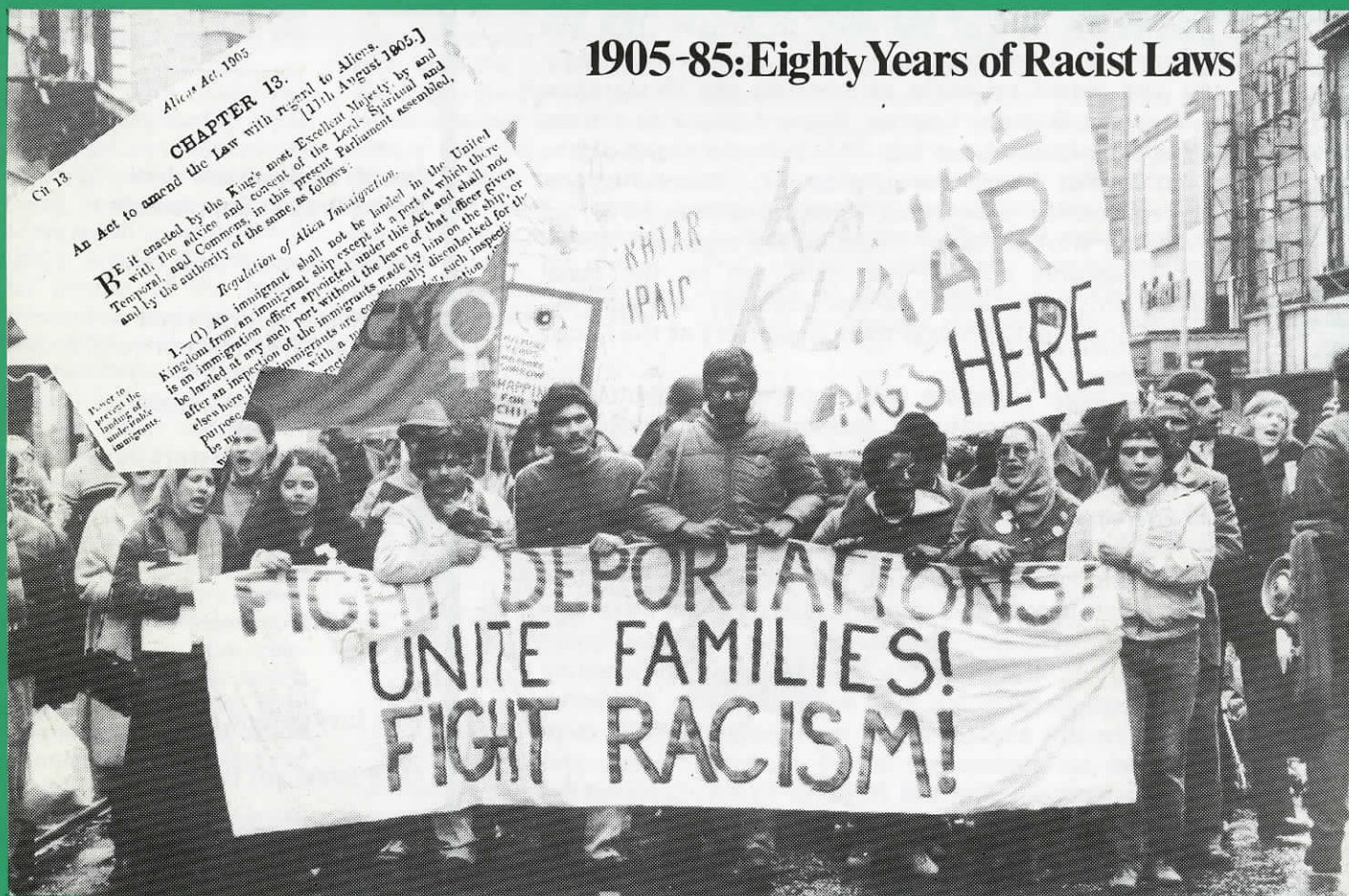


# JEWISH SOCIALIST

No 3 Autumn 1985

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

85p



1905-85: Eighty Years of Racist Laws

**Ken Livingstone Interview**

**The First British Fascists**

**Zionism and Jewish Identity**

**Bund in Poland**

**Israel and the Bomb**

**Racial Harassment**



# JEWISH SOCIALIST

BM 3725, LONDON WC1N 3XX

## EDITORIAL

Eighty years ago, on 11 August 1905, Parliament passed an Act to restrict the right of free entry to Britain. This was the forerunner of more recent restrictive immigration legislation and was aimed primarily at stopping the immigration of Jews from the Russian Empire. Bernard Misrahi's article, "Eighty Years of Racist Laws" (p 11), tells the story of the campaign to restrict Jewish immigration. The Aliens Act was passed in response to widespread agitation among both the middle class and working class, including the organised labour movement. Grassroots opinion was mobilised by the mass-based British Brothers' League, whose ideology and activity, argues Steve Cohen (p 13), made them precursors of the fascist National Front.

The "alien scare", complete with declarations about being "swamped" by foreign cultures, strikingly foreshadows the anti-Black racism of recent years. Faced with a well organised campaign drawing mass support from the indigenous working class, the liberalism of the establishment crumbled, just as it did at the time of the 1962 and 1968 Immigration Acts.

We should, though, avoid making simple equations of state racism with that perpetrated by the fascists. For while the latter demand repatriation, the state racists have developed immigration *control*, regulating the flow of labour and creating an underclass here to carry out vital economic tasks. Nevertheless, the anti-alienism and racism of immigration control campaigns provided an atmosphere which nurtured fascist and antisemitic organisations like the National Front. State racism strengthens popular racist attitudes. It gives space and legitimacy to the notion that immigrants are a "problem" and encourages those who offer a "final solution".

To mark the anniversary of the Aliens Act, JCARP is mounting an exhibition called "The Aliens Act Revisited" (see p 12), which will be launched in London in October. Look out for publicity in the press. And draw the lessons for today.

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The opinions expressed in *Jewish Socialist* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Committee or of the Jewish Socialists' Group.

This issue was produced by an Editorial Committee consisting of Julia Bard, Clive Gilbert, Mike Heiser, Ruth Lukom and David Rosenberg.

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

Typeset by Bread 'n Roses, 2 St Paul's Road, London N1. 01-354 0557.

Printed by Community Press, 2A St Paul's Road, London N1. 01-226 0580. ISSN 0267-4955.

Advertising rates are available on request from *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

September 1985

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Cover picture: Text of Aliens Act set on a photo by Paul Mattsson of an anti-deportation march in Manchester, 1985.

## HUNG, DRAWN, QUARTERED

Until a few weeks ago, *The Jewish Quarterly* was a magazine with a reputation for publishing in-depth, innovative and genuinely searching articles on a wide range of issues affecting the Jewish community. Founded in 1953 by Jacob Sonntag, its independence was fiercely maintained during his lifetime, and when he died in 1983, Tony Lerman, an assistant director at the Institute of Jewish Affairs, was appointed as (unpaid) Editor in the knowledge that he would maintain this tradition.

Earlier this year the *Quarterly* published an article on racism and antisemitism in contemporary Britain by David Rosenberg, a member of the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG). Arguing that successful defence of the Jewish community depends on our making links with other ethnic communities in their struggles against racism, Rosenberg's analysis differs considerably from that of the mainstream communal leadership who, historically and currently, believe we should trust the structures of the British state to protect us. Clearly such an article raises important issues for members of the community to consider, and it was on this basis that Tony Lerman and the rest of his editorial team decided to publish it.

In the same issue Lerman wrote an editorial, also about the politics of antisemitism, but arguing that an unjustified conflation of "antisemitism" and "anti-Zionism" leads to an avoidance of debate on the very issues which are most difficult to see clearly and most crucial for the future of the community. While disagreeing with Rosenberg on the scale and nature of the threat, and warning that the threat itself can be — and is being — used as a device to obscure the real issues, he argues that we must clarify our terms and engage in open debate rather than labelling anything we feel uncomfort-

table with as "the enemy".

None of this went down well with Our Leaders. The issue was raised at a Board of Deputies (BoD) meeting by Eric Moonman, ex-Labour MP until he lost his seat and joined the SDP, and director of the Centre for Contemporary Studies, an organisation which at other times, and where Israel is concerned, has taken great exception to what it perceives as press bias and manipulation.

Having lit the blue touch paper, Moonman stood well back while the Board's Israel Committee and Defence Committee discussed how to deal with a magazine which was showing such a dangerously independent spirit. Though the BoD claims to represent the community, the discussions which took place in both these meetings are con-



fidential, so the first public indication of what had been decided came on 19 July when the *Jewish Chronicle* reported that Tony Lerman had "stepped down (from the editorship) because of increased responsibilities at the Institute of Jewish Affairs. It was felt", the report went on, "that Mr Lerman should not have allowed the publication of views contrary to official communal policy while at the same time working for a communal organisation — the IJA". Such a statement raises some difficult — and potentially vital — questions for Jews to consider. What is this communal policy? Where is it formulated? How is it arrived

at and by whom? Is it written down and available for reference? Must everyone employed by a Jewish communal organisation — however that is defined — swear an oath of loyalty to the Board of Deputies? On what basis does the Board claim to speak and act for the community and is it recognised by most Jews as their representative body? Specifically in the case of *The Jewish Quarterly*, in what way did David Rosenberg's article and Tony Lerman's editorial contravene these unseen, unwritten rules?

Henry Morris, Chair of the Board's Defence Committee, refused to comment on the editorial. On Rosenberg's article, though, he said, "We do not view the JSG favourably, particularly with its attitude towards Israel and ... its sympathy for the PLO. That makes us somewhat suspicious of their activities and their motives and there-

fore we don't look favourably upon them and if Rosenberg writes articles that reflect that kind of attitude then obviously we're not terribly pleased." Now Rosenberg's article, though perhaps contentious, is about racism and antisemitism in contemporary Britain, not about the Middle East. Perhaps realising that his statement bears no relation to the issue, Morris moves marginally closer to the point saying that Rosenberg "consistently ignores ... the part played in the campaign against the British Union of Fascists by the community before the War. He *never* writes about those things." He adds, "I think at one

point in his article he refers to matters concerning Cable Street ... and what he doesn't mention was that the very people who were so active campaigning against Moseley's fascists at that particular period, not so very long after that particular date were supporting the Communist Party's attitude about not going to war with Nazi Germany."

If any readers can make sense of all this, we'd be grateful to hear from them, because, as we've seen, failure to comply with the policy may lead to premature removal from your post!

But the powers that be hotly deny that any pressure was brought to bear on Tony Lerman, suggesting, just as Leon Brittan has done over the BBC affair, that they were simply expressing their opinion as ordinary members of the community. There are two diametrically opposed versions of what has happened. Henry Morris recommends that stated by Colin Shindler, the newly appointed *Quarterly* editor, in a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* (JC). He described the JC's original report as "bizarre", saying, "The innuendo that Tony Lerman was deliberately replaced as editor is as malicious as it is inaccurate". He goes on to express disappointment "at Tony's decision to step down due to increased responsibilities at the Institute of Jewish Affairs" (IJA).

Others connected with the *Quarterly*, however, seem to be less easily convinced that the sudden and timely increase in Lerman's workload at the IJA was no more than pure coincidence. Barnett Litvinoff, a member of the *Quarterly*'s Editorial Advisory Board, says, "The tragedy of it was that *The Jewish Quarterly* is not sufficiently supported to pay an editor and keep him independent. Everybody's got to earn a living and in this case the livelihood of the editor was provided by another organisation which ultimately tried



to call the tune. Tony Lerman took the honourable way of allowing someone else to take over who would not have to submit to any such pressures because he earns his living elsewhere. The *force majeure*," he concludes, "is the fact that we cannot, at the moment, appoint an editor, pay him a salary and tell everyone else to get stuffed!"

The most contradictory version of the story and, ironically, the most enlightening about the internal politics of the self-appointed leadership of the community, comes from Stephen Roth, Director of the Institute of Jewish Affairs, and Lerman's employer. He starts a long and angry letter to the JC by saying that Lerman's "resignation" and the criticism levelled against that issue of the *Jewish Quarterly* were entirely unconnected. By the end of the letter he is saying: "It is a fact that at that meeting (of the Board's Israel Committee) the dismissal of Mr Lerman by the IJA(!) was demanded." He adds, as

though it is nothing to do with the previous sentence: "The IJA is looking forward with great hope to Mr Lerman's editorship of its own journal." Well, what a coincidence that such a tempting nugget of work should have been put Tony Lerman's way just at that moment. Stephen Roth does not indicate who added this new

dimension to Lerman's job nor why. He also does not mention that he was then a leading member of the Board himself, as well as being IJA chief but no doubt Roth, too, took the opportunity of expressing his opinion as an ordinary member of the community!

The *Jewish Chronicle* letters page has been rocked by the response of large numbers of indignant people who are extremely concerned at the crass methods being used to silence views the Board of Deputies finds uncongenial. One letter from eleven authors, some of them extremely well known and highly respected both inside and outside the community, is clear that Lerman did not resign entirely of his own volition, saying, "Once again, the official

community has taken a step towards enforced conformity, crudely imposing a monopoly over the right to represent Jews and Jewish opinion."

Henry Morris discounts this accusation, saying, "They may be closely connected insofar as they are contributors to the *Quarterly*, but they're not that closely connected in knowing the circumstances of Tony Lerman's resignation." Morris contemptuously dismisses the fact that one of the letter's signatories was actually a member of the magazine's Editorial Advisory Board with the words, "That could well be the case, but I prefer to stick to what Colin Shindler says."

This is not the first time people who dissent from the "line" of the Board of Deputies have been silenced or punished for having the nerve to express their views. Jewish socialists, Jewish feminists, Jews against nuclear arms, Jewish gays and many others are all invisible in the Jewish press and are open to ridicule or abuse if they do try to make their feelings felt. The outcry against the punishment that's been meted out to the

erstwhile editor of *The Jewish Quarterly* is a welcome sign that many Jews are not prepared to tolerate such McCarthyite tactics being enacted in their name. It would be an improvement on past performance, however, if, along with the rhetoric about creating an open and tolerant community, all these academics, authors and other important people realised that the future of Jewish life depends not only on defending "intellectuals" against attack, but on creating the conditions where a genuinely pluralistic community can flourish. This means defending often less "respectable" groups from attack — and not allowing so-called "defence committees" to waste communal time and resources on an imaginary threat from within, while ignoring the genuine threat from outside.

David Rosenberg comments: "Some people think it's merely a case of the Board of Deputies overstepping the mark, but it actually shows their fundamental conception of their role in the community as an agency of social control, policing the community and telling us it's for our own good." □

## CROWD CONTROL

Last May, the government published the 'Review of Public Order Law' White Paper, which it intends to make law — probably in January 1986.

The overall tone of the paper is against protest and against oppressed peoples fighting back. Some of the provisions suggested are:

- ★ All marches and demonstrations will be illegal if the police are not given one week's notice. So, spontaneous protests at racist attacks or men's violence are illegal. Those organising them can be put in prison and those taking part fined.

- ★ The police can ban single marches. Most likely, they will protect racist and fascist organisations by banning the counter-demonstration. We will be arrested for saying "They shall not pass!"

- ★ Police can impose conditions, on the spot or in advance, on the location, duration and size of demonstrations. You can be arrested for not obeying these conditions.

- ★ You can be arrested and charged with rioting if you are with 11 friends, violent disorder if you're with two friends and affray if you're on your own, "using or threatening violence to people or property".

- ★ Racial hatred — Section 5a of the 1936 Public Order Act is to be extended to include the *intention* to incite racial hatred as well as the deed and to include broadcasting such material.

There are many implications of these proposals:

- ★ The White Paper does not appear in a vacuum. The Prevention of Terrorism Act

has recently been extended. These proposals are part of the general move to the right.

- ★ Violence against women is expressly omitted in the proposals. They recommend extending the existing offence of causing fear of violence to inside buildings as well as in public but specifically *exclude* private homes. The government obviously wants to keep violence against women in the home a private affair. This is consistent with the general police/state move to categorise "domestic violence" as a "no-crime". They are telling women that we cannot ask the police to protect us from other men's violence.

- ★ The police will use their powers to limit the activity of *any* group, organisation, movement or sector it dislikes or perceives as a threat.

- ★ Society is divided into two: good and bad. Good

equals law-abiding, obedient, non-dissenting and with nothing to object to. Bad equals dissenting, prepared to break the law sometimes, violent and oppressed. No distinction is made between those who seek to oppress and those who fight against oppression. It lumps football violence, fascist activity and anti-fascist action together in an attempt to criminalise the fight-back against oppression. Any situation where there are more than 30 arrests constitutes, for the police, a "serious public disorder".

- ★ The 'minor' public order offences seem designed to be used against the Black community. Over the years, SUS, strip searches, policing of the deportation/immigration laws and daily racist police practice have provided indications of police racism and their

## A LIFE OF STRUGGLE

Joe Garman

On Sunday 9 June 1985 Joe Garman died suddenly and unexpectedly in Manchester. He was 69 years old. Joe's death is a loss to the working class, but to Jewish Socialists and to those of us who knew him well, we are left with a sad emptiness and a gaping wound that will not heal.

