

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

85p

Students under siege



Poland's Jews

Israel's Jewish working class

Conflicts in anti-racism

The Ghetto in the Great War

Belgian Jewish radicals

Socialism & Nationalism

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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EDITORIAL

Socialist and progressive Jews live and struggle in a variety of contexts and social systems. In Poland, conventional wisdom has it that after the calamity of the Holocaust had wiped out the three million strong community, those remaining left after the "official" antisemitism campaign of 1967-8. But as Stanislaw Warecki's article (p20) movingly shows, Poland's "new Jews" have begun to meet and piece together their identity as Jews and as Poles.

In Belgium, nearer to us both in terms of distance and social system, Jewish socialists can look to the Union of Progressive Jews of Belgium, which has a long and distinguished record of fighting for similar causes as the Jewish Socialists' Group here. Michael Heiser (p21) takes a look at the UPJB and the context within which it operates.

In Israel, Roberto Sussman (p7) turns the spotlight on the situation of Jews from Arab lands. He shows how they are facing up to institutional discrimination and how they in turn are asserting their cultural and ethnic identity.

Finally we carry a major article (p9) by John Richardson on the situation at Birzeit University detailing dispassionately the daily harassment that both staff and students face from the Israeli occupation authorities. As Jews, conscious of Jewish history, we have a vested interest in the cause of academic freedom anywhere. Birzeit is not, and cannot be an exception.

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Jewish Socialist welcomes contributions from readers, but regrets that the editorial committee is not liable for the safe keeping of artwork, photographs and manuscripts. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope with any material submitted.

NEWS

JEWS MOBILISE AGAINST APARTHEID

More than 100 young Cape Town Jews recently launched "Jews Against Apartheid" (JAA). It seems its role as challenging the Jewish community in Cape Town to "stand up and be counted in the struggle for justice and democracy" in South Africa. JAA will investigate links between Israel and the South African Government, draft a code of conduct for businesses which are Jewish owned, and attempt to draw the organised Jewish community into working actively as a group to abolish apartheid. Cape Town JAA grew out of a mass meeting of Jewish youths who adopted a resolution demanding:

- ★ immediate lifting of the state of emergency;
- ★ withdrawal of the army and riot police from the townships;
- ★ an end to conscription;
- ★ the abolition of apartheid;
- ★ immediate and unconditional release of all detainees and political prisoners;
- ★ the return of all exiles.

Discussions are taking place with the aim of setting up a parallel organisation in Jo'burg.

AND IN ISRAEL

Anti-Apartheid activists in Tel Aviv have launched "Israelis Against Apartheid". Among the leaders of the new organisation is Arthur Goldrich, who has lived in Israel since escaping from a South African prison in the 1960s.

"Israelis Against Apartheid" declare that Israel's co-operation with South Africa is contrary to Israel's values and long-term interests. Activist Katya Azouley, warns: "In the long run,

the oppressed in South Africa will overcome the apartheid Government and then Israel's cordial relations with the government of South Africa will not be forgotten. People who are oppressed have long memories."

"Israelis Against Apartheid" aims to disseminate information about the general situation in South Africa and Israeli-South African relations in particular. It will act as a focus for pressure to end Israeli involvement in South Africa.

ANTISEMITIC ATTACK ON LSE STUDENT

Antisemitic slogans and a star of David splattered with red ink were drawn on the walls of a student's room at the London School of Economics (LSE) in October.

This followed an earlier incident when the student had been attacked as she helped an elderly Jewish man having difficulties with some dropped shopping. As she helped him she received a massive blow to her face accompanied by a voice threatening: "You Jewish lover, I'll be watching you."

Her room was broken into and the antisemitic slogans scrawled three days after the first incident. The daubers left the building without stealing anything and without being seen.

Stop press: On the weekend of November 30th-December 1st at an LSE hall of residence in Islington, a non-Jewish student who had been seen drinking with four Jewish students was woken in the night by two or three "visitors". He was "warned" by them not to be seen drinking with Jewish students again.

MOONMAN MOVES ON

Always up to date with the latest news, the *Jewish Chronicle* of 22 November 1985 revealed that Vice President of the Board of Deputies, Eric Moonman, had joined the SDP two months ago (September). He did so "in a deliberately 'private and personal' manner, he told the *Jewish Chronicle*".

Readers of *Jewish Socialist* will have found this important nugget of news in our last issue (September), when we discussed Mr Moonman's role in the *Jewish Quarterly* affair.

But, to be fair, we are going to let the *Jewish Chronicle* have the chance to reveal some exclusive news before our intrepid reporters do. Now on the same page as the *Jewish Chronicle*'s revelation about the flight of the Moonman, the latter is pictured, smiling as he stands next to Mrs Thatcher. Will he be flying again????

FOUNDING CONGRESS HELD

The founding Congress of the Progressive Movement, composed of numerous Arab groups who make up the Arab side of the joint Jewish-Arab Progressive List for Peace was held in Nazareth in August.

More than two hundred Arab delegates, representing scores of the movement's centres in towns and villages, participated in the congress. Jewish sympathizers, chiefly from "Alternative" (the Jewish partners in the joint List) were present at the opening session. Telegrams expressing support and solidarity with the Movement's ideals were read out at the congress, such as from Professors Edward Said and Hisham Sharabi. The congress adopted several resolutions: Complete equality in Israel regardless of race, religion or nationality; condemnation of the newly-enacted law which declares in effect that Israel belongs exclusively to "the Jewish people"; a statement that the PLO, headed by Chairman Yassir Arafat, is the legitimate representative of Palestinian people, support for the PLO peace initiative and the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel.

LAND EXTORTION CASES EXPOSED

One of the first acts of the Likud Government, after coming to power in 1977, was to permit private Israeli individuals and companies to buy land in the Occupied Territories. A large number of Israeli settlements were established on the West Bank, on land claimed to have been sold by the Arab owners of their own free will. Very soon, rumours began to spread about the reality behind these "sales", such as extortion and acts of violence against Arab farmers who refused to sell their land, as well as about fraud and counterfeit signatures. Often Arabs learned that their land had been "sold" only when the Israeli settlers appeared on it.

However, during the Likud Government's tenure (1977-1984) all police investigations of these affairs was blocked. It is now known that at least one police investigation was halted, despite (or because of) the evidence; that the trial of a land speculator was stopped, with the prosecution withdrawing all charges and asking the Judge to forbid the publication of any details about the trial; that a key file mysteriously disappeared from a safe in the Tel-Aviv District Court.

In recent months, a growing number of land speculators have been arrested more and more facts, previously hidden, are coming to light and a growing number of Israeli settlements are being exposed as having been built on land stolen from its owners by fraud and extortion. The key figure, so far, seems to be Umed Udeh, an Arab West Bank land speculator who became a multimillionaire by acting as the middleman in many such unsavoury land deals. Having been arrested, Udeh now seems ready to testify against his confederates. The big question is whether the people implicated will include only land speculators — or also the political figures, including high ranking Likud leaders, who supported the settlement effort. Clearly, the Likud leaders are concerned and nervous.

Reprinted from The Other Israel, Newsletter of the Israeli Palestinian Peace

One of the first acts of the newly formed Citizens Against Racism Movement in Israel was to circulate this document, originally drawn up by Michael Eitan, a member of the Knesset Education Committee. It compares the proposals of Meir Kahane for laws against Arabs with the Nazi Nuremberg Laws.

Originally published in *Al Hamishmar*, 21.3.85

Unofficial translation into English and distribution by Citizens Against Racism, Jerusalem, Israel.

