industrial unrest and, after 1948, many Palestinians (Israeli Arabs) saw in Maki a consistent champion of their civil and legal rights against an increasingly oppressive and arbitrary regime.

Maki, like the Soviet Union, remained loyal to

the original UN partition resolution, even maintaining a separate organisation in those territories seized by Israel during the 1948 war which had been assigned to the new Palestinian state envisaged by the UN. Maki's programme called for the creation of such a Palestinian state, return or compensation of their refugees and for Israel's alignment with the 'forces of tomorrow' under the leadership of the Soviet Union. The party also continued to offer to co-operate with Mapam which, however, always refused to move far from Ben Gurion's national consensus.

Despite upsurges in support during periods of workers' unrest, Maki remained marginalised among Israel's Jewish population. But the party's stand on the Palestinian question and its continued opposition to the Government's abuse of Arab civil and human rights drew an increasing number of Arab adherents, influenced strongly by rising Arab nationalism. The party was thus pulled in different directions by the two competing nationalisms. Its Hebrew and Arabic publications often contained considerable differences of emphasis: a fact Maki's opponents, especially Mapam (which was guilty of similar 'deceptions'), were always willing to highlight. Not surprisingly, in the early '60s, the party split on Arab-Jewish lines between Maki, which virtually joined the Zionist national consensus, and Rakah (New Communist List) which, though it retained some Jewish members, became identified with the demands of the Palestinian population within Israel.

The powerful and unrelenting pressure of the national consensus in Israel was the crucial factor in destroying the possibility of building a substantial communist force uniting Arabs and Jews. It also dragged the Zionist left remorselessly and inexorably to the right in both international and domestic politics, and thus contributed to the eventual ideological and electoral triumph of the authentic Zionist right, represented by Likud.

Egypt's struggle

Beinin's analytical narrative of Egyptian Marxism is where the story begins to assume the dimensions of a tragic novel. The background to the events is at first the corrupt monarchy of Farouk, followed by the interim regime of Neguib and, finally, the rule of Gamal Abdu' Nasser. It is worth noting that many of the founders of the organisations that eventually fused to form the Egyptian Communist Party were young Jews, particularly vehement in their anti-Zionism. However, in accordance with Soviet policy, Egyptian Marxists generally supported the partition resolution and opposed the invasion of Palestine by the Egyptian army in

1948. The communists, like their Soviet mentors, were convinced that the creation of Israel was a powerful blow against British imperialism in the region, and that the new state would prove a welcome ally in Egypt's struggle to free itself of that yoke.

These years witnessed the heroic struggle of Henri Curiel and other pioneers of Egyptian Marxism to forge links with Israeli comrades with a view to building a peace in accordance with their internationalist vision. The road travelled by Curiel and his 'Rome Group' eventually resulted in ostracism and in death by an assassin's bullet.

Some Egyptians, in an attempt to build a more authentic national communism in Egypt, formed an organisation from which Jews and women were excluded; the former because of 'cosmopolitanism' and the latter because of 'immorality'. In the face of Ben Gurion's 'military activism' (which included raids on Gaza and Sinai as well as the notorious Lavon affair in which Israeli spies were active in attempting sabotage designed to exacerbate Egypt's conflict with the West), Egyptian communists nevertheless remained loyal, as did their Israeli comrades, to the original partition resolution. They called for a Palestinian state within the 1947 UN borders and the return of the refugees.

Nasser's seizure of power altered the situation considerably. The dilemmas of a Third World nationalist government attempting to modernise its country while freeing itself from western control is starkly illustrated in Nasser's Egypt. The modernisation project demanded investment which would only be forthcoming if there was social peace; therefore labour had to be subordinated to these requirements. At the same time, productivity had to be boosted along with labour's spending power which was needed to stimulate an internal market. Even when he began to develop relations with the Soviet Union, Nasser remained suspicious of organised labour and hostile to local communists to the extent that the Party was virtually eliminated as thousands of its militants suffered imprisonment and torture. Not surprisingly, during the early years of Nasser's rule the majority of Egypt's communists, apart from Curiel's groups, remained hostile to the government.

The events of 1956 brought profound changes. Nasser's political victory, despite his military defeat at the hands of the Franco-British alliance, marked the zenith of pan-Arab nationalism. It also preceded a leftward trend marked by widespread nationalisation, closer ties with the Soviet Union, and the formation of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). The communists remained proscribed, though some of their members found prominent positions within the ASU. The rhetoric on Palestine

also began to change. There was now to be no mention of recognising Israel (which Nasser had previously hinted he was prepared to do) and statements began to reflect pan-Arab dreams of eliminating 'the alien presence on Arab soil'.