Joe's 69 years were filled with struggle — against slum conditions in pre-War Manchester, against Fascism and anti-semitism in the same city, against Japanese militarism in the jungles of Burma, against racism and against injustice. As a young man he pledged his loyalty to the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Despite many years of betrayal and shattered illusions Joe's loyalty, albeit critical, remained constant. Once pledged, Joe could not withdraw it. He was that kind of man. He would never tire of reminding his many younger comrades that "it was the Red Army that liberated Auschwitz."

Joe's socialism wasn't analytical or theoretical, it was emotionally embedded in him; part of his being. Until the end, he was politically active despite his illness. His last year was no different to the rest of his life. He campaigned for CND; he raised money for striking miners; he continued to urge the Jewish community to involve itself in the fight against racism; he fought for pensioners; he strove to build the Jewish Socialists' Group which he had helped found.

Joe loved the Jewish people and humanity with a passionate intensity. That same passion made him an irreconcilable enemy of injustice, inequality and oppression everywhere. Joe's life is an example of everything that is best in the Jewish radical heritage. He was deeply committed to the inseparable dual



components of his identity — he was a Jew and a Socialist — but his solidarity with the oppressed was unlimited.

Joe's humour, like his compassion and his fighting spirit, was unconquerable and contagious. His style as a public speaker exuded love, warmth and humour as well as commitment. He loved children and they loved him. He kept them enthralled with his repertoire of jokes and tricks.

Joe was a very special human being. He never stopped caring, he never stopped fighting and he never stopped learning. When his activity brought him into contact with feminists and with Black people, he struggled painfully to absorb new ideas about racism and sexism.

Many people loved him. Many people will miss him. Joe kept the faith — we can do no less in his honour and in his memory.

CLIVE GILBERT

## Wishing you well over the fascist

Hey Joe, what's it like up there?  
Where do you get your fags?  
Who gives the health warning?  
I remember your hair  
Long  
No wonder the Deputies saw you as a threat  
And you a pensioner yet  
What do you mean —  
That up there it's a good scene?  
That up there the Inquisition flopped  
Stalin was still-born  
Hitler was never born  
The Bund triumphed  
The Republicans won the Spanish Civil War  
The Rosenbergs were acquitted  
Mel Brooks made no movies

When Martin died, you sighed  
And said "we should only meet on demos."  
Hey Joe, what are you demonstrating about now?  
I hear you —  
No immigration controls  
Free entry for all into heaven  
Joe, wait til I get up there —  
We need to discuss the line

We buried you Jewish  
The only way for a real atheist  
God will be turning in your grave  
We buried you  
But not your deeds or your memory  
I'm sure I saw some smoke rise from the ground —  
I should have known you'd got some on you.

Hey Joe, you were a goodie.

STEVE COHEN

determination to use their powers in this way.

- ★ Extending the laws about racial hatred is a cosmetic measure. We know that the far-right is *not* prevented from demonstrating or from distributing literature that incites racist attacks. We *know* that the police will not use these proposals or other legislation to protect Jews, Blacks and other ethnic minorities from fascism. Consultation with the Board of Deputies was merely an

attempt to gain credibility with one ethnic minority and set us against each other. The Jewish establishment may support these proposals wishing to believe that the police will protect us (and of course many Jews wish to believe that we are safe now if we're white... read any NF literature recently?). It is important both that Jews are not brought in to do the government's credibility work over this issue, and that we are not set against other groups.

We must not forget the Jewish tradition of protest and fight against injustice and inequality. We must remember that Jews who are Black, and our other Black sisters and brothers will be further harassed and abused and that Jewish and Gentile sisters are to be kept prisoners to violent men.

We must participate fully as *Jews* in the campaign to stop these proposals becoming law. A campaign called the Campaign for the Right of

Assembly and Dissent (CROWD) has been launched which can be contacted at 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP (phone Maggie on 01-833 2701/2). A sub-group has been formed to co-ordinate the "grass-roots" activity of the campaign — organising local public meetings, leafleting, distribution of campaign materials... If you want a speaker, or want to get involved in this work, contact Sara 01-833 4999.

SARA MAGEN



# A new anti-fascist alliance

On Sunday 28 July, nearly 200 people crowded into Conway Hall, London, to participate in launching a new and militant anti-fascist alliance. Activists from various groups including the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG), Searchlight, Red Action, Newham 7 Defence Campaign, Young Socialists and others had been meeting previously with the aim of forming a broad organisation to counter the threat of fascism in Britain.

The conference was chaired by Michael Safier, National Secretary of the JSG. He stressed that the aim of the conference was to set up a practical anti-fascist network, bringing together localised campaigns within a broader framework, while ensuring greater depth of support for such localised initiatives. The organisation would be non-sectarian, and would guard against domination by any single political or ideological tendency.

The keynote speech was delivered by Gerry Gable of *Searchlight*. Recounting developments on the far right

within the last two years, he emphasised the changes in the National Front, particularly since the ousting of Martin Webster. Following an influx of Italian fascist terrorists, the Front were increasingly in the hands of a young leadership concerned less with a low-key "legalistic" approach and more with direct confrontation. Their orientation is explicitly anti-Thatcher and seeks to recruit schoolkids and unemployed youth. They have infiltrated "Stop the City" demonstrations, "Animal Rights" protests, and an East Anglia CND action against US bases. They have been stepping up violent attacks, particularly on the Asian community and left wing groups. Parallel with these developments are signs of increased para-military training and activity, with the proliferation of small commando teams, and the anticipated national re-launching of the British Movement. Gable concluded: "We are dealing with professionals. We have got to be more professional."

There then followed various

regional reports of fascist activities which provided specific details of the growing threat and illustrated the inaction of the police. After a series of attacks and threats, Kings Cross Women's Centre had campaigned for and won 24 hour police protection, on their terms, but, their speaker declared, others must follow with similar demands.

The conference, being the first of its kind since the demise of the Anti-Nazi League brought together groups with different experiences, understanding and analyses of fascism, and with various strategies of opposition. Clearly if the new body is to succeed it must recognise these differences, while maintaining a broad basis, and unite groups on a minimal general platform in militant anti-fascist activities.

On the basis of one vote per affiliated group, the conference adopted the following statement of aims:

**This conference recognises the need to build an anti-fascist front of groups willing to**

**combat fascist activity in this country. We recognise the need to oppose racism and fascism physically on the streets and ideologically. We support the right of ethnic minority groups under threat to organise for their self defence, and recognise the need for us to organise in their support. This grouping should be organised on democratic and non-sectarian lines with equal representation for all groups involved.**

The conference agreed to form a steering committee to which all affiliated groups are entitled to send two delegates. At its first meeting, this committee confirmed the name of the organisation — *Anti-Fascist Action* — and discussed the scope and aims of AFA in the coming months. Currently, the main base of AFA is London, but a major objective is to expand the network on a national basis. Groups who are interested in affiliating and require further details should write to Anti-Fascist Action, PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7. □

## BLIND SOCIETY WARNS OF CUTBACKS

The Jewish Blind Society will need to find an extra £70,000 from somewhere to keep on caring for residents at its new Finchley Road, NW London home, and executive director Anthony Kraiss says government cutbacks are to blame. Mr Kraiss is to chair a committee on residential care formed by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, which is anxious at the combined effects of increased demand, government cuts, and attempts to push more of residential care into the private or voluntary sector.

The DHSS ceiling of £110 per week for residents in care has been slammed as "totally inadequate" by Jewish Social Service chair Stuart Young and by Jewish Blind Society chair David Lewis, who described government policy as "most damaging". The

measure was cited as a big factor in the Jewish Welfare Board's crisis which forced it to close Fenton House old people's home in July. Stuart Young says more homes will face closure, and vital services will be curtailed "in the very near future, unless there is a realistic review of Government funding and statutory grants, coupled with a significant increase in support from the Jewish community itself."

## SHEFFIELD JEWISH CIRCLE

An informal group or "circle" of Jewish women and men is developing in Sheffield. Recent meetings have shown that a chord has been struck with a number of "buried" Jewish radicals and feminists in the area.

The "circle" is developing as a social/discussion forum concerned with a wide range of cultural and political issues.

Recent meetings included a workshop on *Being Publicly Jewish* and a discussion on *The Non-Jewish Jew* by Isaac Deutscher. For further details contact Dave Hayes on 0742-550957.

## ISRAELIS ABROAD ASK TO GIVE UP THEIR CITIZENSHIP

*Davar, 30.5.1985*

Hundreds of Israeli families living all over the world this week went to their local Israeli consulate in order to give up their Israeli citizenship, because of the new travel tax regulations (which mean that they, too, will have to pay some 300 dollars per head each time they leave Israel — IM ed.) According to data from the Ministry of Absorption, hundreds approached the Israeli consulate in Brussels with this request,

until officials ran out of forms there. The Israeli consulate in Boston reported 10 such requests a day, and the one in Paris reported 20.

## 21 ISRAELI SOLDIERS COMMITTED SUICIDE IN LEBANON

*Koteret Rashit, 8.5.1985*

This week saw Defence Minister Itzhak Rabin's reply to a question tabled by Matti Peled of the Progressive List. According to Rabin, 21 Israeli soldiers committed suicide in Lebanon during the three years of the war, 12 of them before April 1984, and 9 in the war's last year. Mr Rabin refused to give any details.

*Extracts from the Israeli press are reprinted with kind permission of Israeli Mirror.*

# BENEATH GATHERING CLOUDS

**Majer Bogdanski, a lifelong member of the Bund, recalls the life and work of the organisation in Poland in the days leading up to the Second World War**

The Bund consisted of three tiers — the party, the youth organisation (*Yugnt Bund Tsukunft*) and the children's organisation (*Sotsialistisher Kinder Farband, SKIF*). We had many additional associations; a *yeshiva* group, a women's organisation, and a university students' group. We also had a group among secondary school pupils. These were young people who understood little or no Yiddish, but we wanted to gain our influence among them.

The Bund was affiliated to the Socialist International, the youth organisation to the Socialist Youth International, and SKIF to the Socialist Education International. There were other Bund organisations from whom we gained support. There were Jewish trade unions: clothing workers, woodworkers, shoemakers, metal workers, textile workers. In Warsaw, we successfully organised a trade union of the housemaids. And we also had all over Poland a union of the artisans — outdoor workers who worked with the staff they employed, and often longer hours than them. They were exploiting their workers, but were exploited by those for whom they worked. Often we organised strikes with them against the chief employers. The trade unions were affiliated to their internationals, and within Poland all Jewish trade unions were organised in one central national committee. The Central Council was affiliated to the General Central Council of Polish Workers.

## THE CULTURAL DIMENSION

We had a system of Yiddish schools all over Poland, organised in one central authority. We also had a *Kultur Lige*, which would buy up cinema or theatre performances, organise concerts and

cater for libraries. They had one of the finest Yiddish choirs in Poland. We had our own sports club called *Morgnshtern* which catered for athletics, football, gymnastics, and was affiliated to the Socialist Workers' Sports International.

We ran our own press with the daily *Folkstsaytung* (paper of the people), as well as periodicals. The Bund Central Committee issued a monthly called *Unser Tsayt*. There was also a journal or the minority called *Kegn Shtrom*. They didn't agree with the politics of the Central Committee as explained in the official Party paper, so they had their own journal. We also had local weekly or bi-weekly periodicals in towns which could afford them. Once a week the children had a page in the *Folkstsaytung*. The youth organisation had a monthly. This was one of the nicest journals you could ever see. We also had a youth periodical in Polish called *Voice of the Youth*. The Bund had another periodical in Polish called *Voice of the Bund*. This was aimed at the intelligentsia. We wanted to gain influence and let them know who we were.

## POLITICAL LINKS

Ideologically we were Marxist. Politically we called ourselves revolutionary socialists. Where we could gain power by the vote, in a democratic way, we would. But if this was not possible, like in Italy or Portugal, or in our own Poland, and if force was the only way of gaining power, we would use force. We were absolutely against war and absolutely against the army. We thought it should be disbanded. But this was only until the advent of Hitler. Hitler changed our minds in this respect. We were anti-Zionist and anti-

communist. The communists believed that the first fight was against the Bund and the socialists. In all our political actions we tried as much as possible to work with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), and also the socialist parties of the other minorities — Germans, Ukrainians, White Russians and Lithuanians.

We took part as much as we could in the local authorities. We had to co-operate; without the PPS we were always a minority. We organised strikes; not frivolously — we couldn't afford it — a strike was a dire necessity. Strikes were mainly for economic matters. We also called political strikes for a shorter working day. We had demonstrations on all sorts of occasions. If there was a pogrom somewhere, we would call a half-day strike and the shopkeepers would usually support it. This was the only way they could protest against such atrocities.

What did we have to contend with? Poland had a constitution. It was a republic. You could never find a more beautiful constitution! It was drafted and established just after 1919 when Poland regained statehood. The constitution guaranteed minority rights, there couldn't be antisemitism, but a constitution is only a piece of paper. The political system we had in the '30s we called semi-fascist, and this was no exaggeration. The parliament was elected but the last elections in 1926 were boycotted by all the political parties, right, left and centre, except the Government Party — the *Sanacja*. The Polish military leader, Pilsudski, created it. He was once a member of the PPS. When Poland became independent he left the socialists.

He committed a coup d'état in 1926. In Warsaw he assembled military units from all over the country who were faithful to him and he dissolved the existing parliament. We had an elected parliament but the election system was such that no one could get any real representation, only them. In some places 105% votes were cast. Over 90% were always for them. It was such a horrible system that even the *Endeks* boycotted it. The *Sanacja* were antisemitic, the *Endeks* even more so, and still it was constitutional. They said it was a democracy led by an authority. The Government was oppressive to all its citizens. It was horribly anti-labour and anti-socialist. When the workers struck, the police would come and make massacres.



The children's organisation of the Lodz Bund. Bogdanski is 2nd from right in the 2nd row.



## OFFICIAL ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism was the hardest thing we had to contend with all the time. Anti-semitism was official in that no Jew could hope to get employment from a non-Jewish employer or in any government establishment such as the railways, post and banking system, which were all nationalised. The local authorities would carry out open works such as canalisation. They would employ local people but not Jews. To get them to employ Jews was like getting blood from a stone. This was our great struggle. In those councils where the socialists were a majority we were successful. They would employ some Jews. In 1924 the government nationalised the production of alcohol and tobacco. These industries employed masses of Jews. After nationalisation the government excluded the Jews. Thousands and thousands of Jews found themselves without the means to buy bread, and there was no social security.

As for our Yiddish schools, the Government wouldn't pay one penny towards them. We charged the parents a fee, but the parents were poor workers. Even with their fees the schools could not exist. Every year we sent somebody to collect money for them. The Jewish trade unions were asked to charge their members 5 *groshen* every week. Again you couldn't pay the levy. Most of us

were employed six months a year. I was a tailor. I had two seasons — summer and winter. Each lasted three months and out of it I had to eke out the other months.

We also had to organise defence groups simply to defend our lives. The *Sanacja* discriminated, but didn't call for pogroms. In 1938, with Hitler by the door, the Prime Minister stood up in Parliament and said: it isn't nice to make pogroms against the Jews; economic discrimination by all means! The students in the universities didn't allow the Jews to take part in the lectures. They would have to stand in the corner and make notes on each others backs. In one case a student was thrown out of a window and killed. The *Endeks* called for pogroms. They had a youth organisation — the *Nara* — comprising only of students. They not only incited others but they would attack individual Jews or in small groups. They put bombs in Jewish shops. They employed children. In my home town, Lodz, a little boy lost an arm when they gave him a bomb to throw but it exploded early.

In defence we sought, and often got, the help of the PPS. Their militia had men among the *Nara* and they would tell us that the *Nara* were planning to attack Jews when they came out of the prayer house. We would organise ourselves in groups of five, each with a walking stick.

This was the only weapon we could afford or dare to have, because if the police caught us with a knife they could de-legalise the Party. We would go to the prayer houses and stand outside. The people inside didn't even know. Sometimes they came out and hissed us because on the Sabbath you mustn't carry a stick. They thought we were organising an anti-religious demonstration. Make no mistake: we were the only ones to actively fight antisemitism. The socialist-Zionists weren't interested and neither were the Communists.

These were the conditions and these were the things we had to do. Life was hard but it also had very beautiful moments. We managed somehow to have a lot of happiness and enjoyment. With the youth organisation and the children's organisation we organised summer camps and dances. We had our sports organisation. The children were particularly interesting and nice to be with. They would organise summer camps which we called socialist children's republics, and they learned to live together as socialists.