NAZI STATUTE

Status of Jews

Jews are not allowed to be citizens of the Reich. They have no right to political voting, and may not hold public positions (14/11/35 — First order based on the Law of Citizenship)

Residential Restrictions

Apartments in Berlin and Munich that have been leased to Jews will not have the leases renewed without a special permit (Order of the Reich's Minister of Labour, 8/2/1939)

Prohibition on mixed marriages

Marriages between Jews and citizens of the State of German blood or extraction — illegal marriages — are prohibited. They are to be annulled even if they were performed abroad (Paragraph 1 of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour of 15/3/35)

Extra-marital relations between Jews and citizens of the Reich

A. Extra-marital relations between Jews and state subjects of German blood or extraction are forbidden (paragraph 2 of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour)

B. Jews are not allowed to employ in their households State subjects of the feminine sex of German blood or extraction, who are under 45 years of age (Paragraph 3 of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour)

Separation of students

Jewish students are forbidden to study in Germany schools. They may study only in Jewish schools (Order of Nazi Minister of Education, 15/11/38)

Separation at swimming pools and holiday resorts

A. Jews are forbidden entry to public swimming pools (8/35 — orders of various local authorities)

B. At holiday or health resorts Jews and non-Jews must be separated. Jews therefore must be boarded in separate hotels and pensions (Reich Minister of the Interior, 24/7/37)

Preventing contact between Youth

It is forbidden to include non-Aryan students in visits to youth hostels.

KAHANE'S PROPOSAL

Status of non-Jews

A. They will have no national rights and take no part in political proceedings in the State of Israel. A non-Jew may not be appointed to any position of authority, and will not be allowed to vote in elections for parliament or any state of public body.

B. They will undertake obligations, taxes and servitude. Whosoever does not agree to servitude and taxation will be forcibly expelled.

Residential Restrictions

A non-Jew will not be allowed to live within the jurisdictional boundaries of the city of Jerusalem.

Prohibition on mixed marriages

Jews and Jewesses who are citizens and residents of the State are prohibited from marrying non-Jews, either in the country, or abroad. Mixed marriages such as these will not be considered marriages at all.

Extra-marital relations between Jews and non-Jews

A. Jews and Jewesses who are citizens of the state are forbidden to have full or partial intimate relations of any kind with non-Jews, including extra-marital relations. Whosoever breaks this law can 2 years imprisonment.

B. Any non-Jew who has intimate relations with a Jewish prostitute or a Jewish male will be imprisoned for 50 years. A Jewish prostitute of Jewish male who has relations with a non-Jewish male will be imprisoned for 5 years.

Separation of students

All the educational institutions in the Land of Israel will be separate for Jews and non-Jews.

Separation at bathing beaches

Separate beaches will be established for Jews and for non-Jews, with no difference in quality. Any members of one people found on a beach earmarked for the other can expect imprisonment for half a year.

Preventing contact between Youth

All mixed summer camps, youth clubs and institutions will be abolished.

PEACE AS A DANGER

Yediot Aharonot, 8.11.1985
(Likud MK) Ehud Ulmert is a civilised man. I once heard him play one of Beethoven's sonatas on the piano. So, if I had merely heard reports on what he just said on television, I would have thought he was being slandered. However, I personally heard him make the amazing announcement. He really did say that there is a danger that Syria might join the peace talks.

Now what else does someone regarded within Herut as a "moderate" as well as a rational, intelligent and by Herut standards, extremely realistic human being have to do for us to understand that we are dealing with a party that does not want peace? Likud does not think that peace is impossible, it explicitly does not want peace. It only perceives peace as a danger. And those who do not want peace, we must remember, want its opposite.

ISRAEL FOLLOWS SOUTH AFRICA'S EXAMPLE

Ha'aretz, 5.11.1985

The military commander of the central region has issued a standing order banning the television coverage of illegal West Bank demonstrations. In accordance with this order, an Israeli TV crew was two days ago forbidden to cover a settlers' demonstration in the Jordan Valley. The standing order bans the television coverage of any illegal demonstration in the West Bank, by defining its location as a closed military area. On the basis of this order, the TV crew was stopped at a road block near Jericho. Another TV crew, which tried to travel north on the Jordan Valley highway, was made to turn back and take another route. Television circles have harshly criticised the commander's order. According to senior TV figures, it was reminiscent of the recent banning of television crews from demonstrations in South Africa.

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

PEACE OFF

David Rosenberg reports on a meeting called to protest against the peace talks that never were.

Many people were surprised when the Thatcher Government invited PLO representatives to Britain in October in an attempt to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. After all, Thatcher did not get where she is today by being a peacenik. In fact, war seems to be her preferred hobby — in the Falklands, Ireland and more recently, Britain's inner cities.

Fewer people, with the possible exception of the rather slow Geoffrey Howe, were surprised when the talks were cancelled at the last minute. But not wanting to take any chances, the Powers That Be in the Jewish community mobilised so that we could all say "no to the PLO."

A meeting was called for Monday 14 October. A large and no doubt costly advert in the Jewish Chronicle urged Jews to come and "express your views". This statement sat somewhat uneasily with the fact that the venue was not announced and admission was by ticket only.

Meeting against peace

The meeting was called by Board of Deputies, the Zionist Federation and the National Zionist Council, thus embracing the whole spectrum from right wing Zionist to "left wing" Zionist and from right wing Jewish establishment to "left wing" Jewish establishment. The organisers claimed to represent "the entire Jewish community". If you ever think things are bad just imagine what it would be like if they really did.

Anyway, some 800 people, including two *Jewish Socialist* reporters, filed loyally past those manly security guards (I do love shades!) into the *Connaught Rooms*, if you'll excuse me. In the full glare of the TV cameras (this was *some* simcha!) we waited to be told what we think. Without wishing to be corny, this meeting against peace must have cost a bomb! With all the publicity

about the crisis of Jewish welfare, this meeting starkly demonstrated the financial priorities for communal resources as understood by Our Leaders.

It reminded me of a barmitzvah. People were dressed up for the occasion, and a lot of them seemed to know each other. They even had a rabbi there — but more about him later.

The meeting was opened by Eric Moonman (veteran of the Jewish Quarterly Campaign 1985 (see JS3) and Deputy Sheriff at the Board. Reminding us of the solemnity of the occasion, he read out the names of ten recent victims of terrorism involving Palestinians. Strangely he did not mention the 60 human beings crushed in the rubble of Tunis by the Israeli air-strike, but maybe it didn't count since it was a blow against terrorism.

After a brief reference to Russia and Libya, Moonman introduced the first speaker — the rabbi. But this was not just any rabbi, this was the Chief, well chief of the United Synagogue anyway. Jakobovits was at his theatrical worst, physically feeling the pain of being at odds with "friends". After all, Thatcher is so good to the Jews, especially the ones that grovel.

Jakobovits told us that terrorism posed a greater threat than the nuclear arms race (better a big bomb than a small one?) and then, after making a cynical and degrading reference to the Holocaust, which the audience lapped up, he left. Perhaps he intuitively knew how awful the rest of the speakers would be.

Professors and imperialists

And what a shower they were. We had the two token non-Jews; firstly, a clean cut Professor Robertson from Reading who if you were asked where he practises his hobby, you might have said on a rifle range. Apparently he is an expert

in international terrorism. He spent 15 minutes arguing that international terrorism should be combatted internationally, and remarked that no terrorist group has ever overthrown a nation with a loyal army and police force. There must be a moral in there somewhere. Maybe someone lower down the academic pecking order could have said it in one minute. Still it's not every day we have a professor on the platform (please God by you).