The triumph of Nasser influenced Arab politics throughout the region; it also strongly influenced the small, struggling band of communists at home. With some notable exceptions, they too had gradually abandoned internationalist and Marxist positions for Nasser's radical nationalism. Theoretically this was justified by the thesis of the 'Third Way' which asserted that Egyptian national aims would be achieved in a profoundly new vision of society different from capitalism and communism. Nasser's closeness to the Soviet Union and the leftward trend at home reinforced this tendency.

Against the tide

Beinin interprets these developments as a failed attempt in both countries to construct a 'counter-hegemony' to the social, political and cultural 'hegemony' exercised by the ruling class, as described in the theories of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci. But, beyond this, Beinin's story is one of remarkable human courage: the courage to stand against the force of the state and those seduced by its ideology; the courage to endure marginalisation and ostracism; and, in some cases, the courage to face imprisonment, torture and death. And it is this courage which endows the narrative with a timeless quality, for it forms an enduring link with those who, in our own generation, have risked and often lost all in the same cause. Issam Sartawi and Said Hammami of the PLO pioneered dialogue with the 'Zionist enemy' and paid with their lives. Others on both sides continue, while governments and extreme nationalists rage and scream 'betrayal' and seek to liquidate the demands for a just peace along with its proponents.

As time for the international conference draws near, with, at last, perhaps a real possibility of an end to the major conflict in a region sickened and ravaged by conflict, Joel Beinin's work has memorialised the lives and work of a band of Egyptian and Israeli socialists who stood against the stream to declare that conflicts between nations need not last forever and that peace with justice is attainable. The fact that, in their generation, their hopes were smashed by the remorseless tide of nationalism, often reduced to murderous chauvinism, does not detract from their courage or from their contribution, for, albeit in ways unforeseen by them, hope lives again. The title of Joel Beinin's book asks: 'Was the red flag flying there?' It was, and it will again.

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Post impressions

Postcards from Poland and other correspondences by Jola Scicinska and Maria Jastrzebska (Working Press, 85 St Agnes Place, Kennington, London SE1 4BB)

Two women, brought up and living in England, return to their native Poland. In a series of picture postcards with poems on the reverse they describe their feelings and impressions, vividly, with sadness, humour and passion.

From the perspective of their experience of two cultures, the authors challenge both Polish and Western assumptions about Poland, its past, and what the recent political changes mean for that country. As a British Jew of Polish origin, I found this approach of special significance and it should resonate with anyone who lives balancing different cultures.

The statements are also personal, exposing all sorts of complexities, exploring issues of difference on grounds of ethnicity, religion, sexuality, economics, health and status.

Jola's illustrations are based on the traditional Polish peasant art of paper-cutting (she has also researched and drawn on a Jewish tradition in this art), but the images are radical rather than traditional. The book, particularly the pictures, attempt to make visible Poland's Jewish past and question how this is being faced in the present: 'Do you now have to be Catholic to be Polish?'

The pictures and poetry sometimes converge, but at other times do not relate to each other at all, just like postcards!

In Maria's poetry I found unexpected humour, as well as serious comment. All in all I enjoyed the book immensely and recommend it as an original and exciting work by two Polish feminists.

ADI COOPER

I can't bear people who deny the extent of anti-semitism in Poland before the war, and during the war, after the war and today.

I also can't bear people who know nothing at all about Poland and don't really care dismissing all Poles as a bunch of raving nationalists and anti-semites.

They say, as you get older you become less angry. This does not seem to be happening to me so far.

Baby, it's cold outside

Safe Childbirth for Travellers (Information Pack) London Gypsy and Traveller Unit, Jadwin House, 205-211 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2SU

What do you consider are the basic requirements for giving birth and going through a pregnancy?

Anyone who has themselves been through or watched their friends through a birth knows the stress that can arise: will the home be ready, clean and warm, with food put by if you're too tired to cook; will you get to the hospital OK and get medical help when necessary; how will you manage the baby...? Now imagine going through all this as a Traveller.

Councils still fail to provide adequate, or any, places for Travellers to stop. Women can be evicted close to the time of giving birth, and many find it difficult to get access to regular ante-natal and post-natal care. Following a report put out last October by the Maternity

Alliance, an information pack has been produced to campaign for better conditions for Traveller mothers and babies. The information pack gives some background notes on the history of Travellers, and details how the increased use of land planning acts have restricted the Travellers' options regarding stopping places. There are also some interesting case studies of councils' tendencies to an over-zealous interpretation of aspects of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, whilst failing to meet the Act's stipulations in other areas.