## CONFLICT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Inside the Jewish community we had to contend with the Zionists — we were anti-Zionist — and also with the orthodox. Religion to us was a private matter. There were Bundists who were deeply religious. If we were anti-religious we wouldn't

have support at elections. The people knew that we didn't go to synagogue to pray but they knew that we were fighting to the last drop of blood for their right to religious practice. Politically we had a hard struggle with them. Apart from the town councils there were also the Jewish councils. We had to belong, and pay rates to the Jewish *Kehilla*. They were mostly dominated by the religious — the *Aguda*. There was a time when we boycotted the *Kehillas*. In 1930, on their suggestion, the Government passed a law restricting certain Jews from being members of the councils — those who didn't wear sidelocks and beards. In Lodz, two of our most famous leaders couldn't be candidates because they applied this law to them. Voting rights were only for men. Women had no right to vote and that was against our principles.

But in 1936 a conference of Party leaders decided that we should recommend our comrades to take part in the elections. The *Kehilla* had at its disposal masses of money. If we were not there we didn't get a penny, but if we were there in strength we may get something. So the members thought: it is horrible depriving half the population — the women — of voting rights but on the other hand, the *Kehillas* are disposing of

our money. We decided to take part. *Fun a Khazer a hor opgerisn* (if you can pluck a hair from a swine) — and where we managed to get a sizeable number of people, we could get some money for our needs. Without the money, you can't imagine how difficult it was to keep the daily paper going. And we had the Yiddish schools and libraries. The socialist-Zionists (*Poale Zion*) were split into right and left. The left were very small but were Yiddishists and co-operated with us in the Yiddish schools. Right *Poale Zion* were stronger but completely anti-Yiddish so there was no co-operation. In the town councils they joined with the *Aguda* to oppose subsidies for our schools and libraries. The Zionists had their own schools.

1939 saw the greatest triumph for the Bund in Poland. In January 1939, there were elections to the town councils all over Poland. In Warsaw there were 20 Jewish councillors; 17 were from the Bund. In my home town, Lodz, 7 out of 11 were Bundists. This pattern was repeated all over Poland. I remember a comrade of mine who asked a very religious Warsaw Jew, "Who did you vote for?" He replied, "I voted for the Bund." "Why did you vote for the Bund? You are a religious Jew." He said, "Yes,

they defended me."

## THE INVASION OF POLAND

1939 saw also a sordid thing. All through the summer the governments of Britain, France and the Soviet Union met with the objective of concluding a pact against Hitler. Then in the beginning of August, like a bolt from the sky came the news that the Russians had concluded a pact with the Germans, the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. At the same time that they were conferring with the British and French, they were conferring with the Germans. Essentially it was a non-aggression pact by which they divided Poland between them. On September 1st, the German armies came over the Polish frontier from the west and the Russians came a few days later from the east. The tragedy was that the best of our comrades — those that didn't fall into the hands of the Germans — fell into the hands of the Russians and were shot. I mention only a few names: Henryk Erlich, Victor Alter and Anna Rosenthal — an old revolutionary from Vilna. Erlich was a member of the executive committee of the Socialist International. They were the most beloved people in Poland.

And then the holocaust began and put an end to everything. □

*The World Co-ordinating Committee of the Bund is appealing to you for a donation towards its funds for the current year in order to be able to carry on with its activities. Your donation will help towards that.*

*In 1981, the fifth part of the History of the Bund appeared. Now we are planning the sixth part which will embrace the years immediately preceding the Second World War as well as the period of the Holocaust.*

*We also intend to issue a book in English about Erlich and Alter with the purpose of bringing the knowledge of their lives, as well as their tragic assassination, to a wider, non-Yiddish speaking public.*

*We are also in need of funds to keep our press in existence.*

*We are asking you, therefore, for a generous donation.*

Jewish Socialist would like to send a cheque to the Bund from its readers. Anyone who wants to donate money should make cheques and postal orders to Jewish Socialist and write 'Bund' on the back. Send them to us at B/M 3725, London WC1N 3XX and we will send a cheque for the whole amount to the Bund's London Representative.

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AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS  
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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10010  
Tel. (212) 475-0055

דעם 24-סטן מאי 1985

חסידי חבד

דער בעל-קאאדרייניקאמטעט פון „בונד“ הענדט זיך צו אים צו באמיי-  
ליקן זיך אין דער מי-אייקער אקציע פון די בונדיסטן אין די לענדער, וואו זיי  
לעבן, צו שאפן דעם געמיינליכן פאנארא פאר דער היסטארישער פאמיליע פון „בונד“  
מיט אים באשטימטע קאמפאניעס פאר אים אונטערשטעלן פון „בונד“, זיי-  
נע צייטשריפטן און סאכס בכלל מעגלעך די פארשידענע בונדישע פאמיליעס.  
אין 1981 האבן מיר ארויסגעגעבן דעם 5-טן באנד „די געשיכטע פון „בונד“  
עס מעגן געמאכט צוגרייטגעבן, אז עס זאל אויך דערשיינען דער 6-טער באנד,  
וואס הענט ארויסגעבן די יארן פארן אויסברוך פון דער צווייטער וועלט-מלחמה און  
דעם פערטן פון יידישן חורבן בעת דער מלחמה.  
עס מעגן אויך געמאכט ארויסגעבן אן ערליך-אלטער בוך אין דער ענגליש-  
שפראך, וואס א ברייטערע קולע זאל היטן מעגן זיי און זייער דערשטעלונג אין  
רופלאנד דורך דער שטעטישער סאכס. מיר נייען זיך אין פאנארא אויך פאר אים-  
האלטן די בונדישע פרעסע און אנדערע פאמיליעס.  
מיר הענדן זיך צו אים, אז איר זאלט העלפן דער בונדישער באהענגונג  
דורך א געהעריקער באשטימטער קאמפאניע. נעמט אים אים די איינפלאציע און העכערע  
איינער באשטימטער קאמפאניע אין פארבלייבן מיט די פריערדיקע יארן.

מיט דאנק פאר אים — פארן בעל-קאאדרייניקאמטעט פון „בונד“

שלום הערץ

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## LETTERS

## JEWS AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

Thank you for publishing my reflections on Jews in the USSR. Unfortunately, in editing the article you have inadvertently changed the meaning of a point I was trying to make.

I mentioned, perhaps too cryptically, that a socialist of Jewish origin feels inclined to affirm being a Jew in the USSR, in the same way that he or she feels inclined to deny being a Jew in Palestine/Israel. You printed the first part of that sentence, but the second part got left out.

This might create the impression that I value Jewish (or other ethnic) identity for its own sake. I do not. I feel that if you are assumed in one country to belong to an oppressed group then you should accept with dignity that identification, as a sign of solidarity. While if, in some other part of the world, you are identified as a member of the oppressor group, then it is natural to want to resist the presumption. Whether that is a realistic option is of course another matter! Stephen Shenfield Birmingham

## POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION

With regard to Stephen Shenfield's article on the myths and realities of Russian anti-semitism (*Jewish Socialist*, June 1985), it appears to be suggested that to obtain admission to university, or at least certain faculties, Jews have to reach a higher standard than others and are obliged to offer something extra. It is implied that any quota system must necessarily be informed by antisemitism. I appreciate that, in the evolution of a socialist society, the baggage of pre-Soviet ideas endures far longer than the old economic superstructure.

Since Jews were, and still are, vastly disproportionate in their representation in Russian universities — no doubt a result of the Jewish historical tradition of education, the "incentives" provided by the *Pale* and repressive laws, the lack of opportunity for study for most Russians, and the absence of a written language of at least one Russian nationality, amongst other factors — I do not see why, in the interest of positive discrimination for non-Jewish Russian nationalities, to redress the imbalance, standards for Jews might not be raised, in a sensitive way, and standards for other nationalities relaxed. Such positive discrimination is much less painful within an expanding

student population, as opposed to a contracting one.

In the Baake case in New York, in the late '70s, it was held by an American court that it was perfectly justifiable, in the interests of positive discrimination, for a medical college to relax its entry requirements for a Black candidate, as opposed to those for a formally better-qualified White candidate.

To use another American comparison; because the training period was short for the modestly rewarded profession of teaching in New York, and as a result of many Jewish immigrant families having to rely upon a first-born daughter's earnings to "set up" the family, there was a high proportion of (White) female Jewish teachers in Harlem state schools in the '60s, although the school rolls were entirely Black. Despite the opposition of the teachers' union (on the basis of security of tenure and seniority), in order to provide a positive image/incentive to Black kids in Harlem, of the possibility of success in a profession, the New York administration felt it necessary to positively discriminate in favour of the employment of Black teachers in Harlem schools.

D. Shepherd  
London NW4



# Zionism and Jewish identity

Earlier this century, Bundists and Zionists competed for the political allegiance of Jewish communities. Later events turned the Jewish world upside down, but the search for a collective Jewish identity continues, says John Bunzl.

The "old" discussion between Bundism and Zionism was mainly a discussion between two different perspectives of a struggle for a collective Jewish destiny. It was not a debate between Zionism and assimilation. It was a dispute around where such a struggle should take place. Those who advocated the diaspora-centred perspective argued that their opponents neglected the day to day issues of the Jewish masses and took no interest in opposing antisemitism. They thought that political transformations in their diaspora societies would lead to freedom and equality for all. Consequently the struggle for such a goal would have to be a common (Jewish and non-Jewish) one. The "territorialists", advocating the concentration of the Jewish people on a piece of land, favoured strategies that would isolate Jewish masses from their environment and lead them to a special form of migration: the colonisation of Palestine, the forming of a majority and ultimately a Jewish state there.

The Holocaust and the emergence of the state of Israel seemed to have decided this essentially Eastern-European debate in favour of the "territorialists". But these events have actually enlarged the scope of the question and drawn most Jewish people on a worldwide scale into it. The uneasiness most secular and progressive Jews feel about Zionism and Israel today derives primarily from the fact that the "Jewish State" has somehow taken it upon itself to "solve" our problem too; that its mere existence

signifies a constant appeal for support and/or immigration; that most Jews are grateful to it, achieve their identity through it and consider it a compensation for unspeakable suffering — as well as a possible refuge. On the other hand the state of Israel claims to speak for "the Jews" — and the world tends to identify Jews everywhere with Israel. The peculiar behaviour of this state is itself related to the task of "solving the Jewish question" and the "ingathering of the exiles". The state of Israel is, by its own definition, an instrument for this process. Simultaneously it is a process of landgrabbing and expropriation of the Palestinians. Jewish and non-Jewish perceptions of Israel often do not recognize this interrelationship and demand moral standards drawn from the European experience of Jewish suffering. These perceptions themselves result from conflating European experience and Middle East realities and from misunderstanding unavoidable mechanisms of the process of Zionist colonisation.

Israel's tutelage over the Jewish communities in the diaspora derives from the subjective function of Israel for Jewish consciousness outside Israel on the one hand, and from the needs of this state on the other. These needs are ambiguous. On the one hand, immigrants/settlers should be recruited, on the other hand, pressure groups should be maintained in the respective countries. Recruitment can be based either on the attraction of Israel, or on the "discom-

fort" of the diaspora. But present conditions in Israel are hardly very attractive for most diaspora Jews.

It becomes more and more obvious that the conditions of existence are very different, even opposite, between Israel and the diaspora. While Zionist Israel is compelled to use force in order to maintain itself in Palestine, the Jewish communities around the world have a fundamental interest in the pluralist/tolerant character of the societies they live in. Contrary to these interests, Israeli tutelage increasingly takes the form of imposing absurd chauvinist thinking on these communities. Therefore most communities experience internal dissatisfaction under the surface. Although it would be wrong to attribute to Israel the capability of manipulating antisemitic tendencies around the world, some Israeli forces are definitely interested in conditions that would lead to mass immigration to Israel. All these circumstances lead to important controversies among Jews. We must formulate an alternative Jewish perspective.

Zionism and Bundism were forms of collective Jewish self-activity — attempts to influence the course of history by independent conscious action. This aspect should be upheld — against assimilatory and other illusions. Our political orientation should be to integrate Jewish emancipatory aspirations into a more general liberation struggle and to work against the illusion that the Jews could retreat to one corner of the earth.

This implies taking an interest in the Jewish community in Israel/Palestine and in a Jewish emancipatory perspective outside; to see the Israeli Jews as one important community among other Jewish communities and to help those who work against oppression and brutalisation there. This is a very difficult position to take nowadays and a mental burden. Hannah Arendt describes it as choosing the position of a pariah, not only vis-à-vis gentile society, but also vis-à-vis official Jewish society. This situation is a burden not only for our socio-political but also for our individual/personal relations, because they are overloaded by the task of providing us with the sense of identity and belonging so difficult to achieve elsewhere. It is a very serious challenge to perceive identity, belonging and the concept of "homeland" as something that does not yet exist; as something that has to be created by human efforts — and to see participation in such efforts as a central meaning of life as Jews and as human beings. □

# 80 YEARS OF RACIST LAWS

This year is the 80th anniversary of the first British Immigration Act — passed after a "scare" about alien Jewish immigration. Bernard Misrahi relates the events leading to the 1905 Act and draws parallels with more recent legislation.

Who were the first people to be hit by Britain's immigration laws? Was it the Jamaicans or the Pakistanis? No, it was the Jews.

The Aliens Act of 1905 introduced immigration controls into Britain. Before then there were actually no controls at all. That doesn't mean that they didn't occasionally deport people they didn't like, but by and large, anyone who could afford to get to Britain was not refused entry.

"No Immigration Controls!" sounds radical today. Yet in the latter half of the 19th century it was widely accepted that there be controls neither on goods (no tariffs) nor on labour. It took several years and many failed bills before a rather moderate Act was passed by Parliament. As anti-racists it is worth knowing why the first immigration laws were passed. As Jews we should know why we were singled out for attack. Why were we the "aliens"?

## 'TOO JEWISH'

By 1880 many Jews in Britain had become fairly well established. They were allowed to practise the professions. There were even a few wealthy Jewish financiers. Yet perhaps they did not feel that well established? It seemed that the Board of Deputies wanted to keep their Jewishness to the home and the synagogue. Amongst the first people to object to the influx of Russian and Eastern European Jews fleeing antisemitism were the very Board of Deputies. For the community leaders the trouble with these Jews was that they were poor, ragged, had long beards and didn't speak English — only Yiddish. Dammit, Sir, they were too Jewish. They insisted on huddling on street corners speaking loudly in that foul tongue. In Britain, there wasn't the sort of antisemitism that disfigured the Continent. But this tolerance could be jeopardised if Jews drew too much attention to themselves.

Most of the Russian Jews didn't want to stay in Britain anyway. Those who stayed here had simply run out of money to go to the USA. The BOD actually tried to speed some of them onto westbound boats. They also sent emissaries to Russia to warn prospective immigrants not to come to London. Surely they could find some way of

getting on with the Tsar? Besides, Britain was a godless country. Their children would forget their faith.

In those days before the state provided social security the Jewish community was bound to look after their own. There were a lot of Russian Jews, compared to the existing Jewish population, and the prospect of looking after them must have seemed daunting. However, as the immigrant Jews came under more attack from gentiles the Jewish authorities were more willing to defend them.

## ANTISEMITISM

This article is not so much about the poor welcome the refugees from the Tsar got from their Jewish brethren as about the attacks, not only from the Tories and antisemites, but also from trade unionists. Jews were blamed then for social evils as the Bangladeshis are blamed now. They were blamed for overcrowding; the Jews did live in overcrowded conditions but obviously had little choice; they were blamed for creating unemployment by undercutting the prices of gentile firms. Jews were accused of accepting a job for a herring, half a loaf of bread, a pile of mouldy straw and a corner to kip in. Of course, Jewish workers had little choice. Those who got off the boat after them — the 'greeners' — would always work for even less.

They got support from rather dubious sources. Liberals praised their sobriety. No wonder the English and Irish couldn't manage when they spent so much of their wages on booze! Not being to blame for drunkenness, sexual immorality or any other vices, Jews were accused of driving otherwise respectable English people to these desperate straits.

Some Jewish socialists blamed rich Jews for this antagonism. But the non-Jewish socialists used this attack on rich Jews as a cover for their antisemitism. Bebel called it the "socialism of fools". Socialist groups like the SDF, as well as most of the trade unions campaigned vigorously for controls on Jewish immigration. Jews were accused either of being bloated capitalists and money-lenders conspiring to control British industry; or petty-bourgeois sweatshop owners; or scab labour sent in to drive down wages; or anarchist subversives.

## NOT MUCH DUTY

Ben Tillett, one of the dockers' leaders in the 1889 strike, was more generous than some. "Yes, you are our brothers and we will do our duty by you, but we wish you had not come." Not much duty was done. It was Jewish workers who first showed solidarity with non-Jewish strikers. Jewish tailors and bakers did establish their own unions which occasionally amalgamated with gentile unions. Naturally it was far more difficult for the most poor and desperate workers to organise — but organise they did, without much help either from the TUC or the rabbis.

It was the Jewish anarchists who worked hardest to organise Jewish workers. Their weekly Yiddish journal, "Arbeiter Frint" (Workers Friend) was sold by the thousand with its translations of William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, Maletesta and others. Many of them spoke or were given refuge at the anarchist club in Berner Street.