Second was Tory backbencher John Biggs Davidson. The audience put to one side the fact that he is a former Chair of the far right Monday Club, and put to another side his active record of campaigning for the freedom of Rudolph Hess. (Don't let any socialists tell you that Biggs Davidson is an enemy of freedom. After all, he wants Rudolph Hess to be free.) It was interesting that Jakobovits, while making his cynical references to the holocaust, was willing to share a platform with the Rudolph Hess Liberation Movement. Now Biggs Droaning-on reminded us why he supported Zionism. It was his "semitism", derived from being a Christian. You remember all the goodness that Christianity has shown the Jews over the centuries. With friends like these . . .

Anyway, Biggs Davidson didn't make quite the hit he had planned. The man is an inveterate imperialist. After blabbering on about the Brits in India, he got quite carried away and remarked that Britain should never have given up the Palestine mandate. This met with a bemused silence. Still what did it matter, he must have thought, damn Jews ought to be grateful they have such friends.

Explicit racism

Back now to the Jews on the platform. Knesset member Amnon Rubinstein rose to his feet to tell us what a peace-loving country Israel is and what war-loving countries all the rest are. Although most of the speakers kept their racism at an implicit level with lots of references to the "civilised" world (which seemed to encompass South Africa and Chile), Rubinstein won the prize for the most explicit racist statement. Of the PLO he asked, "Is it so difficult to say 'no more war' . . . if you can't say it in English, try saying it in Arabic."

The joke was on him. He was followed by the English-born Israeli ambassador, Yehuda Avner, who has unlearned English. He strongly criticised various "analyses". Good word that Li'l Avner. Maybe friend Rubinstein can tell us what it means and if he can't say it in English, I'm sure he can say it in Hebrew!

Still, the ambassador was a mine of information. In measured tones he explained the process by which the Government's talks with the PLO were called off: "A great and enlightened nation paused and pondered this morning." More astute observers of the political scene thought it might have been related to pressure from America and intense lobbying by Israel and its trained poodle — the Anglo-Jewish establishment.

More out of duty than pleasure the audience stood up and applauded. I sat still but was nudged by an illiterate behind me who grunted "Why aren't ya clapping?" Very nice isn't it — the speakers tell you what to think and the *shmerel* behind tells you who and when to clap.

To bring the proceedings to a close, Mr Moonie read out a prepared text and hurriedly announced that this was unanimously supported by the assembled sheep to which no one baaed "no", and in true barmitzvah style, all rose to sing "God save the Queen" and the "Hatikvah". I hummed to myself, "God save us from the Board of Deputies".

COLONISATION DATA

Ha'aretz, 8.11.1985

According to data published yesterday by the 'West Bank Project' headed by Dr Miron Benvenisti, the number of West Bank settlers this year increased by 10,000. It rose from 42,000 at the end of 1984 to 52,000 settlers at present. 2,000 of the new settlers live in the Jerusalem suburb of Ma'aleh Adumim. Most others joined the large settlements in Judea and Samaria. In 1983, the number of West Bank settlers had risen by 15,000.

Pinhas Wallerstein, the leader of the Mateh Benyamin council and a member of the Judea, Samaria and Gaza district council, commented yesterday that Dr Benvenisti must have underestimated the number of settlers. According to his council's data, the West Bank now contains some 60,000 settlers.

LEVY: ARMED CRIMINALS AND MADMEN ROAM THE STREETS

Ha'aretz, 23.9.1985

The Cabinet will soon discuss the drafting of mentally disturbed recruits into the Home

Guard and Civil Defence Patrols. The issue was raised at yesterday's government meeting by Deputy Premier David Levy, who warned that "criminals carrying arms for the Home Guard and Civil Defence Patrols" are roaming the streets.

Mr Levy said that this was causing much public concern and distress. He quoted the commander of the Home Guard, Colonel Aharon Vardi, as saying that "20 per cent of those serving with the Home Guard are criminals and another 5 per cent are certified madmen". Mr Levy said that the government must take steps to protect the public. It could not disregard this development.

ARMS AND THE ISRAELI

Ma'ariv, 20.9.1985

Research undertaken by Ma'ariv has uncovered some astonishing figures. According to a variety of estimates, civilians, soldiers on leave and IDF reservists on the one hand, and hostile elements and criminals on the other, have over half a million fire-arms in their possession. Moshe Weiss, who heads the Ministry of Interior's licensing section, says that 180,000

civilians are licensed owners of personal weapons. Civilian institutions and private security firms also possess some 60,000 fire arms, including revolvers and "Uzi" sub-machineguns leased from the police. A large number of "Uzis" are in private hands.

This does not include arms supplied by the IDF, for which there are no precise figures. Many IDF reservists keep their personal weapons at home. Others have "taken care to equip themselves" with weapons captured during previous wars. The Ministries of Justice and the Interior have encouraged several amnesties for people willing to hand back their arms. "However, despite their relative success, such schemes cannot keep up with our wars", comments Mr Weiss.

The army also sometimes acts on information received in order to retrieve weapons. Thus, for example, it conducted a raid on the home of former General Shmuel Gonen. However, IDF arms are not kept by senior officers alone. Several operations undertaken to retrieve lethal weapons have yielded missiles taken home as souvenirs without anybody's notice. One undiscovered missile was used

by Private David Ben Shimul in his private retaliation attack on the Arab bus to Sa'ir after the murder of the student couple near Carmisan. Members of the "Jewish underground" managed to accumulate amazing quantities of arms and ammunition.

In order to complete the picture, one must point out that the security forces have, for reasons for their own, also given arms or fire-arms licences to Arab individuals and families in the occupied territories. The leaders of the "Village Leagues" were among those armed by the authorities. These arms were used more than once to settle accounts in the villages. After the murder of a suspected collaborator with Israel, Yosouf al-Khatib, in Ramallah, Mustapha Doudin of Hebron and Bishara Qumsiyeh of Bethlehem were issued with fire-arms for self-defence. Soon afterwards, Bethlehem turned into a battle field. The Qumsiyeh families were charged with using fire-arms against their political opponents and prosecuted. They got away with mild sentences, after the security forces had intervened on their behalf. . .

Talking peace — a statement from the Jewish Socialists' Group

Those of us wanting a just peace in the Middle East must greatly regret the British Government's last minute decision to call off talks with Palestinian representatives. While placing no faith in this Government as honest broker — or honest anything — we must recognise there can be no peace which ignores the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and this must mean recognising their representatives, the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Whatever influenced the British Government's about-turn, it is certainly not a blow against terrorism. On the contrary, the practitioners of terror — whether hijackers or those who bombed Tunis — are bound to feel encouraged by what they will see as their effect on world events.

Having seen the PLO's diplomacy once again frustrated, many an embittered young Palestinian may be tempted to listen more readily to those who offer gun and bomb as the only way. So the bloody downward spiral continues, with more innocent victims on either side, and the ever-present threat of widening conflict.

It is a source of particular regret to us that the Board of Deputies of British Jews was among those raising their voices against these talks. Could the board have been unaware that Mohammed Milhem, one of the PLO envoys, has spoken in the US as guest of Jewish organisations, and beside the Israeli Knesset member Mordechai Bar-on of Peace Now? Is that the action of a "terrorist"?

It is ironic, too, that after Israel's Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir only recently insultingly told Diaspora Jews not to "meddle" in Israel's affairs — for example by making their own peace efforts — they should still be mobilised when it suits the Israeli government.

We too care for Israel, and our people. We want peace, for both Israelis and Palestinians, and the rest of the world. We are appalled that the Israeli government, legislating to prevent its citizens from pursuing dialogue with the PLO, seeks to prevent others' efforts too.