The information pack is very clear on looking at positive aspects of the issue, and stresses the opportunity for many types of people to get together and exert some influence. Several harrowing stories are told, but then emphasis is laid on where councils delayed eviction or

allowed for tolerated sites.

The aim of the pack is to build on this slight shift in attitudes, and includes a full action list of ways in which people can take up the campaign.

MICHELLE GREEN



Prison politics

Every conscientious person will identify with this collection of writings by prisoners of conscience. 'Those who', the editor says, 'express in themselves that defiance which seems embedded in them more than others.'

As a former political prisoner myself, I found it even easier to identify with them all, though naturally I identified more with Augustino Neto, Victor Jara, Ruth First and Nazim Hikmet – the Marxist revolutionaries of our time. Their words express not only the spirit of defiance, but also the aspirations of the workers and oppressed people everywhere. What distinguishes their writing and experience is an involvement in a concrete historical struggle rather than a subjective spiritual belief.

My political or materialist perspective leads me to disagree with editor Geoffrey Bould's view that 'the prison experience is unique to those who have suffered it'. For revolutionaries, prison, like war, is a continuation of the political struggle in a spiritual

form. For us, what counts is not the suffering but the struggle. To paraphrase Tolstoy: the suffering is unique but the struggle is always the same. George Mangakis, a professor at Athens University condemned to 18 years' imprisonment by the colonels, writes: 'It is the unity of all man's yearning to be free of oppression ... who ever resists oppression is a brother to them.'

When I recently read Yitzhak Zuckerman's book, *Those Seven Years*, about Jewish resistance in the Warsaw ghetto, I asked myself what makes his story so relevant and so important for me all these years later. The answer is that he deals with the resistance of the Jews, unlike most other books about the Holocaust which describe only Jewish suffering.

It is not always true that the opposite – and the only opponent – of totalitarianism is the individual conscience. This basic premise of the Enlightenment and, indeed, of the mainstream of western philosophy since Plato, that individual conscience is

synonymous with human liberty, seems persuasive in the light of the collapse of Stalinism. But here and now, listening to Thatcher, Major and Bush speaking against dictatorship and totalitarianism, I cannot avoid the suspicion that behind the defence of freedom of conscience hides the prosaic interest of private property which can be equally, if not more, totalitarian and oppressive than the overtly totalitarian regimes. Historically, the real opposition to totalitarianism has come not from the individual spirit, but from democratic and socialist struggle.

Conscience be my Guide focuses on people resisting oppression under the most difficult circumstances: when they were alone and without material support; the only weapon they had was spiritual – their courage and their strength. I would rather the book had been called 'Struggle be my Guide'.

UDI ADIV

Udi Adiv spent 12 years in an Israeli prison

FIFTH COLUMN

Be part of the Fifth Column. Deadline for listings in the next issue of *Jewish Socialist* is 30 NOVEMBER. 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 Meets regularly. C/o Box 11, Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS

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

Manchester Jewish Socialists Contact Adrienne on 0204 591460.

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

Red Rabbi offers services: for naming ceremonies; secular bat/bar 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 081-349 3236.

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.

Leeds Jewish Klezmer Festival. 7/8 December, concert on the Saturday night (£3.50/£5) and workshops Sunday (£8/£15). Accommodation can be arranged. Further details: Deb 0532-620824.

Morris Beckman is compiling a book of personal experiences of the '43 Group' which fought fascists in the 1940s. If you were involved in the group or remember fascist activity in your neighbourhood between 1946 and 1949, please contact Morris Beckman, c/o Centerprise, 136/138 Kingsland High Street, Hackney, E8 2NS.

The Jewish Socialists' Group is holding a

DAY SCHOOL

on current controversies for Jewish socialists on 25 January 10am – 5pm + evening social (Leicester)

Details: JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX

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.

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

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No 25 coming soon...

In our Silver Jubilee issue we will continue our series on revolutionary Jews in history with a profile of Alexander Berkman. We can also promise a fascinating article by Nan Rubin, a prominent cultural activist in the USA, on 'the hidden Jews of New Mexico' – a group of people directly descended from forced converts as a result of the Spanish Inquisition. With several others Nan Rubin has been working for four years on a radio project on this subject as part of the movement countering the Columbus Quincentennial. Nan will be writing about the New Mexican Jews especially for *Jewish Socialist*...

And now a song – an old favourite: I'm Lenin on a lamp-post...

I'd rather be reading Jewish Socialist