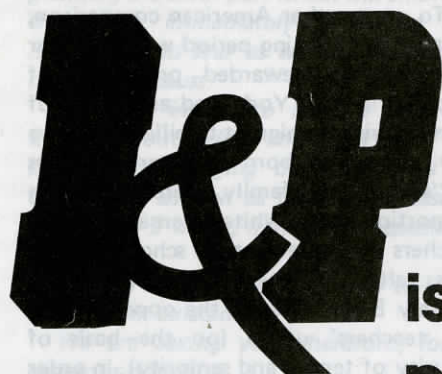
Some of the comments of socialists and trade union leaders then were so vile that they have been applauded by Martin Webster, the former National Front leader who remarked that in those days socialists were also nationalist. The then equivalent of the National Front was the British Brothers League — an East End organisation that could draw thousands of workers to its meetings. There were violent assaults on Jews who had to organise to defend themselves. However, this violence never went as far as murder (the racism of today provides a sad contrast).

Hostility to Jews wasn't confined to the dockers who demanded, "No Jews in Wapping!" The upper class Pall Mall Gazette joined in with articles worthy of Goebbels. One Evening Standard reporter writing from Hamburg lamented that all the fine blond, broad shouldered Letts and Lithuanians were bound for New York while (what he considered) the scum of the earth were only going as far as London. Some of the outpourings of Tory MPs would not be repeated in public today even by the likes of Martin Webster.

## PRESSURE FOR RESTRICTION

So how did the campaign for restriction succeed?

Pressure for restriction had persuaded the Government to establish two Royal Commissions in 1888; one to investigate



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Published by MAGELAN, 5 Rue Cardinal Mercier, 75009 Paris



the sweated trades, one to investigate who was emigrating to Britain. The Commission on sweated labour concluded that the Jews were not responsible for it. The Commission on immigration believed that controls were unnecessary at that time but conceded they might be needed at a later date. "Let's start counting aliens as they enter Britain" they suggested. Here we see the familiar spectacle of liberal politicians rejecting the more blatant assertions of the racists while making proposals that bolster up the racists' main argument in an attempt to pacify them. If Jews were not responsible for terrible working conditions then why count Jewish immigrants?

The issue of course, then as now, was not about numbers of immigrants but about the prevailing prejudices against those particular immigrants. The Tories made two half-hearted attempts to introduce legislation in 1894 and 1898. The earlier Sainsbury Bill proposed that immigration officials should refuse entry to aliens "likely to be a burden on the rates". Opponents wondered how these judgements could be made in advance. Refugees did tend to be very poor after they had been on the run for a long time. Such objections sank these Bills.

The Boer War absorbed the energies of most jingoists. Afterwards, as unemployment rose, they discovered their concern for working people and how necessary it was to protect them from aliens. It was common sense. How could one solve the terrible housing problem

in Tower Hamlets if Jews kept coming in? Few socialists opposed these arguments — so no wonder these ideas became more popular.

#### RESTRICTIVE BILLS

The 1904 Bill went even further than the others. Aliens would have to register with the police. They would be forbidden from living in areas which already had a high alien population — that is, those very areas they wanted to live in. The Liberal opposition was very fierce, especially by Winston Churchill who split with the Tory Party over this issue. They managed to talk it out in Committee. Perhaps even the Tory leadership thought this Bill might be a bit extreme and resolved to try again the next year with a more moderate bill that stood more chance of success. Perhaps they realised that what was important was not *how restrictive* an Act was but that any restrictive Act should be passed at all.

The 1905 Bill empowered immigration officers to refuse entry mainly on the grounds of poverty and disease. Aliens had to prove they could maintain themselves. However, if they could be classed as refugees they could enter no matter how poor they were. Possession of a cabin class ticket was sufficient proof that one would not be a burden on the rates. It was also strange, in the light of modern manufactured scares of illegal immigrants landing secretly on the beach in small boats, that passengers in small boats (carrying less than

twelve passengers) were also exempt from control. Those refused entry could appeal in this country. Not that many immigrants were actually refused entry, although the Jewish Chronicle, which had fought against the Bill, did publicise cases under the Act and tried to help Jewish immigrants through control.

It probably isn't very surprising to us today that the Liberals did not repeal the Act when they were returned to office by a landslide majority a year later. (In fact, no immigration Act has ever been repealed except to be replaced by a more restrictive Act.) They did not want to be accused of "letting them all in". Besides, by about 1910 "aliens" were considered to be behind anarchist bomb plots and similar subversion. (the "siege of Sidney Street")

But let us not forget that there was powerful and sustained opposition to immigration control in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Britain was, believe it or not, a liberal society, liberal in comparison to the Tsarist and Hapsburg Empires and the Prussian state. It was considered very important that Britain should be a haven for the persecuted — especially for those fighting reactionary regimes — and who could be more reactionary than the Tsar of Russia? It was also important that people should be allowed to travel where they wanted. No matter if they were poor when they reached British shores; that drive and determination that enabled them to reach Britain would help them succeed.

#### LATER ACTS

The 1905 Act inflicted a total defeat on these sentiments — it seemed to make them look old fashioned. It took 15 years to get the 1905 Act passed. The second Immigration Act was passed, on the outbreak of war in 1914, within a few hours. The 1919 Act laid the basis for future control of alien immigration. Every alien would now need some kind of work permit, visa, or special permission to work in Britain. From then on it was established that people could not simply live in Britain if they chose. To do so was a privilege, a right that could be withdrawn from certain kinds of people. There was a little opposition to withdrawing this right from Black Commonwealth immigrants. Much of what resistance there was stemmed from a type of Empire loyalty and could not withstand the pressure for further controls.

So the arrival of Jews fleeing from the pogroms of the Tzar not only exposed how antisemitic British society was. It demonstrated how hollow was the liberal ethic of freedom of people to live where they wanted. Once the liberals were defeated — in 1905 — they gave up fighting for that principle. We have a long struggle ahead of us to restore it. Perhaps over the last few years we have made a start. □

## The Aliens Act Revisited

In January 1906, a nine year old Jewish girl, an immigrant from Russia, was deported because she was deaf and dumb.

Sounds familiar? Yes, years before Leon Brittan and our current immigration officers were born (or assembled?), their administrative ancestors were implementing the 1905 Aliens Act, Britain's first modern immigration law. Just as there is resistance to the brutal racism of today's immigration laws, so there was resistance to the 1905 Act. JCARP is mounting an exhibition to commemorate these struggles.

We have received material from a variety of institutions, but not without difficulty. One letter sent to a Jewish archivist in London NW4 was returned with the following message: "Please note that it has been agreed by several of us who have received this letter that nothing of any sort whatsoever will be given to you or your organisation from our records or archives." This very brave man forgot to sign his helpful reply. Maybe he thinks that if you lock up Jewish history nobody need know that Jews struggled against Tory immigration laws!

The exhibition will be launched in October and will appear in various venues in the coming months. For details of when the exhibition is in your area contact JCARP on 01-587 1506.



A poster (in Yiddish) calls Jews to a mass protest meeting in the East End, against the anti-alien resolution passed at the TUC Congress in Cardiff, 1895. The meeting was organised by the "Jewish workers' Defence Committee" based on ten Jewish unions in London. Among the speakers are Eleanor Marx and Peter Kropotkin.

# BRITISH BROTHERS' LEAGUE

## Birth Of British Fascism ?

Fascism put down its first roots in this country at the turn of the century when the right wing antisemitic British Brothers' League took to the streets, says Steve Cohen

The British Brothers' League, like the Aliens Act itself, has been entirely ignored by conventional history. However, its influence amongst all classes was enormous — and it was victorious. It was a genuine popular movement which forced through immigration control. What is surprising is that neither the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s nor the right wing movements of today have acknowledged the existence of the League. Yet the British Brothers have a historical claim to have been the first British fascists.

Some idea of the strength of the League can be found in an interview given by W. Stanley Shaw, founder — in 1901 — and first President of the League, in the *Jewish Chronicle* of October 31st 1902. He gave membership as 12,000 and spoke of a petition of 45,000 which had been presented to Parliament demanding control. However this underestimates its influence. It was a grassroots movement with a predominantly working-class membership able to convene huge rallies and demonstrations. Moreover, it had access to the media through a subsequent president, James Silver, the proprietor of the *Eastern Post and City Chronicle*, a London weekly which virtually operated as the organ of the League. As an agitational movement its activities were mainly based in the East End of London where it had eight branches. This again does not reflect its real influence, which extended right into the ranks of the Tory Party and compelled the formation by prominent Tories of the Immigrant Reform Association in 1903.

#### A TYPICAL MEETING

The main activity of the League was the organisation of large and spectacular meetings and processions. These events bear an uncanny resemblance to the style of both the British Union of Fascists and

the National Front. A typical meeting took place in January 1902 at the People's Palace in Mile End. The following facts and quotations are taken from reports in the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *East London Observer*.

The meeting was preceded by simultaneous demonstrations from Stepney, Hackney, Shoreditch and Bethnal Green, each accompanied by the sound of drums and other instruments. The Hackney contingent carried a banner with "Britain for the British" on it, flanked by two Union Jacks. They distributed leaflets on the way and stopped at pubs to encourage people to join the march.

Inside the hall there were eventually four thousand people, with a powerful organ playing "Soldiers of the Queen", "God Bless the Prince of Wales", "There's No Place Like Home" and "Rule Britannia".

The meeting was heavily stewarded in case of opposition. There were "260 stewards — big brawny stalwarts, dock labourers, chemical workers from Bromley and operatives from Shoreditch, Bow, Poplar, Stepney, Bethnal Green and Mile End — whose duty it was to see that order was maintained". We also learn that "some isolated foreigners . . . were unceremoniously ejected".

Messages of support were read out — including one from Sir Howard Vincent MP, "who was to have moved one of the resolutions but who was detained . . . and was unable to put in an appearance." A message of support was also read out from Marie Corelli, the famous authoress. She called for the setting up of branches of the League in all other major cities.

There were several speakers from outside of London, including Henry Norman, MP for Wolverhampton (the future power base of Enoch Powell), and C. Wason, the

#### BRITISH BROTHERS' LEAGUE. Organised by WILLIAM STANLEY SHAW.

The object of the League is to bring about legislation to stop the immigration into this country of alien paupers.  
If a great country like the United States of America, with its immense territory, its boundless natural resources, has found it absolutely necessary to restrict the immigration of alien paupers, how much more must a small country like England stand in need of similar restriction?

#### A PUBLIC MEETING

in support of the above will be held at the  
**STEPNEY MEETING HOUSE,**  
ON  
**THURSDAY MAY, 9th, 1901.**  
AT 8 P.M.

The Chair will be taken by  
**Mr. SPENCER CHARRINGTON, M.P.**  
SUPPORTED

Major W. Evans-Gordon, M.P., Mr. W. Murray Guthrie, M.P., Mr. T. R. Dewar, M.P., Mr. F. S. Ridley, M.P., Mr. A. T. Williams, L.C.C., Mr. William Stanley Shaw.

— ADMISSION FREE —  
Members of all Political Parties invited.  
British Brother's League — Temporary Headquarters:  
97a, GRACECHURCH STREET, E.C.

MP for the Islands of Orkney and Shetlands.

The main speakers, though, were the leading lights of the League — in particular Major Williams Evans-Gordon, MP for Stepney, S.F. Ridley, MP for South-West Bethnal Green, Arnold White, James Silver and others. Henry Norman MP set the tone of the meeting in this report: "Let other nations burn their own smoke [cheers]. Let them disinfect their own sewage [great applause]. Englishmen did not want to be forever like a man drawing out good wine from the bottom of a cask and filling the cask up with dirty water. They would not have this country made the dumping ground for the scum of Europe [prolonged cheers]. This was England, the heart of the Empire, not the dustbin of Austria and Russia [great clapping of hands]. He wanted to see at the mouth of our great river a notice erected in unmistakeable terms: 'No Rubbish Shot Here' [prolonged cheering]."

Finally, the meeting passed two resolutions. The first stated: "This meeting is of the opinion that the housing problem of London is insoluble until the immigration of the foreign houseless poor is prevented." The second stated: "This meeting declares that the continued influx of destitute aliens tends to lower the standard of life desirable for English citizens."

#### PROTO-FASCIST

The League had much in common with future fascist movements. It was proto-fascist. Various examples can be given of this:

The League had its own theory, its own way of understanding the world. It was the classic fascist idea of the Jewish world conspiracy. This theory was not incidental to the League, it was intrinsic. Arnold White, speaking at the People's



# OUTLAWING RACIST HARASSMENT

A campaign is underway to introduce effective anti-racist legislation which can't be used against the victims of harassment. Francesca Fleming describes the terms and the context of the Racial Harassment Bill

The most oft-repeated statistic in regard to racial attacks is the Home Office Study of 1981 which found that the incidence of racial victimisation for Asians was 50 times higher than that for White people and for Afro-Caribbeans 36 times higher. The second most repeated statistic in informed circles is that the number of racial attacks could be 10 times higher, as only 40% of racial incidents in a 1984 Study by the Policy Studies Institute were reported to the Police.

What isn't known, or acknowledged, is that Black people have been documenting, researching and compiling these sorts of statistics for the past 10 years, and that racial harassment has been a regular feature of our lives in Britain ever since we came here in 1555. We have been beaten, discriminated against, stereotyped and brutalised to death for as long as we can remember, and with the connivance of the State.

In 1919 there was a series of riots by demobbed White soldiers who looted and destroyed Black sailors' hostels in the main ports, and attacked, even killed, innocent Black men. In Liverpool, Charles Wootton who had served as a fireman with the Royal Navy, was chased by police, thrown into the water by the mob, and pelted with stones to cries of: "Let him drown". He was dragged dead from the dock. No arrests were made. His crime was his black skin. In September that same year 600 Black men were repatriated as a result of the disturbances.

The 1930s saw the rise of fascism and Mosley's Blackshirts, with attacks on the predominantly Jewish Community living in the East End of London. In 1948 there was conflict between the Black and White communities in Liverpool, with the Police resolving the disturbances by "removing the coloured minority rather than attempting to arrest the body of irresponsible Whites involved." Black people's homes, clubs and hostels were raided by police and the occupants beaten and arrested. 1958 saw anti-Black riots in Notting Hill Gate with local Blacks being attacked and one killed by racist White youths. This was followed by further violence by "Keep Britain White" fascists and the obnoxious "Paki-bashing" phenomenon of the '60s.

In the '70s numerous dossiers were compiled by community relations councils and groups outlining the scale of racial harassment against the Black communities. Many were sent to the Home Office but nothing ever resulted. The best known report was *Blood on the Streets* in 1978 which gave a graphic and factual account of racial harassment against the predominantly Bengali community in the Brick Lane area. Reports continued from the CRE in 1979 and Rev K Leech in 1980, but it was the report from the Joint Council Against Racism in February 1981 that first made an impact in government circles. It resulted in the Home Office study previously mentioned and produced the now well-known statistics of racial victimisation. It was instrumental in making the police sit up and take racial harassment seriously and they are now supposed to record all racial incidents reported to them.

There are, however, many anomalies in the police statistics and considerable disquiet over police handling of racial harassment. The history of Black people in Britain is also the history of police racism, inaction and neglect, the criminalisation of our communities, especially our youth, and their failure to provide adequate protection to our homes and families. Instead, the law that is supposed to protect our rights, freedom and personal safety has consistently been used against us. The recent Newham 7 trial and the terrible Kassam murders are just two cases in point. Meanwhile the level of racial harassment is higher this year than last and the best the Commissioner of Police can state is that "the method of reducing the numbers of reported racial incidents is unchanged... even though... it is clear that the problem is worryingly large."

The issue of support for Black people's rights is now being taken up by the Campaign for a Racial Harassment Bill. The group came out of the GLC Anti-Racist Year 1984, when a working party was set up of people active in the race and housing field. Given the history outlined, it was decided that another report was not required as there already existed a convincing mountain of supporting evidence. A Racial Harassment Bill was drafted, therefore, with particular reference to housing, which

seeks to tie up many of the loose ends and generalities within the present legislative process that give Black people such a raw deal. The Bill will protect many defenceless families and entitle them to the right of peace and comfort in their own home. It is unique in giving legislative powers to evict a proven racist rather than forcing victims to flee for their own safety, as at present. The definition includes all ethnic minorities who are victims of racial harassment be they Jewish, Chinese, Vietnamese or any other. The Bill will not give the space for it to be used against Black people, that has been such a feature of previous race legislation.