Nothing will prevent us from doing everything we can to advance the peace dialogue. It clearly cannot be entrusted to the statesmen.

ISRAEL'S JEWISH WORKING CLASS

Israel's non-European Jews have been stereotyped, oppressed and manipulated in the interests of the ruling elite. Now they are organising on their own terms, says Roberto Sussman

To the dismay and disappointment of Israel's supporters in Western Europe and North America, Israeli Jewish society today is very different from the vision of the early pioneers and founders. Instead of a radically transformed and Hebraicised version of the former Yiddish speaking, non-territorial Jewish nation of Central and Eastern Europe, two thirds of Israel's Jewish inhabitants today have their roots in the Muslim and Mediterranean world.

Before settling in Israel, these so-called Oriental or Sephardic Jews were far from being a homogeneous group. Unlike the formerly Yiddish speaking Ashkenazim, whose Jewish identity had developed into a form of national awareness of which Zionism was one manifestation, Jews living in Muslim lands and in the Mediterranean basin identified themselves rather as belonging to specific, locally-based, religious communities, roughly similar to the Copts, Maronites and other religious minorities in the Middle East. Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews from Tangiers, Salonika and Istanbul (the real Sephardim) did not share a common identity with Arabic speaking Jews from Maghreb, Baghdad, Yemen or Damascus. Even within localised areas like Morocco there were sometimes sharp differences between neighbouring communities.

The Melting Pot of Assimilation

These local identities gradually disappeared only after this disconnected mosaic of traditional, non-Ashkenazi, Jewish communities was transplanted to Israel and a new "Oriental" (read: non-Ashkenazi) identity gradually emerged. During the sixties, as this population amalgamated into the Jewish working class of Israel, Jews from different non-Ashkenazi communities, who were settled in the same "development towns" and the same slums, faced the same patronising racism from the Ashkenazi elite formed mainly of *vatikim* (early settlers) usually associated with the (then) dominant Labour wings of Zionism. Thus, the ethnic "non-Ashkenazi" identity became interwoven with an increasing sense of class consciousness. A similar process had started earlier, in the pre-state *Yishuv* (Jewish settlement in Palestine) when different types of Ashkenazi immigrants intermarried among themselves in order to form the upper and middle layers of the Israeli Jewish society.

The harsh conditions experienced during their first years in Israel produced a deep sense of uprootedness and frustration among Oriental Jews. These feelings often emerged in the form of violent riots like those of Wadi Salib (a slum of Haifa) in 1959. At the same time, as happens with uprooted and deculturalised groups, the Oriental Jewish communities began a phase of assimilating the values of the dominant Ashkenazi group. For older Jews, this assimilation was a painful experience since it entailed the rejection of most of their former cultural elements (language, music, extended family life, traditional religion) which the Ashkenazi elite regarded as "Levantine" and "primitive". More than once, prominent Israeli politicians (including Ben Gurion), of the then ruling Mapai Party, emphatically declared that Israel would never become a "Levantine" state. They meant by these statements that the Oriental Jewish communities had to be "westernized" (read: forcefully detached and alienated from the Arab world).

A New Black Consciousness

Israeli born Oriental youths growing up in this period witnessed the frustration and helplessness of their elders, blaming the Labour party (Mapai) bureaucrats and apparatchicks for it. Luckily for him, Menachem Begin was a marginal politician at that time. Later some of these youths developed a political consciousness and formed the Black Panthers. For the first time, they challenged the hypocrisy and paternalistic racism of the Ashkenazi elite in clear political terms, linking their plight to that of the Palestinian Arabs. This was precisely what the Israeli ruling class had always been afraid of — any manifestation of cultural and political affinity between Oriental Jews and Palestinians.

The Black Panthers represented the response of a politically aware but marginal sector among the Oriental communities. It was not an intellectual clique but a grassroots spontaneous movement operating in the slums of Israeli cities. Unfortunately they remained marginal, though most of their leaders later became actively involved in different left-wing parties and movements. For most Oriental Jews, the channel for expressing their anger against the Ashkenazi elite became, in the end, Begin's right wing Likud.

Since the ruling circles of the Likud are also Ashkenazim, why did the underprivileged Oriental Jews back the more conservative sector of this elite? This complex issue is usually misunderstood because the following specific characteristics of Israeli society are usually ignored: firstly, the labels "left-wing" and "right-wing", as applied to Israeli political groups, loosely correspond to their degree of dovishness or hawkishness with respect to issues of external politics (that is, *vis a vis* the Arab states

and the PLO), and this does not necessarily correspond to their attitudes in domestic affairs. Secondly, it is not the private sector of the economy which is represented by the Likud, but the public sector — the state, mainly through the Histadrut who is the main employer. So the "boss" for Oriental Jewish workers was traditionally a Mapai bureaucrat or a Kibbutz foreman. Thirdly, although demographically (and thus electorally) diminishing, different elite groups around the Likud's main opposition, the Ma'arach ("alignment"), were (and still are) economically powerful. The Kibbutz movement, for example, representing 3% of the population, controls 25% of Israel's gross economical output.

Abandoned by the Left

Hence, the support for Begin among Oriental constituencies obeyed more a sense of ethnic kinship with elements of class antagonism against their affluent "left-wing" employers than a thorough acceptance of the "Greater Israel" vision and other elements of Beginite ideology. Those who lament the Begin-Oriental alliance should pause and reflect: after all, the traditional Zionist left never offered their "kibbutz socialism" to the real Jewish working class of Israel. The indifference of this Zionist left to politically aware Oriental groups like the Black Panthers greatly contributed to the marginalisation and lack of effectiveness of such groups, opening the door to Begin's skilful manipulation of the legitimate resentment of the less conscious Oriental masses against a political and economic system that exploited them. During the 1977 elections, the Oriental Jews were aware for the first time that their votes constituted an important political asset. And they chose to support that part of the elite

which they felt could better bargain for their interests and their desire of upward social mobility.

During the invasion of Lebanon several deep-seated myths about Oriental Jews were highlighted. One example is their supposed tendency to undemocratic mob action and anti-Arab hawkishness. This is supposedly based on the facile notion that these Jews, originating mainly from Arab countries, are unfamiliar with democracy and hate the Palestinian Arabs because of the suffering they had to endure while living in Arab countries as far away as Morocco.

Such explanations bear the mark of European ethnocentrism, to say the least. If anyone suggested that working class Poles hated their fellow Jewish workers because the former have a "tendency" to Fascism and the latter guilty of the suffering the Poles endured at the hands of Jewish capitalists, would not such an opinion be considered unprincipled and equally racist against Jews and Poles? Can chauvinistic attitudes and anti-Black and anti-Asian feelings among white English workers be explained away in terms of the suffering of these white workers at the hands of alleged Black and Asian oppressors? The fact that right-wing parties with populist chauvinist platforms often win the support of some or many workers (and not necessarily lumpen elements) is not unknown in history. But this does not mean that a given working class is in any form naturally inclined to Fascism.

Today, it is uncertain which political parties will be beneficiaries of Oriental Jewish support in the long term. The 1984 elections ended in a political deadlock euphemistically called the National Unity government. As the left-wing Zionist parties outside this government represent the interests of the more dovish

sector of the ruling classes, it is unlikely (or at least not immediately likely) that Oriental workers will support them. The non-Zionist parties like Rakah and the new Progressive List for Peace have taken an even more progressive stand in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but have failed to do the necessary political work among Oriental Jews.