Specifically, the Bill: creates, for the first time, the offence of racial harassment; provides a definition of "an act of racial harassment" and a schedule delineating types of such acts; lays duties upon the Police to conduct investigations, maintain records and publish their findings; lays duties on all landlords and Local Authorities to inform their tenants and ratepayers of the offence and its consequences; makes connivance or neglect by an officer of a "body corporate" in dealing with a racial harassment case also an offence; enables injunctions to be sought to stop any further acts of harassment occurring; introduces stiff fines and/or imprisonment upon conviction; provides grounds, in severe cases, for the eviction of perpetrators;

This includes the possibility of a Compulsory Purchase Order being instituted against a convicted racist owner-occupier, subject to the acceptance of the Secretary of State. A convicted racist tenant who is subject to eviction cannot subsequently be rehoused in accommodation of superior standard. The Racial Harassment (Housing) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 17 July 1985 by Harry Cohen, MP for Leyton. It has its second reading on 25 October 1985. Among its 12 sponsors are John Cunningham MP, Shadow Secretary of State, and Greville Janner, MP. More specifically, Dr Cunningham

Palace rally, said with obvious reference to the Jews: "These great European financiers hold the fate of nations in the hollow of their hands and are unanimously against any country." Paradoxically, the treasurer of the League, A.R. Rodgers, took time out to write to the *Jewish Chronicle* to argue that the popular press was in the hands of a Jewish conspiracy. Just as surprisingly the *Jewish Chronicle* (presumably the open vehicle of such a conspiracy) actually published his letter, in which he said: "The press having, at a price, cut off what tail it had at the behest of one or other of its Jewish patrons who exert over it a control of one kind or another, would no doubt be pleased to have everything else follow suit."

Like classic fascist organisations the League made a direct appeal to the working class. This was no confidence trick. The League addressed real problems. For instance, the People's Palace rally drew attention to a genuine housing problem. However, the "solution" the League proposed to this was essentially reactionary — an antisemitic campaign of immigration control and repatriation. Nonetheless, because it showed itself conscious of working class problems, it attracted not just ordinary workers but many who called themselves "socialist". There was one member who habitually signed himself "Mile End Socialist". In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* of November 21st 1902 he stated his "theory" of socialism in the following way: "Nature has made its own laws which no mortal can alter or abolish. The instinct of the tiger can never be transplanted into the lamb, nor yet that of the hawk into the dove. The Jew has made himself obnoxious through the incarnate instinct of his race to every nation where he has emigrated. This is an historical fact and beyond any controversy. The Jewish immigration into Stepney has driven natives from the homes of their birth. Jew v. Gentile will be my battle cry at every election as long as life is spared." This reminds one of the famous phrase that "antisemitism is the socialism of fools". More immediately, it has overtones of National Socialism.

Indeed, there was early on in the life of the League an internal debate as to whether or not the organisation should transform itself from a single-issue campaign into a fully fledged political party based in the working class. A *Jewish Chronicle* reporter infiltrated an Executive meeting of the League and reported that there was "a proposal to make the League a permanent association for the benefit of British working men". There is no mention of what their program would have been. However, some suggestions for such a program were made in a letter by a League member to the *Eastern Post and City Chronicle* of September 27th 1902. He talked of aiming for a membership of 100,000,

with, initially, 80 MPs. Two of the main planks for such an organisation would be "An alteration of our sanitary laws as should make the foreign — aye and the Christian landlord too — criminally, not civilly, responsible for insanitary and overcrowded property... and fair rent courts". The basic plank, though, of such a party would be antisemitism. As the letter said: "The first thing we want is to close our doors to the alien. The second is

**A GREAT PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION**  
Under the auspices of  
**THE BRITISH BROTHERS' LEAGUE,**  
in favour of restricting the further immigration of  
**DESTITUTE FOREIGNERS**  
into this Country, will be held at  
**THE PEOPLE'S PALACE,**  
MILE END, E., on  
**TUESDAY, JAN. 14TH, 1902.**

The Chair will be taken at Eight p.m. sharp, by  
**MAJOR EVANS-GORDON, M.P.,**  
who will be supported by Members of Parliament,  
County and Borough Councillors, Members of  
Boards of Guardians of all shades of politics, and  
Ministers of Religion of all Denominations.

to repatriate all the undesirable aliens at present in this country." If such a party had been formed it would have been the first fascist party in this country.

No such party was formed and the suggestion was "tabooed". No reasons were given for this decision, but it is important to speculate on them as it helps to understand the social base of fascism. A year after its formation the League was subject to some form of division. The reason why Shaw gave this interview to the *Jewish Chronicle* in October 1902 was to announce that he had resigned from the presidency of the League. He gave two explanations. The first was the "Mad-headed antisemitism of some of the member of the League." The second was the fact that he thought he was being manipulated and used as a mouthpiece by Evans-Gordon MP. This suggests a deeper division within the League — a deviation which exists to a greater or lesser extent in all fascist movements between a "bourgeois" and a "proletarian" wing. It is in the working class wing that there can be found genuine anti-capitalist sentiment which goes beyond rhetoric — and where antisemitism is ever more vitriolic. The bourgeoisie naturally wish to preserve capitalism at all costs. It is this split which appears to have led to the fragmentation of the National Front today. It undoubtedly had extremely important consequences within German Nazism.

The *Jewish Chronicle* reporter who infiltrated the League Executive described it as "a combination of Primrose Leaguers... and radical workingmen". One can reasonably imagine that it was the "radical workingmen" who wanted

to create a political party with a full program based on the Jewish conspiracy theory of history and with overtly anti-capitalist overtones. It would have been the Primrose Leaguers (ie Tories) who tabooed this and insisted that the movement should be confined to a single-issue campaign whose main emphasis was to pressurise the Tory government to enact immigration controls. The Primrose Leaguers had no intention of creating an anti-capitalist organisation. They won the internal battle within the League. Shaw himself appears to have been a right-wing centrist with no definite opinions on this split. The *Jewish Chronicle* account of the League's Executive meeting dismissed him as "the mechanism between the two parts". He was trapped between the bourgeois and proletarian division, and this is the real significance of his resignation.

There is another resemblance the League had to classic fascist movements. This was on the level of sexuality. In particular it made a direct and conscious appeal to women on the preservation of English "family life". The most blatant example of this is found in the *Eastern Post and City Chronicle* of October 11th 1902. This reports the setting up of a British Sisters' League by a Mrs Ayres. She published "several thousand leaflets" whose sole purpose was to show that women's interests lay with Christianity and were being undermined by Judaism. We do not learn what happened to the Sisters. However their formation illustrates the emphasis on aspects of sexuality within the antisemitic ideology of immigration control. It takes this emphasis a stage further by attempting to organise women.

Finally, in spite of its emphasis on patriotism and national pride, and its attacks on internationalism, it was anxious to foster links with racist organisations in other countries. In the *Eastern Post and City Chronicle* of November 9th 1901 there is a report of a meeting between Shaw and Alex Matheson, a member of the Australian Senate and a supporter of the "White Australia" movement, which was aimed against Chinese immigration. The report states that "In Australia, Mr Matheson explained, the influx of coloured immigrants is a burning question, as they tend to reduce the rate of wages and generally to lower the standard of living. Mr Shaw, who has lived in South Africa, appreciates the urgency of the Australian demand for a 'White Australia'."

## THE LEAGUE'S LATER HISTORY

The peak of the League's activities were between 1901 and the end of 1903. After this date it still managed to maintain a certain level of struggle until the battle for control was successful. In the January 1905 Tower Hamlets bye-election it campaigned for the election of Harry

*Continued on page 16*



has publicly stated that "the future Labour Government will take all necessary appropriate action to outlaw the constant, vicious attacks going on all over the country, and which can lead to death". We would like the Jewish community to also pledge their support to the principles of this Bill and join with us in fighting racial harassment.

The Bill is only a beginning. There are plans for a Racial Harassment Conference in early October and we will be continually lobbying MPs from all parties with our demands for legislative action. If you would like more information on any of the above or want to join us, support us, attend or take part in our conference or help us lobby MPs, please contact Francesca Fleming, Research Officer, Brent Race Relations Unit, Tel: (01) 903 1400 ext 8357. We need your support!

Continued from page 14

Lawson, the Tory candidate. *The Times* of January 9th 1905 reported that "The British Brothers' League issued a manifesto on Saturday in which they called upon 'all British workers to vote for the Hon. Harry Lawson'. They say that a great question like alien immigration 'can only be settled by agitation or revolt'."

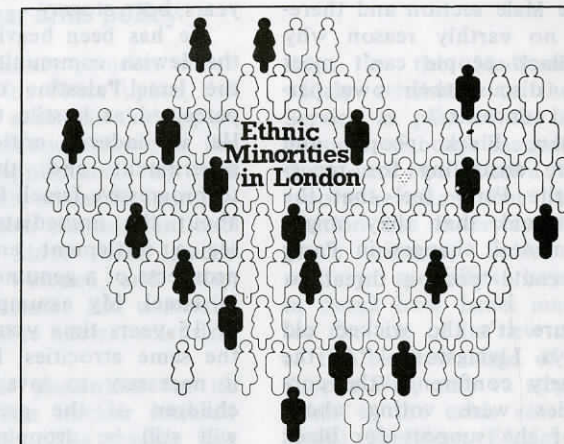
However, by the end of 1903 the League was no longer mounting the rallies and demonstrations which had made immigration control a popular issue. An explanation for this can be found in a remark made by Shaw in his interview to the *Jewish Chronicle*. He said that after one of the League's rallies "Conservative MPs were threatened with the serious displeasure of high officers of the Party if they appeared on the British Brothers' League platform again." The Tory hierarchy was probably worried by both the potential working class "radicalism" of the League and its overt antisemitism, which was making immigration control appear unrespectable. All this accounts for the formation, sometime in 1903, of the Immigration Reform League. Restrictionist Tory MPs turned to it as the vehicle for immigration control agitation. This did not lead to the end of anti-immigrant rallies. However, as the *East London Observer*

of September 19th 1903 makes clear, these were in future to be organised by the Immigration Reform Association with members of the League only being asked to speak by invitation. Moreover, we may assume that a lot of the energy of the Association would have taken place internally within the Tory Party, giving the final push to that party as it eventually passed the Aliens Act in 1905.

The British Brothers' League was the most successful British right-wing agitational movement of this century. Since the early 1880s various individuals had been advocating controls against Jewish immigration with no success. However, within a year of the formation of the League the Tories had been compelled to set up the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. Indeed, two prominent members of the Commission, Evans-Gordon MP and Henry Norman MP, were publicly identified with the League and its secretary, Eddis, was also a member of the League. Within four years of its creation the League got what it wanted — the Aliens Act. The *Jewish Chronicle*, in an introduction to its interview with Shaw, correctly understood the strength and importance of the League when it wrote: "It has posed as the great weapon spontaneously forged by the populace for its emancipation from the alien 'hordes'." □

## JEWS & THE LIVINGSTONE QUESTION

As controversial leader of the Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone has weathered attacks from all directions — both inside and outside his own party. Julia Bard and David Rosenberg spoke to him as he prepares to move into parliamentary politics



As we approach the dismantling of the Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone's leadership has increasingly become the focus of often acrimonious debate. Yet the achievements of the Council and his role in giving a voice and a platform to previously unrepresented groups are not only undeniable, but are a far cry from anything the Labour Party traditionally had to offer.

"In the past," says Livingstone, "the Labour Party and the trade union movement have gone for bland statements of principle. This Labour GLC is the first to break away from the idea that all you need to do is say 'We are an equal opportunities employer' at the bottom of your job adverts, and actually go for monitoring, go on the offensive to try and change people's hearts and minds and, with the power of your purchasing, to try and change the attitudes and discriminatory practices of companies towards women and Black people. Racism is a part of everyone in one form or another, and it's a struggle, not only against the overt, obvious racism, but against institutionalised racism which sets a pattern and style whose effects are almost as bad as the bigotry of overt racism."

The demand for the Labour Party to set up Black sections has arisen in London, Livingstone believes, as a consequence of the GLC's anti-racist stand, though the results of a GLC survey indicates that this has had little influence on the trade union movement. "Only half of those we wrote to replied," he says, "and none of them had an acceptable range of anti-racist policies. Clearly there is a great residue of racism among working class people which will take a lot of effort and education to remove."

Though the Jewish Socialists' Group has been one of the GLC's beneficiaries, it has been clear that the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Unit (EMU) is, in general, operating according to a very narrow and specific definition of what constitutes racism as the oppression of people or groups because of their "colour". Jews and Jewish concerns, along with the concerns of other less "visible" groups have had to be fought for not only in a hostile outside world, but within the context of anti-racist year. Livingstone believes that while the EMU has been responsive to taking on the question of antisemitism, the

acute economic problems faced by Black people must take priority. At the same time he recognises the relationship and interaction between anti-Black racism and antisemitism. "While most of the National Front's propaganda is about Black people," he says, "their real hatred and fear is of Jewish people. They treat Black people as subhuman, but they fear this huge 'international Jewish conspiracy'. It has never been difficult to get home to people in anti-racist work that there is no real separation between Jewish interests and Black interests," he says. "It is much the same in taking on board the Irish dimension."

Livingstone believes that the politics of the Middle East has clouded the connection between racism and antisemitism: "The issue of Palestine and Zionism has done a lot to fracture what used to be a very strong link, say, in America, between Jewish radicals and Black radicals in the Civil Rights movement. I have a strong suspicion that what you have with the Jewish establishment in Britain is a determined attempt to focus in on the question of the Middle East and the State of Israel because that is a way of rallying the Jewish community and pulling them all together; preventing it breaking down into groups and interests in the way that other ethnic communities have done. I think there's a strong element of using the Middle East to try and corral people and say: 'This is the view of the Jewish community in Britain,' and to try and ignore the tremendous diversity within that community. The struggle against racism should not be affected by what's happening in the Middle East. The struggle against poverty in Britain, whether it's Blacks or Jews living in bad conditions, should not be affected."

Nevertheless, Livingstone does not attribute the decline in Jewish involvement in socialist politics entirely to the Middle East issue. "I don't think that the general erosion of support we've seen over the last 30 years has

had any more dramatic effect among Jewish people than among skilled workers. The individual's personal disposable income does affect it irrespective of their religion or race."

Many people, however, feel alienated from a Labour Party which is clearly failing to address the real problems of women, ethnic minorities and other oppressed groups because those problems don't fall under the heading of what the Party sees as "class oppression".

"That's part of the traditional workerism of the Labour Party," says Livingstone. "Their definition of class is so narrow that they've managed to redefine the working class as being a small minority of the population. That takes some doing! We have got to define 'working class' in its widest sense. That means women who have never worked outside the home; women who have worked in areas which aren't unionised — which is most women; Black kids who have never had a job since they left school; people who have a disability and have therefore been excluded from the work experience; pensioners who have just retired and are eking out an existence. Too often the labour movement zeros in on the white, male trade unionists. After two periods of Labour government in the last 20 years, their moves towards equality are pathetic!"

"The Labour Party has always been dreadfully backward on sexual politics. On the whole question of abortion, gay and lesbian rights, there has never been a question of the three line whip being imposed. That is outrageous because as a socialist party we are allowing a moralist minority to impose their will on the majority."

He is hopeful, however, that the Party will gradually change its position. "As you get this shift in the composition of the Parliamentary Labour Party," he says, "it will be increasingly difficult to argue that abortion legislation, homosexual equality and women's rights should be left to the conscience of

## What's on in Yiddish?



### CLASSES

City Literary Institute, 01-242 9872

Weekly classes at beginner and intermediate levels.

Hackney Adult Education Institute, 01-533 2426

Weekly classes — beginners on Tuesday mornings.

West London Synagogue, 01-723 4404

Weekly classes on Monday evenings.

South London Yiddish "Self Help Circle"

Meets weekly on Wednesday evenings.

Contact Susan Goldstein: 01-698 4113.

### CULTURAL

Friends of Yiddish meet every Saturday in Whitechapel. Contact Majer Bogdanski: 01-488 3092

Di Yiddishe Fraynd meets monthly in Ilford. Contact Chaim Neslen: 01-554 6112.

The Mameloshn Ring meets monthly in Central London. Contact Barry Davis: 01-435 7559.

### YIDDISH FOLKSONG WORKSHOP

The Yiddish revival proceeds apace. Following a number of well-attended concerts of Yiddish folk music, a Yiddish folksong workshop, supported by JCARP has now been established. The workshop meets for a two hour session every fortnight at a venue in Central London. Chaim Neslen and Barry Davis, the organisers, aim to cover all varieties of folksongs, from lullabies and love songs to songs of work and struggle.

Participants, of all ages, are provided with full English translations of the songs that are sung. They are invited to bring along their own musical instruments, ranging from guitars to

a piano accordion.

Yiddish folksongs reflect the history of Jews from Eastern Europe at a crucial time. They cover tragic events from pogroms to the Holocaust, and ghetto songs of resistance. They deal also with the trauma of emigration to countries like the United States and work and struggle there. Singing Yiddish songs is a very real way for Jews to maintain contact with their social and cultural heritage.

For further details contact Chaim Neslen on 01-554 6112 or the JCARP office, Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1. Tel 01-587 1506.

אָפּאַר אַלס זינגער



the individual MP."

By the same token, he feels that the Labour Party has nothing to fear from Black sections. "Basically at the moment, the Labour Party is the White section and the Male section and therefore there is no earthly reason why women and Black people can't meet as a group to discuss their own particular needs and concerns."

Many women, Black people and others who are struggling for recognition within the Party feel that the leadership is afraid that they might demand fundamental changes in Party policy, which could pose a threat to their position.

"I'm not sure it's the wicked old leadership," says Livingstone. "At the last Labour Party conference the constituency parties were voting about 50/50. Most of the support for Black sections comes from London where we have had this anti-racist debate for a few years. An opinion poll for (Channel 4's) *Black on Black* showed that only one third of Black people support Black sections. It's not a debate we've won in the way we've won the debate on nuclear weapons, for example. So Kinnock is standing with what is probably the majority opinion in the Party. The trouble is that minorities cannot wait for majority opinion to agree."

Livingstone is acutely aware that if Labour fails to swing opinion away from racist positions, either the Conservative Party will drift even further to the right or the fascists will move in to fill the vacuum. On the appointment of neo-Nazi Dennis Pirie at the Department of Trade and Industry (see JS No 2, Summer 1985), he says, "That's nothing new. At the end of the Second World War, both Britain and America absorbed most of the Nazis and clearly looked after them and were quite prepared to see people who had been responsible for the Holocaust carry on governing Western Europe provided they were going to be anti-Russian. You have also got a strong streak of antisemitism in the British establishment, in the senior Civil Service, which still manifests itself."

He believes, though, that there is a link between the fascist parties and racist attacks, saying, "Fascist parties and individuals within them will go in groups off their own bat to harass Black people. In some areas, like Tower Hamlets (in East London) the policing is deplorable. If there were attacks on wealthy people in Harrow-on-the-Hill, the police response would be saturation. But the police are there to support the political views of the establishment, not to protect Black people's or women's rights to walk the streets in safety."

Despite his firm stand against racism and antisemitism, as well as a history of good relationships with Jewish com-

munities in Hackney where he was a councillor and in Hampstead where he was selected to stand for parliament, Ken Livingstone's relationship with the Jewish establishment has, in recent years, been stormy.

He has been heavily criticised within the Jewish community for his views on the Israel/Palestine conflict, which are perceived as hostile to Jewish interests. He is, indeed, critical of the Israeli government and, though sympathetic to progressive Israeli forces, is pessimistic about the immediate future. "I don't see a settlement emerging. I see no prospects of a genuine peace government in Israel. My assumption is that in 10 or 15 years time you will still be having the same atrocities. Israel will still find it necessary to invade neighbours. The children of the present PLO fighters will still be dropping bombs. I don't think the demographic and political structure in Israel is going to allow a peace majority to come about. The only chance is if it is imposed by America. You could very well find that in 20 or 30 years time, America's power could have been reduced quite dramatically and Arab power would increase; you may reach a time when America no longer supports Israel, and Israel will face extinction."

"I think a secular state is the only way of preventing another Holocaust, this time in the Middle East, because unless you actually deal with the problem of the Palestinians, then the problem will not go away, and eventually there will be a tremendous backlash. If Israelis wake up to the fact of where the long term impact of their policies is going to take them, and the likely consequences for their children when the balance of power has shifted from America to the Arab world, then they'll realise that it's worth doing a deal now."

There is often a bitter divide between advocates of "two states" and advocates of a "unitary state". "It's not either/or,"

says Livingstone. "If the peace movement could come to power in Israel in some way and offer a two nations position — two states side by side — then this would be a big step forward. It doesn't prevent the encouragement of a secular state. I start from another basis," he continues. "I'm not in favour of immigration control anywhere. Jews should be free to leave Russia; Palestinians should be free to go to Israel. This is a fundamental right for people to go where they want."

Livingstone believes that two states could be achieved "en route" to a unitary state, but says, "People seldom campaign for half a loaf. They may settle for it at the end of the day, but nobody goes out saying, 'Oh, there's a nice half a loaf!'"

But he does not believe that this issue preoccupies many British people. He feels, too, that the Board of Deputies' response to him on Israel/Palestine has more to do with their desire to conceal rifts in the Jewish community here, than with events in the Middle East *per se*.

"The criticism of the Labour GLC started when the Board of Deputies asked for the power of veto over the funding of any Jewish group. We weren't prepared to give them that undertaking. From that day on they were deeply critical. That was the first encounter and it was shortly followed by the invasion of the Lebanon and those of us who opposed the invasion got a fairly heavy battering."

"Before that there was no problem in the areas where I was selected by parties with a very large proportion of Jewish people. In the mid '70s when the National Front were getting much more powerful, I did a lot of work opposing them and made that a key part of my election campaigns in Hampstead and Hackney. I got a tremendous response from the Jewish community. I was appearing on platforms with speakers from the Jewish Ex-servicemen and I had no problems at all."

Now he is prospective parliamentary candidate for Brent East, also an area with a sizeable Jewish community, Livingstone faces the task of inspiring their support despite attacks from the Jewish establishment. "I would assume," he says, "that over a period of time, the Jewish community will get to see me, to meet me and to question me. We are specifically going to call meetings in major Jewish areas to discuss things like antisemitism and not just the Middle East. Jewish people aren't any different from anyone else. They see me on television and they have the same problem matching this up with what they read in the *Jewish Chronicle* as the average person has matching up what they read in the *Sun* or the *Mail* with what they see on television. *Jewish Chronicle* readers shouldn't be that much more difficult to reach than *Sun* readers!"

# How Israel got the Bomb

Andrew White takes a close look at Israeli nuclear arms policy

In a recent *Jerusalem Post* article called "Is Israel Making the Bomb?" the newspaper's Washington correspondent wrote "In the US today it is virtually taken for granted that Israel has the capacity to develop nuclear weapons and almost certainly has some in its stockpile". This assessment is not based on official Israeli statements: for successive governments have refused to disclose the existence of Israeli nuclear weapons activity. It is based instead on evidence which has been accumulating since the late 1960s, ranging from CIA reports and meticulously researched books for Western think-tanks, to *Time* magazine cover stories and the off-the-cuff remarks of Israeli soldiers, scientists and senior decision-makers. The picture which emerges — of a serious national commitment to nuclear arms — may create feelings of anxiety or fear, or else relief and reassurance, among those who see it. But it is reliable, and no-one concerned with issues of war and peace, in the Mid-East and in the wider world, can afford to disbelieve this reality. A clear and accessible general study of Israeli nuclear weapons is in Chapter III of "Nuclear Proliferation Today" by Leonard Spector (Vintage Books, 1984) Paperback £5.20. "Israel's Nuclear Arsenal" by Peter Pry (Westview Press, 1984) contains lots of technical information.

## ISRAELI NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAMME

A country's nuclear programme requires four basic things: nuclear know-how among its scientists, engineers and other technical cadres; the fissile material enriched uranium or plutonium — to make bomb cores; the facilities to manufacture nuclear weapons and their support components; and lastly, weapons systems for using the weapons on assigned "missions". Thanks to a sequence of political decisions taken since the early 1950s, Israel today can meet all these requirements.

Interest in nuclear knowledge goes back to 1948, when the Defence Ministry of the fledgling state sent geologists into the Negev desert to search for uranium deposits. A year later the Weizmann Institute set up a nuclear development and activities branch, and many Israeli students were sent to American universities to learn the rudiments of atomic science. In 1952 Israel established an Atomic Energy Commission of scientists, under the auspices of the Defence Ministry, to oversee nuclear affairs. Three years later Israel acquired from America a nuclear research reactor, built at Nahal Soreq south of Tel-Aviv. Although

designed for non-military projects under America's "Atoms for Peace" plan, the reactor gave Israeli scientists the opportunity to develop atomic know-how for possible military application. By the Suez war of 1956, the scientific foundations for Israel's nuclear commitment had already been laid. Since then, Israel's nuclear skills have widened, and today Israel's research institutes and universities produce high-calibre nuclear scientists and engineers.

Israel's source of plutonium for its bombs is the Dimona nuclear research reactor in the Negev. The reactor was secretly supplied in the late 1950s by France, which was at the time a close military and technical ally of Israel. A central figure in French-Israeli nuclear cooperation during this time was Shimon Peres, who is today Israel's Prime Minister. Until 1960 the reactor was referred to as a textile plant by the Government, and when six of the seven members of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission resigned in protest at the obvious military potential of Dimona, the resignations were kept secret. In 1963 Dimona was "activated", and nowadays its existence is public knowledge. An advanced nuclear reactor producing sizeable though unknown amounts of spent fuel for possible military use.

The crucial step Israel took in the actual manufacture of nuclear bombs came in late 1967 or early 1968, when it is thought that Israel decided to build a nuclear "separation plant" adjoining Dimona, for "separating" weapons-grade plutonium from the spent fuel which Dimona produces. This secret decision, taken by an inner Cabinet of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Yigal Allon and Moshe Dayan, was chiefly prompted by the Six-Day War, which convinced Israeli leaders that the country must never again face the prospect of annihilation. Nevertheless, there are suggestions that only Dayan was keen on the final step to nuclear manufacture. The details of the crucial decision were revealed in a *Time* cover story. "How Israel Got the Bomb" *Time* April 12, 1976. There is much technical and diplomatic evidence to back up this version of events. (In addition, it should be noted that no proceedings for libel against *Time* were begun by the Israeli Government members — unlike more recent times!). For details of the "separation plant" decision, the best book is the grimly titled "Spectre of a Middle Eastern Holocaust" by Robert Harkavy (University of Denver, 1977) chapter 1.

In 1968 quantities of uranium were hijacked while in transit on merchant

ships in the Mediterranean, actions widely attributed to the Israeli Secret Service as part of the accelerated programme of bomb manufacture. In 1970 there were two massive *New York Times* reports revealing that Israeli bomb production was underway. American intelligence experts, Soviet analysts, and military specialists have all reported in detail how Israel made preparations for the use of its new nuclear weapons at the bleakest stage of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, only to step back from the brink as the crisis eased. In 1974 the Israeli President Efraim Katzir stated, during an interview with a group of science writers, that "it has always been our intention to develop nuclear potential. We now have that potential". In 1976, a CIA official testified publicly that the Israeli nuclear arsenal was estimated to contain between ten and twenty Hiroshima-sized bombs. Finally, in 1981, Moshe Dayan confirmed Israel's nuclear status: "We can assemble them in a short time. We do . . . have the capacity to produce nuclear weapons . . ."

Israel's current armoury of nuclear-capable Phantom, Skyhawk and Kfir jets, Jericho missiles and Gabriel missiles fired from Navy ships, provide the Israel Defence Forces with a variety of means to fire nuclear weapons in war time.

## ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR POLICY

Israel's nuclear policy, evident from its actions, not its words, consists of three parts. Firstly, as already described, Israel has acquired nuclear weapons capability. Second, Israeli leaders are deliberately coy about this status, never admitting it openly, but not appearing too perturbed by the fact that more and more people are coming to realise it. The idea seems to run as follows: "We believe we need nuclear weapons as a last-resort deterrent. We want our opponents to know about our nuclear capacity; therefore we won't object to public reports on the matter. Suspicion that we have nuclear weapons, and that we might use them in desperation is good for us: it helps the deterrent effect". (Indeed, it is suspected that some of the newspaper leaks have been assisted by the Israelis as a matter of deliberate policy!). "However, we are not willing to declare publicly our nuclear status, because of all the negative consequences of such a course . . ." What consequences are these? If Israel were to go publicly nuclear, it might result in any or all of the following: world-wide condemnation; calls for inter-

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national economic sanctions; a cut-off in American weapons supplies; and greater efforts by Arab hard-liners to accelerate, out of a mixed sense of humiliation, insecurity and pride, their nuclear plans. In short, Israel's current policy of nuclear vagueness and ambiguity is followed so that the country can gain the deterrent "benefits" of nuclear weapons while avoiding the political risks. It's a rather amazing form of nuclear schizophrenia.

The third part of Israel's nuclear policy is a readiness to use force to deny nuclear weapons to Arab states, and to maintain Israel's nuclear superiority. This policy was highlighted in 1981 when the Israeli Air Force destroyed Iraq's nuclear research reactor outside Baghdad, and set back Iraq's nuclear plans by many years. There is evidence that Israel (and possibly America), each aware of the dangers of nuclear weapons in the region, might be ready to undertake similar attacks in the future to sabotage Arab ambitions. But there are difficulties about acting as nuclear policemen, and if this becomes Israel's way of gaining nuclear advantage, the prospects are grim.

#### REACTIONS TO ISRAEL'S POLICY

As Israel's nuclear activity has become more widely acknowledged, several schools of thought have emerged regarding its morality and wisdom. Is Israel's Bomb in the interests of security, or a source of insecurity? Will it ensure peace, or delay it?

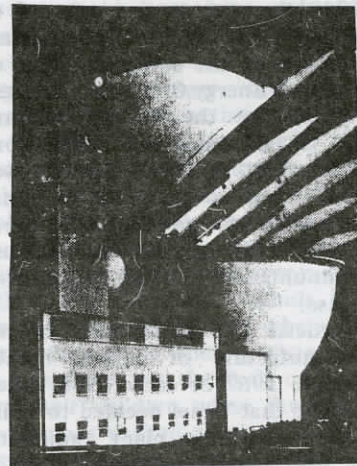
Nuclear weapons are agents of barbarous destruction, and one school of opinion states that they must be renounced, by Israel and by every other country. Nuclear weapons confound Jewish ethics and vision, and if Israel resorts to such means for its defence — so the argument runs — then the price of Israel's security, of Zion itself, is too high.

Many people question this moral argument. Israel, they say, is situated in a region of hostility, where power, fear, religious fervour and prestige are larger factors in behaviour than morality. In these circumstances, Israel needs to take any action necessary to ensure its safety, as long as the social fabric of Israel is not destroyed in the process. Israel's leaders have secretly decided that the Bomb is a security interest: therefore it should be supported.

The nuclear issue is now emerging on the Israeli public scene, largely for economic reasons. Some Israelis argue that, because the economic squeeze on the defence budget is severe, Israel should reduce conventional weapons spending and compensate by "going nuclear", and saying so. As long as the economic crisis continues, it can be expected that this line of argument will gain ground. There is evidence that few Israeli citizens would object to an open nuclear policy. In the only

poll of its kind taken, in 1976, 62% of Israelis said they thought Israel possessed nuclear weapons, and 77% said that, assuming this to be true, this was a correct policy. (We should not be surprised or scandalized by these figures. The same sort of percentage supports British nuclear weapons, and there are higher percentages still in favour of US and French nuclear weapons).

The crucial issue is this: Is the Bomb an asset for Israel? It seems to me that the answer is no. Firstly, Israel has nuclear supremacy now, but this will not always be so. If and when Arab nations go nuclear — Iraq is the leading contender, perhaps in the early 1990s — and there has been no progress towards peace, a nuclear balance of terror will emerge. It is hard to believe that an Israeli-Arab nuclear balance could last. In a climate of hostility and fear, and with so many unpredictable factors in the area, a nuclear balance would be risky and dangerous. It would create, not nuclear peace, but a higher risk of nuclear war.



More fundamentally, Israeli nuclear weapons create the illusion that peace can be secured in this way. This is not true. There is no military "fix" — nuclear or otherwise — for Israel's long-term dilemma in the region. Nuclear weapons are not agents of peace: for what is Israel's advantage today will be Israel's fearsome burden tomorrow. Israel's defence is to be found, not through nuclear deterrence, nor some precarious nuclear stand-off, but through a comprehensive peace process which can be sustained between all the peoples of the region.

Whatever course Israel follows, there are risks. But it should be remembered that Israel has no eternal enemies, and that what appears impossible today becomes a reality tomorrow. In 1974 President Sadat was Israel's "mortal enemy" and when Egypt purchased a nuclear reactor from the Americans there was a ripple of panic through Israel. Here was Israel's nuclear foe. Yet, three years later, Sadat was in Jerusalem seeking peace, and today

this nuclear anxiety about Egypt has vanished. If such transformations are possible with the country which was once Israel's mightiest opponent, then it is highly dangerous to assume some frozen hatred for Israel throughout the Arab world. Such frozen hate does not exist; attitudes, stereotypes, fears do mellow, among Jew and Arabs, and at the moment changes are happening very fast.

#### AN ANTI-NUCLEAR POSITION ON ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

To sum up, a workable anti-nuclear policy on Israel needs to comprise at least the following:

- *Israel should be denuclearized:*

The benefits of nuclear weapons for Israel are outweighed by the risks. The anti-nuclear groups in Israel should be supported, and those segments of Arab opinion apprehensive about Arab nuclear weapons should be recognised and supported too.

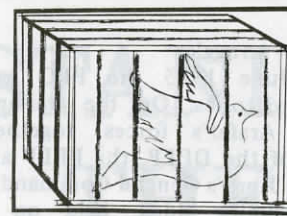
- *The region should be made into a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone:*

Such a zone should be established by direct negotiation between the parties. All nuclear facilities in the region should be opened up to rigorous inspection by international safeguards agencies. Israel officially supports the creation of such a Zone, but its stance is inconsistent, given its refusal to consider opening up its own nuclear facilities — by far the most advanced in the area — to inspection. What is clear is that it is in Israel's long-term interest to oppose the nuclearization of the region, and to align itself firmly against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The nuclear age is Israel's burden, not its godsend.