As a result, there is still no political framework for these working masses to assess their class interests outside the control of the traditional political establishment, whether Labour or Likud. This is one of the most disturbing aspects of the social and political crisis facing Israeli society. This sort of political vacuum is one of the factors which makes Kahanism and other radical right-wing movements really threatening. Although these movements now involve more Ashkenazi than Oriental supporters and militants, nobody knows to what degree ideological racists like Kahane will be able to swell their ranks by capitalising on the antagonism between Oriental and Palestinian workers as they have to compete for the same unskilled jobs in times of economic depression.

An Anti-Fascist Movement

The response to Kahanism will be ineffectual if it remains straightjacketed in the cosmetic ideas voiced by the Likud-Labour political establishment (that Kahanism is an aberration of "real" and "democratic" Zionism, and is damaging to the "support" for Israel in the West). Kahanism is the ugly but open (and logical) manifestation of the right-wing trend that has been affecting Israeli society since its inception, and that has become chronic since 1967. This trend (and thus Kahanism) can only be stopped if an anti-fascist and anti-racist mass movement seriously confronts the Likud-Labour government on the need to end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, in order to meet the necessary conditions to bargain a peace settlement with the PLO and the Arab states. But no such mass movement is possible in Israel without the firm support of the Oriental working class. The problem is precisely that there is still no such mass movement bringing this working class together.

A ray of hope in this potentially dreadful situation is embodied by a handful of small groups doing progressive grassroots politics in the slums and development towns in Israel. Some of these activists are former Black Panthers, some are students, intellectuals and artists who have more recently become politically involved. Having grown up in these same slums and development towns, these activists are regarded as part of the community and are listened to with respect. They do not have an ideologically sophisticated discourse dealing with abstract concepts and distant goals, but are pragmatic and concerned with immediate problems.

The activities of these groups are being extended outside Israel by another group of Oriental (mainly of North African origin) intellectuals based in Paris, called *Perspectives Judeo-Arabs*, which through its French language quarterly of the same name aims to contribute (among other activities) to an Arab-Jewish dialogue by voicing what different individuals and groups within the Oriental Jewish public have to say about problems affecting their communities and Israeli society in general. Unfortunately, *Perspectives Judeo-Arabs* is still not available in English.

New Directions

Among the grassroots groups whose activities are reported in *Perspectives Judeo-Arabs* are *Mizrach el Hashalom* (the Orient for Peace) created in 1982 as a response to the fact that Peace Now had become increasingly co-opted by the Labour party, and so neglected political work in Oriental constituencies. It aims to combat the image propagated by the Ashkenazi establishment that Oriental Jews are aggressive, militaristic Arab haters. Another group is *Bimath Kivun Hadash* (The New Direction Society) created in 1983 in the Hatikva quarter of Tel-Aviv. It stages a variety of political and cultural activities with a view to raising the level of political awareness. They conduct lively public debates in which leading politicians from the whole political spectrum are expected to answer all sorts of questions, no matter how embarrassing or contentious. Right wing personalities like Ariel Sharon, Rafael Eitan and Geulah Cohen have entered full of self-confidence feeling they were on "safe ground", and have finished up very disturbed by the harsh criticisms sometimes uttered by the traditional Likud supporters among the audience.

The performances of these and other figures have been filmed, creating valuable and politically illuminating documentary video material which is unique in Israel. This activity has met with a great deal of success, and the lively, critical response of the audience shows to what degree the image of Oriental Jews as mobs who mindlessly follow a leader is inaccurate. Ten years ago, these communities had been so neglected that they were easy prey for Begin's chauvinistic demagoguery. The struggle today must be to prevent Kahanism spreading in the same way as Beginism did. That is the reason why these grassroots movements need support from all progressive forces in Israel and abroad.

For further information and/or to contact the groups mentioned above (and others), write to *Perspectives Judeo-Arabs*, 27 Rue des Orteaux, 75020 Paris, France or to Moni Yakim, Bialick 92, Ramat Gan, Israel.

Birzeit : students under siege



Members of the Israeli Committee for Solidarity with Birzeit demonstrating in Ramallah, February 1983

**John Richardson describes how
Birzeit University is struggling to keep alive
Palestinian national identity in the face of
repression from the Israeli authorities**

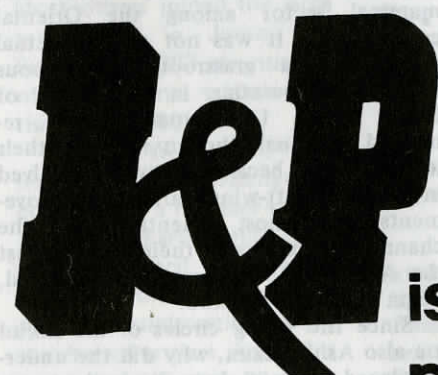
Being a student at Birzeit University in the Israeli-occupied West Bank is not yet an offence under military law — but students at the university could be forgiven for assuming that Israeli soldiers view them as violators of a military order which has yet to be recorded in public documents.

To join Birzeit as an undergraduate is almost an act of faith. Students know that they will not graduate without going through periods when their college is closed; their representatives on student councils will not go through their year of office without suffering arrest, in many cases house arrest and most recently administrative detention; they know that they will be subject to raids on student houses and dormitories and that being

identified as a member of the student body singles them out for special attention at road blocks — most frequently on their way to and from college, but even as far afield as the Gaza Strip. Yet despite all this, and the similar trials suffered by faculty and administration members, the story of Birzeit has been one of continued growth, both in size and in international reputation, since its foundation.

A 60-year story

What is Birzeit University today started life as a village primary school in 1924. It was founded by a local woman to provide educational opportunities for the children of Birzeit (a few miles north of Jerusalem) and the neighbouring villages. It became a secondary school in the



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ISRAEL & PALESTINE

1930s. In 1962 it expanded again to provide courses at the junior college level (equivalent to the first two years at university), sending its students on to graduate in universities in the Arab world and beyond. With the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, such transfers became increasingly difficult and the decision was taken at the beginning of the 1970s to become a university. A four-year development programme leading to the awarding of BA and BSc degrees was instituted in 1972, and in 1975 Birzeit College became Birzeit University (BZU).

BZU was born at a time when Israel was trying to portray a liberal image of its occupation of the territories it captured in 1967. At about the same time, several Arabic newspapers were licensed in East Jerusalem. Palestinians see in these moves an attempt by then minister of defence Moshe Dayan to placate local intellectuals by giving them limited forms of self-expression. If that was the case, he soon changed his tune. Birzeit University was closed for the first time in 1973. Since then, there have been ten similar closures. The high point came in 1982. Then the Hebrew University Professor Menachem Milson, appointed to the post of "civil administrator" in the military occupation hierarchy, made Birzeit his major target. He closed the campus three times in a year, for a total of seven months. Like his predecessors and successors, he claimed "security reasons" for his actions.

Security, a catch-all phrase for most of the Israeli army's repressive actions in the occupied territories, means in Birzeit's case that virtually any normal university activity is viewed as threatening. Closures have followed student demonstrations, cultural events such as concerts and book fairs, as well as confrontations with Israeli soldiers or settlers.

Arrest and detention of students

Closures, however, mark the tip of the iceberg. The British professor Eric Hobsbawm commented during his visit to BZU in 1983, "One doesn't realise (in England) the amount of small harassment, the arbitrariness of the rule in the West Bank." He was referring to the mass arrest of students on their way to a voluntary work camp in a nearby village. BZU has made the completion of 120 hours community work an essential requirement for graduation. It is perhaps one of the most difficult parts of the course to complete. During the late spring and early summer, as students go out into the community to help farmers with their harvesting or villagers and townspeople in voluntary work to clean up their communities and provide essential amenities, the reports of mass arrests start to trickle in. Detention is generally for periods of a few days (detainees can be held for 18 days without charge), but the cumulative effect can be a major disruption of the student's life.