- *The spread of nuclear weapons-related technology should be halted:*

There are many means by which the Western, Communist and Non-Aligned nations can hinder access to nuclear know-how in the Middle East. These include political, diplomatic and technical measures. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 needs to be strengthened: it remains the main legal restraint on the spread of nuclear weapons capacity. In addition, the international trade in sensitive nuclear power technology (mainly promoted by the West) must be curbed. A note of caution is, however, in order here. There is a lot of hypocritical, sometimes racist talk of the "civilised" West curbing the nuclear ambitions of the "volatile" Third World. In this regard it must be remembered at all times that it is the North which, in the past forty years, has made nuclear thinking and nuclear policies legitimate and accepted. The thousands of nuclear weapons in the stockpiles of the "advanced" countries pose greater global risks than do the weapons of the Third World. The sale of Trident missiles by America to Britain,

*Continued on page 22*



## Israel's Grounded Doves

Do the Israeli "doves" really want to talk peace? Recent events cast doubt on their intentions.

— without proper funds and facing the hostility of a great many conservative Christian circles. Their work was totally dedicated and idealistic, yet unfortunately they lacked the political know-how and experience which is needed in the political minefield of Israeli-Palestinian contacts.

In the context of wider, behind-the-scenes efforts to bring about a meeting between the Jordano-Palestinian delegation and Israeli-American representatives, Pax Christi's lack of experience was, unfortunately, fatal to the Amsterdam meeting.

At first the main Middle East contenders did not credit the forthcoming Amsterdam meeting with too much importance. "Another nice effort by do-gooders and well-thinkers," they thought. Then something happened to change all that: for the first time, under pressure from moderate circles inside Fatah, the PLO leadership decided to send some of its topmost people to the meeting. The PLO representative in The Hague made a public statement to the press saying that the PLO was willing to meet, without conditions, Israeli personalities who were willing to have dialogue with the Palestinian National Movement.

At which point an anguished thought occurred to Israel's Labour Party leaders: "My God, what shall we do if the PLO leaders really do talk with us at the meeting and propose real peace negotiations?" Their response was sharp, direct and applied with the whole thrust of the powerful Labour establishment: On pain of excommunication, Prime Minister Shimon Peres categorically forbade any member of Labour to travel to the meeting or meet PLO representatives. This included such activists as Orah Namir and Aharon Harel who had already met with PLO representatives. It also applied, in a particularly cruel manner, to Israeli Palestinian Labour Knesset Member Abdel Wahab Dawasha, who almost — but not quite — flew to the last PLO National Council meeting in November 1984.

Labour's decision had something of a domino effect: after the Peres veto, others cancelled plans to send their doves to Amsterdam. Peace Now decided not to go and then the Citizens' Rights Movement declared that it, too, could not meet Palestinian representatives — although, in fact, MKs Bar-On, Ran Cohen and Yossi Sarid had already met with PLO personalities.

A desperate trip to Israel by Pax Christi representatives on the very eve of the meeting was unsuccessful; the

Zionist doves simply folded their wings and refused to fly.

#### A CLEARER VIEW

Nevertheless, one cannot say that the Amsterdam effort was useless. Pax Christi and the other organisers have contributed considerably to the clarification of a previously muddled situation. Two points, specifically, now seem crystal clear: firstly, the PLO is really willing to talk to, and with, Israeli-Zionist leaders — provided such leaders are willing to accept Palestinian national rights and to see in the PLO the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Secondly, the Israeli Labour Party and other Zionist dovish forces, are totally unwilling to enter into such a dialogue on the basis of the mutual recognition of Israeli and Palestinian rights to self-determination.

At this point one might ask: why not? After all, what has Labour to lose besides its Likud partners in the present Labour-Likud coalition? This might not be a bad thing if Labour wants elections before Deputy Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir of the Likud is due to take over Labour's Premiership next year.

The answer is simple. Labour, the Likud, the Civil Rights Movement, most of Mapam and Peace Now — in fact all the purely Zionist parties, including, of course, the extreme right wing Tekhiah movement and Kahane's Kach party — share one basic tenet: that the State of Israel is, basically, an instrument for bringing into historical Israel-Palestine most of the Jewish people of the diaspora, or as many of them as possible.

For this to be feasible, even in a distant future, no definite borders can be attributed to the State of Israel. The possibility must be kept open, in the view of the Zionist parties, for territory to be expanded as more Jewish immigrants arrive. At a pinch some Labour and dovish Zionist circles are willing to retain a considerable minority of Palestinians under their control and even to grant them a large degree of human and political rights (but not equal rights, as can be ascertained by the Knesset decision earlier this year to deprive Arab Knesset Member Miari of full parliamentary immunity because he condemns "both Israeli and PLO terror" and not, unilaterally, PLO terror — an idea suggested by Civil Rights Movement dove Yossi Sarid KM).

Even giving back (temporarily?) part of the West Bank is not excluded by some of the Zionist doves, provided the status quo is maintained — that is,



a state of Jewish superiority in which the Palestinians are subservient. And provided, too, that no final, decisive peace agreement is signed with the Palestinians and their representatives; provided any possible peace agreement is signed with Jordanians, Egyptians, Syrians, Americans — the Devil or God himself — but not with the Palestinians themselves.

#### FIGHTING WORDS

For Israel, no-peace-and-no-war is the ideal situation. For almost 40 years the Zionist establishment, including both right wingers and doves, got away with murder — thanks precisely to the obstinate despair and doctrinaire stubbornness of the Palestinian Resistance, and particularly of the so-called Palestinian "radicals" or "left wingers" who continue to demand, firstly, a Palestinian multi-confessional state in all of historical Palestine and secondly, no end to fighting as long as this goal is not achieved: to quote the well-known slogan, "revolution until victory".

Only after the Palestinians were repeatedly defeated and more and more territory was taken over by Israel, in 1948, 1967 and in 1982 — only after the PLO's "state within a state" in Lebanon was destroyed, together with

most of Lebanon itself — did the PLO opt for policies long advocated by the late Palestinian leader, Dr Isam Sartawi, assassinated for being ahead of his time — a pioneer.

From that moment on, Zionist leaders — dovist or not — became really afraid for the future. Imagine what would have happened had the PLO struggled diplomatically in the '60s and '70s just as it does now. Had it then raised the slogan: "both peace and war efforts as long as Israel does not accept our national and human rights", how effective this would have been throughout the world and in Israel, compared with the trite and untruthful "revolution until victory".

Imagine how the no-peace-no-war situation would have been voided of all its "sense" had there existed an alternative Palestinian solution — one beyond killing and maiming!

What the Palestinians and their friends must realise is that Israel's Zionist leadership — including Labour and the Zionist doves of Mapam and the Citizens' Rights Movement — do not want a definitive peace based on full Palestinian self-determination. But they can be forced into just such a full and real peace by the combined efforts of popular Jewish and Israeli pressure for peace and of Palestinian diplomatic — as well as

armed — struggle.

In June 1985 the PLO won two signal victories. On the war-and-peace front, Arafat's forces, together with those of the DFLP, the PFLP and even Ahmed Jibril's General Command, against overwhelming odds, held on to the Beirut camps of Burj el Barajne and Shatila, forcing Syria and the Shia Amal movement to concede defeat. On the less publicised war-and-peace front, the PLO did show that it is ready for unconditional talks with the Zionist leadership — provided the Israelis are willing to discuss matters — informally or not, as equals. The PLO has shown that it is the Israeli Labour leaders and their camp followers who refuse coexistence and talks.

Both these victories have implications for a future peace. But only if the PLO does not abandon its present policy of talking peace with all Israelis and Jews who accept Palestinian self-determination, as well as the reality of the PLO as the Palestinians' chief, and only, representative, political spokesperson. □

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*Andrew White is a research student at the London School of Economics. He is the author of "Symbols of War: Pershing II and Cruise Missiles in Europe" (Merlin Press: 1983) and has been active in JONAH since it was founded in 1981.*

*This article was originally published (with slight changes) in a JONAH (Jews Organised for a Nuclear Arms Halt) pamphlet on the JONAH Leeds seminar of 21 April 1985. The pamphlet is available (75p inc p&p) from 14 North Park Grove, Leeds LS8 3JJ.*

# STANDING IN THE TORRENT

In December 1885, Emma Goldman and her sister Helena left St Petersburg for America. As their destination approached, the Statue of Liberty emerged from the mist, "the symbol of hope, of freedom, of opportunity". Twenty-three months later, their illusions lay shattered as they learned of the execution of the Chicago anarchists. The events leading to the execution marked Emma Goldman's social awakening.

*"It was so different from  
what I had heard at socialist  
meetings . . . It seemed like lava  
shooting forth flames of ridicule,  
scorn and defiance."*

Throughout the States, strikes broke out in 1886 for an eight hour working day. In Chicago, a meeting of McCormack Harvester strikers was attacked by the police. People were beaten and several were killed. In protest, a mass meeting gathered in Haymarket Square. Towards the end, police suddenly appeared and told the meeting to disperse. The chairperson protested that it was an orderly meeting. When the police fell upon people, clubbing mercilessly, a bomb exploded, killing some police and wounding others. No attempt was made to ascertain the identity of the bomber. The speaker and other anarchists were arrested. Inflamed by the press and bourgeoisie, the country bellowed with bloodlust. A fair trial became impossible.

Goldman followed the trial in the local papers and was upset by their prejudice. She began to attend the meetings of a German socialist group. At one meeting, Joanna Greie, a famous socialist from New York, spoke on the injustice of the trial. Emma was so entranced by the speaker's earnest and impassioned speech that Greie motioned to her after the meeting: "I never saw a face that reflected such a tumult of emotions as yours. You must be feeling the impending tragedy intensely."

Some weeks later, she came upon

a German paper, *Die Freiheit*, edited by the anarchist Johann Most. "The language fairly took my breath away, it was so different from what I had heard at socialist meetings and even from Joanna Greie's talk. It seemed lava shooting forth flames of ridicule, scorn and defiance." Subsequently, she read *Die Freiheit* regularly and familiarised herself with the lives and ideas of the great anarchists. She determined to leave the introversion of Rochester's Jewish community to seek Johann Most in New York.

There, she frequented Sach's cafe, the headquarters of East Side radicals, socialists, anarchists and young Yiddish writers and poets. She met Alexander Berkman, who was to be a lover and lifelong friend and through him, Johann Most, who invited her to help out with *Die Freiheit*. She grew to idolise Most for his fiery eloquence and great learning; and he imbued her with a love for books, music and theatre. He also encouraged her to take up public speaking and, like her mentor, she proved to be a brilliant and intuitive speaker.

Goldman says, "Suggestions that I write my memoirs came to me when I had barely begun to live," but she held that "One should write about one's life only when one had ceased to stand in the very torrent of it." Her autobiography, *Living my Life*, is eloquent, passionate and candid. An advocate of sexual freedom, the contradictions of her relationships are fully explored. Ed Brady, whom she loved avidly, wanted her to bear him a child, but an incident in her youth meant that, to conceive, she would have needed a corrective operation. Despite a love of children and yearning for motherhood, she refused because she wanted to be free to fight for the cause of anarchism.

Goldman's anarchism was not the individualist strain of Proudhon. She was inspired by the vision of Bakunin and Kropotkin, who advocated that people should be in direct control of all aspects, social, political and economic, of their lives. To facilitate this, they foresaw the decentralisation of society into self-governing communities which would freely federate with other such communities, first on a regional basis, then nationally, then internationally. Delegates elected to federal meetings would be instantly recallable. Intellectuals, scientists and technicians would work with, and not in place of, the people.

*Living my Life by Emma Goldman (Peregrine Smith, £10.95)*

At Goldman's meetings — those not obstructed by the authorities — armed police and Pinkerton agents lined the walls. In San Diego, Goldman and her lover/organiser, "the incredible hobnobbing", Dr Ben Reitman were pursued by a patriotic mob, the "Vigilantes". Reitman was severely beaten. Defiantly, Emma travelled the States, exposing the abuses of capital and authority everywhere. She articulated the anger and

*"Proletarian from infancy,  
their lives barren of beauty  
and joy."*

frustration of the downtrodden in the sweatshops and factories. She too had known the super-exploitation of piece-work.

As a labour agitator and anarchist she was loathed by the bosses, both political and economic, likewise by the "moral brigade" for her advocacy of birth control and free love. For her stand on feminism she was opposed, even by progressive thinkers of both sexes. (In their challenge of hierarchies, there is a natural coalescence between anarchism and feminism.) She was imprisoned several times for her ideals.

Goldman travelled widely. As a Londoner and a Jew I was greatly interested in her comments on the "Smoke" and the Jewish East End (she thought that conditions were even worse than on New York's East Side). On a Welsh tour, she remarks on the mining communities, "Proletarian from infancy, their lives barren of beauty and joy." (She married James Colton, a large self-educated miner, who, like Goldman had become an anarchist as a result of the Chicago Martyrs.)

During World War One, whilst the nation was caught up in jingoistic fervour, Emma's stand against war and activities with the No-Conscription League proved too much for the authorities. *Mother*



*Earth*, of which she was co-founder and editor was suppressed under the Espionage Law and she was jailed for two years. An extradition order was taken out against her which she fought, but when her comrade, Alexander Berkman, was deported she accompanied him to Russia.

For me, the 200 odd pages which cover her two years in Soviet Russia are the most important in this autobiography. In America, Goldman had passionately championed the cause of the Russian people in revolt. She was angry with those comrades who openly expressed doubts about the course being taken by the Revolution under Bolshevism. She went to Russia eager to serve the people and their revolution. Abruptly she was confronted with the disturbing reality. "I had not been naive enough to expect anarchism to rise, phoenix-like, from the ashes of the old. But I did hope that the masses, who had made the Revolution, would also have a chance to direct its course."

Not so. The Bolsheviks, once they felt secure of their position, had centralised all power into their keeping. There was a complete stifling of independent thought and initiative. The party shrouded itself in a vast bureaucracy in which corruption became commonplace. Any voice that dared to doubt its wisdom was cynically crushed by the terror of the Cheka, the State secret police. People went cold and hungry because, it was alleged, of the international blockade.

True, the revolution had many ruthless enemies, inside and outside the Russian borders. Yet when party officials, state functionaries and Chekists are fed, clothed, well housed and generally pampered, while the masses go without, it is not counter-revolutionary to start asking questions. Those that did, not

just anarchists, but even Bolsheviks who had distinguished themselves during the Revolution were jailed, tortured or killed along with the real counter-revolutionaries. Independent publications and meetings were suppressed as the Bolsheviks monopolised communications.

Goldman, disquieted and confused, nevertheless persisted with her faith in the ultimate integrity of Lenin and

*"I did hope that the masses  
who had made the revolution  
would also have a chance to  
direct its course."*

his Bolsheviks. Yet it was becoming increasingly obvious that the marxist revolution was taking the course long predicted by anarchists since Bakunin. Power had twisted the leaders, who in turn twisted the revolution into something grotesque. The dynamism and sheer creative potential of a people in revolt had been squeezed of life.

The end came for Goldman with the indefensible massacre at Kronstadt, orchestrated by Trotsky. Kronstadt, the free commune, had once been lauded by Lenin as "the pride and joy of the Revolution". During the siege, the Kronstadt sailors were defamed in the

Bolshevik press as counter-revolutionaries, but as Lenin later admitted, "The Kronstadt men did not really want counter-revolutionaries. But neither did they want us." They simply took seriously the revolutionary cry "All power to the Soviets".

Incidentally, Goldman campaigned for the release of a Ukrainian anarchist, Voline, who had been imprisoned and threatened with execution. He was eventually released. Voline is the author of *The Unknown Revolution*, which looks at the Revolution from an anarchist perspective and covers Kronstadt in depth.

Of particular interest to Jews are Goldman's comments on the Ukrainian Jews she met in Odessa, Kiev and Kharkov. Many, after the terrible pogroms of the Tsars, saw the Bolsheviks as saviours, not politically but in their clampdown on antisemitism. Some of the younger Jews were more fatalistic, believing that the increasing unpopularity of the Bolsheviks, even among Ukrainian communists, would be translated into a resurgence of antisemitism. It is also interesting that Nestor Makhno, the legendary Ukrainian anarchist, beloved by the peasants, and opportunistically lauded then derided by the Bolsheviks, and accused of antisemitism by them, was in fact known to have shot anti-semites he encountered.

*Living my life* was written in the early thirties, before the Spanish Revolution, which saw the largest, most sustained and closest approximation to an anarchist society in history. Anarchists talk about Spain like Spurs fans talk about the winning the double. Goldman's later work is also well worth reading for her analysis and experience of this crucial event.

MIKE GERBER

**STATEMENT:** *Motherlounge* is the title we have chosen for this magazine to express our idea of cultural identity. We are women of differing cultural groups who are minorities in this country. Cultural identities have been and are carried across continents and through generations in our humour, foods, songs, stories – our traditions.

In choosing *Motherlounge* we are putting words to feelings and memories that are an everpresent reminder and affirmation of our pasts and future. Our motherlounge is how we communicate through more than just words: they are the ways we live.

As women who struggle both against male and cultural oppression we have shared vulnerabilities and a responsibility to create and strengthen existing bonds between us, both in this country and overseas.

We try to provide a public space for women who otherwise have limited access to such a space and therefore welcome contributions: written, spoken (on tape), and 'art'-work, that share an interest and concern for these issues.

The magazine will be an exchange through which we can all gain and extend an understanding of oppressions – of male dominance and cultural prejudice that affect and shape our lives.

We are an independent (unfunded) project relying on a shared commitment from readers and contributors.

*Motherlounge* is a Quarterly magazine. It is available on tape.

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# CHALLENGING DESTINY

David Edgar's prophetic 1976 play, *Destiny*, has recently been revived in East London. David Rosenberg considers its message for today.

*Destiny* was written against the backdrop of a disturbing series of events in the early to mid 1970s; events which threatened the spectacular rise of a specifically fascist movement in Britain for the first time since the 1930s. In the wake of the Conservative Government admitting British passport-holding Ugandan Asians in 1973, there were many defections from the ultra-right Monday Club to the National Front (NF). In response to defeats inflicted on the Tories' pay policy and Industrial Relations Act, some ex-servicemen began organising paramilitary organisations to combat "union power". The fascists openly intervened in the dispute at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester, against picket lines comprised of Asian trade unionists fighting discrimination in their workplace. In a parliamentary by-election in West Bromwich in 1973, the National Front saved their deposit, and in the 1974 October election polled over 100,000 votes nationally. Two years later they polled 43,000 votes in local elections in Leicester alone, while in a council by-election in Deptford, South London, the combined votes of the competing National Front and National Party outnumbered those gained by the victorious Labour candidate. Meanwhile, in 1975 inflation had risen to 30% and unemployment was beginning to grow.

When *Destiny* was first performed in 1977, the National Front, 20,000 members strong and growing in influence, was confidently and provocatively marching through Britain's inner-cities. Two years later they were in organisational disarray. The Anti Nazi League (ANL) – a mass anti-fascist movement – had won the streets from them, but at the same time, enough hearts and minds had been won by the Tories to return them to power. A mass anti-fascist movement was not the same as a mass socialist movement. In their run up to the election, the Tories cynically exploited the immigration issue to win support from potential NF voters. The Labour Party, with its poor record on such matters, and, in many areas, with its lack of will to confront racist arguments head on, was in no shape to win this issue.

After six years of Tory Government, racist attacks continue to escalate in number and brutality. While *Destiny* was enjoying its recent revival in Mile End, a few miles further east, in Ilford, an Asian family was burnt to death by arsonists as yet not apprehended; and if past experience is our guide, they are likely to remain free. Meanwhile a new, robust nationalism, forged in the Falklands War, daily draws new boundaries to exclude the "alien nation" whether they're Black unemployed youth in Brixton or picketing miners in Yorkshire, and the fascists are beginning to re-group and reorganise, sensing new opportunities in the Tories' growing unpopularity engendered by economic misery. In nearby France, the defeat of the conventional right resulted in massively increased resources flowing into the coffers of the far right, and this has helped them emerge with such force in the last two years.

*Destiny* is a deeply perceptive and often chilling examination of the social, psychological and ideological roots of fascism in Britain, its relationship with racism, and the impact of its growth on the Labour and Conservative parties. A central figure is Dennis Turner, a small-shopkeeper in Taddley, a fictional town in the West Midlands. Grappling with economic decline, he gradually loses his faith in the Conservatives, and becomes increasingly obsessed with "racial" matters, which, for him, sym-

bolise Britain's decline. This obsession is not pathological, but is an extension of the racism inherent in British imperialism, which was particularly imbued in those who played their part in Britain's imperial domination. We find Turner in the first scene of *Destiny* as a young army sergeant in India, on the eve of Independence, contemplating the impact of an influx of Indian immigrants to Britain.

As racism becomes increasingly legitimised through the speeches of Enoch Powell, media-inspired scare stories, and immigration legislation, so Turner moves from anxiety to activism. He forms the Taddley Patriotic League – a tiny group principally concerned with anti-Black racism. The league soon becomes engulfed within Nation Forward, an emerging fascist organisation, with an obvious resemblance to the National Front, for whom anti-Black racism is just one facet of a comprehensive political ideology. Within Nation Forward, Turner haltingly internalises his further political education and is encouraged to stand as their candidate in a parliamentary by-election. With the Labour Party dithering, and the Tories belatedly playing the "race" card, Nation Forward picks up a handsome proportion of the votes and the Tories marginally retain the seat.

Through *Destiny*, David Edgar is determined to smash the notion that the NF is merely an extension of Powellism – an extreme, patriotic, anti-immigration pressure group. He initially presents Nation Forward as a collection of intense, militaristic, Hitler-worshippers. While they are celebrating their historic idol's birthday on 20 April 1968, they receive news of Powell's "rivers of blood" speech. Sensing new political opportunities, they discard their external Nazi trappings, begin to present themselves as a patriotic pro-White group, while internally they maintain and strengthen their Nazi ideology. Antisemitism is at the heart of this inner ideological core. Their main enemy is an "international conspiracy" based on the Jewish "race". In making this explicit, Edgar is also challenging the oft-stated slogan: "Yesterday the Jews, today the Blacks", which reinforces the view of the NF as a single issue pressure group and fails to locate the

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essence of their fascism. Elsewhere, through detailed analysis of fascist literature, Edgar has shown that they portray Black people as dupes and passive victims of forces beyond their control, unconsciously "mongrelising" the 'White race', whereas they portray Jews as sinister, all-powerful, controllers of the destinies of nations. Ideologically, fascist anti-Black racism is a facet of a comprehensive antisemitic world view. We cannot assume an automatic leap between racism and fascism. This carries a message for the anti-fascist movement that was used to good effect by the Anti-Nazi League in driving a wedge between individual racists obsessed with the single White v Black issue and the thoroughly Nazi leadership.

It is very fashionable nowadays in anti-racist, socialist and Jewish circles to be dismissive of the ANL and its achievements. The most common accusations are that it was a White, male, SWP dominated organisation that saw the defeat of fascism purely in electoral terms and which challenged fascism and fascists without confronting the roots of racism. There is truth in these assertions but they are a caricature of part of the ANL leadership rather than a real view of the rank and file in the country as a whole. The ANL knew that a mass movement was needed to challenge the fascists on the streets, on housing estates, outside the football grounds, in schools and elsewhere. A more sophisticated message may not have recruited non-aligned youth to such a movement, and may not have given it such breadth of support. The role of conscious socialists was political education. Many of the most critical groups abdicated that responsibility in favour of devoting their energies to sectarian attacks on the ANL. If many ANL leaders thought their job was done after the 1979 election that was not the view of many rank and file ANL activists. Without the ANL we would not have seen the subsequent emergence of mass movements in Britain such as CND. And if they, too, have similar problems of political sophistication, then socialists should see their

role as an educational and agitational one. Purist sectarianism we can do without.

For small-shopkeeper Dennis Turner, the leap from racism to fascism is difficult and confusing. However satisfying to his personal sense of White superiority, he knows that anti-Black racism does not solve his economic difficulties. The economic crunch comes for Turner when he falls victim to property speculation and development from the almost faceless Metropolitan Investment Trust. The one face he does see is that of the Jew, Monty Goodman, a business shark representing the Trust. In the play's original version, instead of Goodman we find Razak Patel. Edgar rescripted Goodman to emphasise the centrality of antisemitism. In this production, however, the message is compromised by the antisemitic portrayal of Goodman. Played, inexcusably, by a non-Jewish actor, all the stereotyping comes through the mouth of the Jew rather than through the racist, incipient fascist. The script itself has not changed, but when Patel has the part the image is offset by earlier ones of Asian victims of British imperialist racism, and Asian trade unionists courageously defending their rights. Therefore any generalisation from one avaricious capitalist is patently ridiculous. Goodman, though, is the only Jew in the play. *Destiny* ends with a powerful twist when, following his impressive by-election performance, Turner accompanies Nation Forward's leader to a meeting with solidly Anglo-Saxon, powerful, business elements, now offering support to the fascists. One is revealed as the director of Metropolitan Investment Trust. Turner realises that Goodman was a small fish, a pawn of pure British capital. No doubt the earlier caricaturing of Goodman contributed to the strength of the final twist, but it is dangerous to play with such stereotypes, and Turner's gradual descent into antisemitism could have been well illustrated without even meeting Goodman.

If there are lessons and warnings for socialists in *Destiny*, there are also lessons for the Tories, which have been

well learnt. Their by-election candidate is of the new school, young, brash, and far more concerned with free markets and profits than with old fashioned values and staid conservative traditions of nation and empire. But he is unable to break away from the weight of the old conservatism, and when compelled to take a stand on union power and on immigration, he is ultimately drawn towards the social authoritarian view. Initially expressing repugnance of Nation Forward, he then becomes scared: "... thought, oh no, these can't be, with their grisly xenophobia, they can't or are they, our creation? Alter ego. Somehow." In the end he plays on the same territory as his alter ego, making a strong anti-immigration statement just before the election. In electoral terms it pays off.

In an uncanny coincidence, *Destiny* was televised in 1978 the day after Thatcher's public outburst about Britons being "swamped" by alien cultures. The racists rewarded her at the next election.

Bob Clifton, the Labour candidate, is not averse to taking electorally unpopular stands on immigration, and as a result having party members refusing to canvass for him. But when it comes to the nitty gritty of violence on picket lines, and "illegal" immigration he becomes increasingly enmeshed in his unswerving respect for the rule of law, and his faith that bad laws can be changed rather than smashed. His wife, Sandy, an Asian community worker, claims that the law must also protect fascists - a spurious argument that has recently emerged with force in the National Council for Civil Liberties. "The law is a car... goes whichever way you steer it," says Clifton. His more militant agent, Paul, who physically confronts the fascists head on, retorts, "So why, whoever's driving, does it always go one way?"

The divergence between the agent and the candidate comes to a head after a brick comes through the window of Clifton's home and excreta is pushed through the door with a note threatening his four month old baby. Intimidated, Clifton pulls back. He has no faith in an anti-fascism built on bravado which cannot give support and protection to its most vulnerable targets. But Paul knows that fascist intimidation must not succeed. He rejects legalistic reformism and, as a young, white man, without ties and responsible only to himself, his "revolutionary" actions, which he elevates into a principle and test of commitment, are not bound by any sense of vulnerability. In showing how, ultimately, both the "reformists" and the "revolutionaries" are trapped in rigid principles, Edgar focuses on a central dilemma among anti-fascists. We need to be firm but flexible, to recognise vulnerability but take calculated risks, and to be militant without being vanguardist. It is a dilemma we have yet to resolve. □

## The Cultural Consequences of Genocide

*Germany Without Jews*

by Bernt Engelmann (Bantam £2.95). Antiracists usually castigate those who strive to 'purify' their country's population on moral grounds, arguing that it is simply unkind to persecute minority groups. It is not an argument that has made much headway, so Bernt Engelmann's attempt to establish whether his home country, Germany actually benefitted scientifically, socially and culturally from the loss of its Jews should be of wider interest.

An obvious case in point is medicine. Until 1933 German medical research enjoyed an unrivalled international reputation, partly due to the crucial discoveries in bacteriology, neurology, haematology and other fields made by Jewish medical researchers. Although Jews formed less than 1 per cent of Germany's population, 25 per cent of diseases and clinical practices listed in key medical textbooks were named after the Jews who had discovered or developed them. By 1933 Germany had 8,000 Jewish medical professors, researchers and practitioners. Today, a mere 80 Jewish doctors can be found in the Federal Republic, with another handful in West Berlin and East Germany.

The disappearance of German Jews, says Engelmann, ended Germany's pre-eminence in medicine. Germans were awarded a quarter of all Nobel prizes for Medicine between 1901 and 1932, but only 5 per cent between 1933 and 1969. Many of the British and American prize winners in the latter period were, in fact, German Jewish refugees. Nowadays, major medical discoveries are usually made in Anglo-Saxon countries, and the same has been true for chemistry and physics, in which Germany also excelled until Hitler. The awesome potential of such a shift in scientific knowledge was illustrated in 1945 by the 'Manhattan project', when a group of academic fugitives from antisemitism managed to build the first atom bomb for their host country, the United States.

In the arts, the racist purges robbed Germany of much of its cultural life and heritage. Germany's two main modern painters Franz Marc and Max Liebermann, had been Jews, and so were about 40 per cent of theatre directors, actors, playwrights and patrons, as well as many famous composers and writers. 'Aryan art' was in such short supply that even Nazi leaders quietly continued to patronise works by artists of Jewish origin.

German science and art had been denuded not just by the flight or murder of their Jewish practitioners, but also by the emigration and subsequent vilification of prominent non-Jews who abhorred the new political system. Scientists like Professor Max Delbrück, writers like Thomas Mann and entertainers like Marlene Dietrich chose to go into exile, although they were in no personal danger.

In fact, some non-Jewish Germans had perceived the threat posed by Nazism before most Jews did. The earliest warnings had come from the left, and most German Jews were never socialists. Nor, however, were they apolitical. There had been Jewish deputies in Germany's first National Assembly in 1848, which called for a national parliament and a constitution enshrining civil rights, and in all subsequent parliaments. Engelmann insists that quite a few Jews supported the reactionary right, most the political centre and only a handful the parties of the left, but this seems an obvious attempt to counter the Nazi equation of Jews with Bolshevism, and is not borne out even by his account of the 1918 Munich 'red rebellion'. Most of its leaders - Eisler, Levine and Toller - were certainly Jewish (although this was not true of top Social Democrats). The rank and file of German left movements may have contained proportionately fewer Jews than their leadership, but Engelmann does not deal with this. His book is essentially a memorial to Jewish middle class achievement in Germany.

He attributes much of Jewish social mobility to the solid urbanness of the community. Jews had arrived in Germany with the Romans and had lived in cities for a continuous 2,000 years longer than many other Germans. Their education and business traditions suited the Prussian rulers, who hoped Jewish emancipation would help transform Germany into a modern European power. Once the 1871 constitution had granted them formal equality, Jews found little difficulty in entering most economic sectors. Antisemitic feelings, although widespread, at worst meant that professorships would elude them. Germany was not a religious country, and middle class Christians and Jews mixed freely. Between them, claims Engelmann, they created German science, art and culture. By 1914 a third of Jewish marriages in the Reich were to non-Jewish partners.

By 1933 thousands of German middle class Jews had non-Jewish spouses or parents, and many German Christians were aware of having Jewish ancestors. It took the Nuremberg laws to pull them asunder.

Like most other writers on inter-war Germany, Engelmann cannot ultimately explain how this level of integration could have given way to mass murder. However, beyond reminding us that the Nazis saw population change as the solution to all socio-economic problems, he identifies one other fatal factor: since the Bismarck years, Germany had combined an official policy of equal opportunity with official tolerance of racist ideas and organisations. The two cannot coexist forever, and Germany's economic collapse after the First World War greatly increased the appeal of "legitimate" racism among a confused and impoverished population. It is a lesson of some relevance to modern Britain.

As for Germany, it has irreversibly traded its old Christian-Jewish culture, not for the chaste, earthy, idealistic, national high-culture promised by Nazism, but for what Engelmann calls "a frightful spiritual poverty, a shockingly poor education system, a distressing lack of general and specific knowledge, provincialism and a general petty, narrow mindedness obscured by an exaltation of sexuality introduced to stimulate consumption."

ELFI PALLIS

### ADVERTISEMENT

The Jewish Women in London Group is a feminist oral history research project. We are concentrating on immigration and settlement, and are interested in interviewing women from as wide a variety of backgrounds as possible, including women who immigrated and settled in London - though they may now live elsewhere - or their daughters. If you would like to contribute to the project in any way, please contact us at Southbank House, Black Prince Rd, London SE1. Tel: 735 8171 Ext 147.



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Socialism has been central to the modern Jewish experience. The struggle for our rights as Jews has been closely allied with the fight of oppressed humanity. Collectively and individually, Jewish women and men have contributed enormously to working class struggles and progressive movements.

In Britain in 1985 our Jewish establishment actively oppose progressive causes; many Jews have enjoyed considerable social and economic mobility; and the general image held of the Jewish community, apparently confirmed by its institutions, is one of relative comfort and security.

But there is an economic and political power structure in the community and this picture is drawn in the image of its more affluent and powerful elements. The Jewish community is diverse, as are the social positions and interests of its component parts.

In Britain today, with mass unemployment and economic stagnation, an increasingly authoritarian political atmosphere in which racist and chauvinist ideas have gained "respectability", we view the interests of most Jews as linked with those of other threatened minorities and the broader labour movement. Our common interest lies in the socialist transformation of society.

- \* 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 mobilize solidarity with, all oppressed groups.
- \* We recognise the equal validity and integrity of all Jewish communities, and reject the ideology, 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 recognition of national rights and self determination, including statehood, of the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples.

We believe that without a revived progressive political movement within the Jewish community in Britain, its present problems of individual identity, cultural stagnation and organisational apathy will grow worse. Without a transformation of the present economic and political structure of society, a widespread resurgence of antisemitism is to be expected. And unless the socialist movement abandons assimilationist tendencies and recognises the important contribution that different groups have to make in their own way, it cannot achieve real unity or the emancipation and equality to which it has constantly aspired.

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