In August this year, a Birzeit press release pointed out that over 90 per cent of the university's students held by the Israeli military are not brought to court. Last year, the university was closed following the "security threat" of students planting trees within the walled new campus a kilometre outside the town of Birzeit.

Birzeit is one of the smallest towns in the occupied territories. Ironically, it is also one which suffers the most roadblocks. At times of tension, and sometimes for no apparent reason, roadblocks are thrown up on the main road linking the town and nearby Ramallah. Identity cards are checked and, on occasion, staff and/or students are turned back. The roadblock is a regular weapon in the disruption of classes and teaching programmes.

Another major problem for students and staff alike is the question of banned books. A vague list of illegal literature is published, but in practice soldiers have wide powers to seize books they consider to be subversive. Campus raids usually result in large numbers of books, periodicals and other literature being taken away by the military. Israel usually announces that it has discovered another cache of illegal material. University officials point out that such seizures are never made in their presence, i.e. the offending material is discovered only when administrators are not present. They also point out Israel's arbitrary method of declaring publications illegal.

The same tactic causes considerable delays to the library acquisitions. The Israeli military takes upon itself the task of vetting all books which enter the occupied territories. This causes long delays — up to a year in the arrival of books, including academic journals, on the library shelves. More pernicious is the policy of imposing taxation on such material in contravention of international law. All educational materials to West Bank institutions are taxed. UNESCO agreements, of which Israel is a signatory, outlaw the practice.

More difficult to assess is the impact these measures have on staff and students. Given that there is no way an individual can know when and why roadblocks or campus raids are to take place, an *ad hoc* assessment of what books and articles it is safe to carry to college or have in one's home has to be made on the spur of the moment. This even affects written course work. One West Bank student found recently that, during an Israeli army raid on his refugee camp, his father, worried about his safety, took it upon himself to destroy the essay he had been writing on the Village Leagues (Israeli-sponsored groups in the West Bank). All the student's

notes went up in smoke too. Others report the confiscation of their whole libraries in individual raids.

Assault on Culture

It is a rare year at Birzeit when the student council's "Palestine Week" goes off without the campus being closed. Palestinian cultural weeks, including exhibitions, concerts of singing, dancing and poetry, book and poster displays and meetings, are an integral part of university life in the occupied territories. The Israelis are determined to try to stamp out any manifestation of Palestinian self-expression — making the students, if anything, more determined to defend their right to enjoy and develop their cultural and national identity.

The imposition of administrative town restriction on one or more members of the student-elected council (for security reasons) has been an annual occurrence over the past several years. This year the restriction was made more harsh. Marwan Barghout, head of the student council, was placed under town arrest early in the year, then jailed for violation of the restriction. Finally, in the late summer, he was summarily arrested and is presently held in jail under administrative detention. The last BZU person to be so restricted, Taysir Aruri a lecturer in the Physics Department, was held for four years from April 1974.

Similar military regulations are used to prevent students and lecturers from leaving the country. Last year, two-thirds of the Birzeit folktroupe were prevented from leaving the country to give a series of concerts in Europe. This summer mathematics lecturer Hisham Awartani was prevented from leaving to attend a series of academic and trade union functions in Britain. Teachers have also been restricted to their home towns and prevented from giving classes in the past.

These overt activities against the university take place against a constant background of petty harassment. Where Birzeit University is concerned, the wheels of bureaucracy turn very slowly. Permits for imports of equipment, the erection of new buildings, and the importation of donated money take months and sometimes years.

Military Order 854

The high point of Israel's harassment of the university came in 1980 with the attempt to impose on BZU (and the three other West Bank universities) the now infamous military order 854. The military order, declared by the military commander of the West Bank, purported to be an amendment to a Jordanian law governing secondary-school education. In effect, it tried to reduce universities to the status of schools and to regulate them through the military authorities. It gave the military the power to grant and revoke licences for the universities to operate, the power to review curricula and programme development and the power to

determine who would study and teach at universities. There was an immediate international outcry at this violation of academic freedom. Over the next few years successive attempts were made to get parts of military order 854 accepted *de facto* by pressuring individual institutions.

1982 became "the year of the pledge". By the end of the year, 21 university teachers had been expelled from the West Bank and another 36 threatened with deportation, as Israel made issuance of work permits for non-resident staff dependent upon signing an anti-PLO statement. Work at the universities was disrupted with teachers being barred from attending classes as a prelude to deportation. In the end, after intense international pressure, including critical comment from US Secretary of State George Schultz, the pledge was dropped.

The irony of the situation was that, because of Israel's purposely slow bureaucracy, before the pledge was introduced most teachers would apply for a permit at the beginning of the academic year and would only receive it, if they were lucky, towards the end of the year. Since the 1982 climbdown, military order 854 has been implemented more quietly. So far, BZU has escaped its full effects, but this year several students were prevented by the military from taking up places at Bethlehem University, and at Najah University (in Nablus) students were barred from campus for periods of up to a year.

Despite the almost constant pressure, BZU has flourished since its foundation. It now has four faculties and 2,300 undergraduate students. The education

department has given MA degrees, and links are being expanded with universities all over the world. The university has formal links with Durham University in this country and with the University of Amsterdam. Under these twinning arrangements, students and staff are regularly exchanged and joint academic programmes undertaken. In 1982, the three institutions came together to organise the first international conference in the occupied territories. Academics from all over the world gave papers on rural sociology. Last year, Birzeit organised its first cultural festival, and this year published the first issue of a new academic journal, in English and Arabic.

Solidarity

Because of its unique position Birzeit has been the focus of much solidarity work. The harassment in 1982 led a group of progressive Israelis to form the Committee of Solidarity with Birzeit University. This group became the umbrella body for all non-partisan initiatives to protest against Israeli occupation practices. Its importance can be measured by the fact that it was this committee which led directly to the formation of the Committee Against the War in Lebanon (CAWL), which was able to mobilise 20,000 people for the first anti-war protest in Israel immediately after the June 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

In this country and abroad, "Friends of Birzeit University" groups have been formed. The group in the UK exists to promote information about the university and to encourage and support exchanges between academics and students here and in the West Bank.

The military occupation has made the West Bank universities unique. BZU, the oldest of them, has had its character forged between the anvil of the Palestinian demand for education and the hammer of Israeli military repression. A decade after its first students graduated, it is accepted on equal terms by international academic bodies and is an important symbol of the Palestinians' determination to keep their national identity alive.



Women students at Birzeit

Pictures: Melanie Friend



Birzeit Women's Charitable Society, in cooperation with the Employees' Union, held a First Aid Day, at Birzeit on May 22, '82.

Further information can be obtained from: Friends of Birzeit University, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN (tel. 01-226 3369, Mondays and Tuesdays only).

LETTERS

TIME TO FACE REALITY

Many thanks for another issue of *Jewish Socialist* (which I bought at Days of Hope Bookshop in Newcastle). The articles all raise lots of points I'd love to discuss, but I'll try to confine myself to one in particular. In the article on Racism Awareness Training, I (as a white, middle class, Jewish lesbian) felt Michael Heiser could, and should, have been clearer on the point that white Jews are *not* black. If white Jews are to be at all serious in the antiracist struggle, we cannot start by purposefully blurring the reality: that we have white privilege. We would effectively be saying that the daily experience of abuse that a black person has in a white society must be because of something other than white racism. Painful rubbish! We would also be failing to accept the reality, only too true, not least in Israel, that white Jews oppress black Jews.

As Audre Lorde so often writes, for example in *Sister Outsider* (The Crossing Press, New York), it is only through recognising our diversity that a movement can grow and become strong. There are many examples in history of black non-Jews and white Jews combining in struggle against racism and antisemitism (see, for example, *Yours in Struggle* by Balkin, Pratt and Smith (Long Haul Press, New York) and we cannot continue the antiracist struggle so urgently needed by lying about who we are.

Why, oh why, is it so difficult to accept what for most people is the reality: that we are at the same time oppressed and oppressor? We'd better hurry up and accept it, though, because the fascists aren't waiting for us to get sussed!

Anthea Lehmann
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

JEWISH DEFENCE

The Autumn 1985 issue of *Jewish Socialist* reveals a serious omission with reference to the current environment of Anglo-Jewry.

As a veteran and life-long East End Jewish resident, I can only view with concern the ineptitude of the various sectors claiming to be the official standard bearers for Jewish Defence. Conflicts involving the misnomer "official representation" associated with "establishment acceptance" have created grave divisional factors detrimental to Anglo-Jewry's

communal and community survival.

The recent Board of Deputies election charade ridicules the concept of democracy and confirms the mutual admiration, class structure and Zionist domination of the "Jewish Parliament". The other "officially" sanctioned defence movement, AJEX (the Association of Jewish ex-Servicemen and women), assumes a confused dictatorial posture which provides scant practical solace for the victims of racial tensions.

It is difficult to reconcile the importance of Yiddish culture and language as relevant to the existing racist turbulence: indeed it appears retrograde.

Louis Behr
London E1

SHINDLER'S BARK

Although you have made a reasonable attempt at reporting the *Jewish Quarterly* controversy, it is unfortunate that you launch your piece utilising the highly inaccurate original article on the affair in the *Jewish Chronicle*. Quoting a distorted report did not add credibility to your own presentation.

Moreover, since you endeavoured to obtain an overview of the affair through contacting a number of individuals such as Barnett Litvinoff for their considered opinions, is it not strange that your sense of investigative journalism did not extend to contacting myself? Especially since you allow Mr Morris of the Board of Deputies Defence Committee to bolster his unhappy position in the affair by quoting me out of context.

After Tony Lerman asked me to succeed him as Editor, I felt duty bound to endorse his own statement that his decision to step down was essentially governed by commitments at work. The policies which Tony Lerman pursued will be continued and enhanced. Well-argued articles from all sections of the community, including the Jewish Socialists' Group, will be considered for publication, purely on a basis of merit. Can *Jewish Socialist* claim to follow the same policy? Would they publish an article from the Board of Deputies Defence Committee, for example?

Perhaps this is what distinguishes the *Jewish Quarterly* from the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish Socialist* in that we are not overtly concerned with the

imagery of a specific catchment group. We exist to examine policy, not to propagate it.

Santiago Carrillo, the former general secretary of the Spanish communist party, wrote that "Marxism is based on the concrete analysis of concrete reality. Either it is this or it is a *pure ideology* (in the pejorative sense of the term) which sets reality aside and is not Marxism." It is a sentiment which your leader writer could well consider in the future.

In the meantime, may I extend my best wishes to your collective for a peaceful 1986.

Colin Shindler
Editor, *The Jewish Quarterly*

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JCARP ...REPORT

Michele Carlisle
reports on the continuing work of the
Jewish Cultural and Anti-Racist Project.

The autumn initiatives of the Jewish Cultural and Anti-Racist Project have taken us the length and breadth of London. We have featured in publications including the *Hackney Gazette*, *London Labour Briefing*, *Asian Times*, *Manna*, and of course, the *Jewish Chronicle*! Our co-ordinator has spoken at two universities and we have held several meetings and a successful conference.

The main focus of our work has been our exhibition, "The Aliens Act Revisited." The exhibition traces the history of modern immigration legislation in Britain from the 1905 Aliens Act which restricted the entry of Jews into this country to the current laws which have discriminated against Black people, divided families and fuelled the ideas of the British fascist movement.

The exhibition, which opened at Stamford Hill Library in September, has been very well received. The comments in our Visitors' Book have all been positive and indicate that people are relating the subject of the exhibition to both their own and their family's experience, and to what is happening around us today. The exhibition was intended to be thought provoking, and for those who are particularly interested in the issues, JCARP has held a number of public meetings.

At our meeting at Stamford Hill Library we had a very full debate, led by our three speakers. Bernard Misrahi (see his article, "Eighty Years of Racist Laws" in JS 3) spoke about the historical aspects of immigration laws, in particular, the agitation which brought about the Aliens Act. Ann Owers from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants detailed recent cases of deportations and discrimination against Black would-be immigrants. Michele Carlisle, the new JCARP co-ordinator, spoke for the Project, explaining how we can use the experiences of the past to strengthen our fight against immigration laws and racism today and stressed the need for Jewish and Black people to unite in this struggle.

The exhibition went next to Jacksons Lane Community Centre and then to Haringey Central Library, where we held a further public meeting. Dr Geoffrey

Alderman, Jewish historian, and elected member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, imparted some of his vast knowledge of the period when the Aliens Act came about, Francesca Klug, one time researcher for the Runnymede Trust and now active campaigner in women's anti-deportation campaigns, described the current situation for immigrants and the way that young Asian women are abused by the laws, and Shalom Charikar, an Indian Jew from the JSG, recalled his own experience of immigration into this country in the 1960s.

Our next meeting will be at Clapham Library in December, with a women-only panel. The exhibition has a busy few months ahead. There are plans afoot to take "The Aliens Act Revisited" to Manchester, and it will feature in the National Union of Students Anti-Racist Roadshow visiting colleges all over the country next March.

JCARP 1985

The exhibition was also on display at the JCARP Conference at County Hall on Sunday October 27th. Sixty people attended the Conference "Countering Racism and Fascism", which had been called to promote discussion on and understanding of some of the major issues within the anti-racist movement in Britain. The issues we tackled were "What rights should racists and fascists have?", "Racism Awareness Training" and "Strategies for the future." It has been feared by some that these issues could divide the anti-racist movement, but we were firm in our belief that intelligent and thoughtful debate on these matters could only help to make the movement more cohesive. We were right. Few people left the Conference without a sense of greater

understanding of the struggles of all those threatened by racism and fascism, and the need to unite in our fight against these evils. The Conference was a serious attempt to come to terms with these controversial issues and to that end we brought together a distinguished and knowledgeable group of speakers.

Our first session, "Racists and Fascists — their rights and wrongs", was led off by Francesca Fleming from Brent Race Relations Unit and member of the Racial Harassment Bill Group, who outlined the history of racial harassment in this country, dating from the 15th century, and explained the need to make racial harassment a criminal offence. Anil Malhotra from Essex University, and Executive member of the National Black Students Alliance, spoke about the activities of the Federation of Conservative Students and the role of the "no platform for racists and fascists" policy in colleges. The National Council for Civil Liberties' representative Malcolm Hurwitt recalled the debate that has shaken the NCCL in recent years — whether fascists and racists should be given advice about civil liberties. The NCCL now has a policy not to advise organised fascist groups, but will not ask individuals their political affiliation before handing out advice. Rounding off the session was Barry Smerin from the Jewish Socialists' Group, who warned that we must differentiate between fascists and racists in planning our tactics against them.

Racism Awareness Training is a hot issue. The GLC Conference this summer achieved little in terms of reaching a greater understanding of the issue, and we hoped that our debate would be carried out in a calm and positive atmosphere. Ahmed Gurnah, lecturer in Sociology at Sheffield City Polytechnic and opponent of RAT, outlined briefly the way that he believes RAT depoliticises and personalises the fight against racism. Stephanie Malach, a practitioner of anti-racist and equal opportunity training for the Industrial Language Training Scheme, spoke next. Stephanie described the work that she does in this Government-funded scheme, teaching companies and local authorities to be non-racist, and also warned of the dangers of anti-racist

Continued on p25

BLACK VERSUS ETHNIC — CONFLICT IN ANTI-RACISM

As the threat from racist ideology and practice becomes more intense, Naomi Dale questions the adequacy of conventional Marxist theories of racism.

Racism is about the power relation of one collective group over another, whereby one oppresses, exploits or excludes the other — the Left in Britain generally agrees on this. Also, that the defining characteristic of racist victims in Britain today is being Black (ie on the basis of skin colour). Some in the Left go as far as to argue that the only possible victims of racism today are Black people. This is persuasive, since Black people (usually defined as Afro-Caribbean and Asian peoples, but often extended to include all members of Third World countries) do experience extensive racism in legal, economic, political and interpersonal spheres. They are probably the *primary* victims of racism in Britain today, with no other minority group subjected to the same severity and extent of racism. The GLC Ethnic Minorities Unit (EMU) recognises and reflects this in the funding priorities given to Black groups. As Ken Livingstone said in Jewish Socialist No. 3, although EMU has been responsive to taking on the question of antisemitism, the acute economic problems faced by Black people must take priority.

No one seriously concerned with the racist experiences of Black people in Britain would take exception to this prioritisation as a political strategy in combating racism. Moreover, the political term "Black" has successfully drawn attention to the politically oppressive consequences of being Afro-Caribbean or Asian, unifying and mobilizing their struggle against racist institutions and policies. I do take exception, however, when the Black/White division is used as the basis for a comprehensive *theory* of racism that sees Black people as the only possible victims of racism in Britain today. This limited and partial view of racism in contemporary capitalist societies is seriously misleading.

Black or ethnic?

The choice of "Black" rather than "ethnicity" as a unifying basis for anti-racist activity has generated heated argument within the Left over the last few years. A parallel debate, from different starting points, has been pursued in the feminist movement. Look at its prominence — the recent spate of articles in *Race and Class* (Spring 1985) by A. Sivanandan and *Feminist Review* (No 15, 1983 and No 20, 1985) by Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis and Michele Barratt and Mary McIntosh.

Roughly, the argument can be reduced to the following:— one side argues that "Black" should be used rather than "ethnicity" as the basis for anti-racism, because emphasising the latter obscures the class and conflict nature of the Black struggle and replaces them with a liberal philosophy of ethnic and cultural integration. Michele Barratt writes: "to reject the black/white division in favour of a concept of ethnic division is to reject the political, social and ideological force of racism in our society," and "the social divisions of race in contemporary Britain correlate closely with class division."

Sivanandan declares that the new "ethnic" strategy, welcomed by Tory and Labour alike and epitomised in Lord Scarman's report (1981), sees minority groups as suffering racial disadvantage and a problem of cultural identity. One remedy is governmental "ethnic funding" to help a wide variety of minority groups in cultural identity. It ignores the exploitative and class nature of racism towards Black people and the coercive power of the State against them.

The other side claims that "Black" cannot encompass other minority groups that also face racism or are potential victims. In this sense, it is too narrow a category for successful political mobilization against racism. It may also be too wide because it does not take into account the complex relations and contradictions between ethnicity, gender and class — like Black men oppressing Black women, Black middle classes against Black working classes, and Black people in the Third World acting as oppressors of other Blacks. It is too simplistic a division between "oppressor" and "oppressed" categories.

Two kinds of racism

I believe there is a serious problem in the use of "Black" as the sole political category to mobilize anti-racism. Even though Black people in Britain today are the prime racist target, there is evidence for two distinct kinds of racism, at least, in capitalist societies this century. They serve different functions, and take different forms, although they often overlap, may work together, and are both intimately part of capitalist economic and political relations. They are not limited to capitalist societies, and so-called socialist societies have their own histories of racist politics.

Starting with the first kind of racism, Sivanandan and others in the Left have traditionally acknowledged that racism is the *exploitative* power relation between a white European capitalist ruling class profiting from the cheap labour and menial conditions enforced on the Black sub-working class — at least in Britain. "Black", in this sense, as a political category of exploited racial labour, goes back at least 350 years to the earliest days of British colonization and formalized slavery.

Returning to this century, when additional labour was needed in the economic boom years, post-war, countries with a recent colonial history recruited members of their colonized countries as a supplement to the labour force, usually into areas of least skilled labour or direct labour shortage. But the relation between labour needs and racism is complex. Racist ideology and practice is not essential to the search for additional pools of labour to supplement the national supply, but it seems an inevitable product of nationalism as it relates to economic and political organisation during this century. So, Britain turned to the Afro-Caribbean and Asian peoples to fill the gaps, France to the Algerian people, Netherlands to the Indonesian communities — and those without imperialist heritages found others (Switzerland used Italian labour).

Even if complex, there is undoubtedly a relationship operating between imperialism, capitalism and racism. This has been identified by the Black Power movement and later Black feminists. The fundamental economic and class nature of this racism is shown by the rapid decline of this kind of labour exploitation during the 1960s, and especially the 1970s, when the economy moved into a new recession. With the exception of countries like Britain — where members of the previous Commonwealth held passport rights to entry and residence — many other European countries expelled their migrant workers and cheap labour sources when the economy began declining. Nowadays, European capital prefers to use cheaper, and relatively unorganized labour forces within the Third World itself and imperialist exploitation mainly continues overseas, particularly in Africa and Asia.

But there is a second kind of racism that fits less easily into this class-race equation. The traditional Marxist, class-reductionist position on racism simplifies

a reality that has uncomfortably ruffled the Left throughout this century and before. Minority groups may be selected as *scapegoats* to obscure exploitative and oppressive economic class relations. They can be blamed for economic problems occurring within society, thereby removing charges of responsibility from the ruling classes. In this sense, scapegoating is intimately part and parcel of economic class relations and power conflicts of capitalist societies, but the targets of racism may not neatly reduce into a single economic class. Racist power relations do not always coincide with economic relations and power is the salient feature of this kind of racism.

With a disgruntled, angry and alienated work force, especially during periods of economic recession, the ruling classes may encourage another group to be held up as scapegoat. And they are particularly likely to select a group that cannot totally be identified with the lower economic classes, to prevent the conflictual nature of class relations becoming visible to the oppressed work force. This kind of racism is prominent in fascist ideology.

Why the Jews?

However, the Left has frequently failed to explain why certain groups are selected for victimisation or to take their vulnerability seriously. This was the case with Jews under Nazi Germany. Post-war left-wing accounts of fascism under the Third Reich have rarely addressed themselves to the question of *why the Jews?*

During this period Jews crossed *all* class boundaries. They provided the ideal target for racist accusations at one and the same time of "Jewish capital" and "Jewish communism". The class spread of Jews contributed to the choice of them as racist victims, in addition to the prevalent and popular antisemitic prejudice developed through centuries of Christianity and the economic rivalry of an emerging German petit-bourgeoisie. With Jewish people active in a wide range of occupations during this period, including commerce, finance, professional and academic life and artisanship (stemming from their traditional economic roles as a middle-caste between the landed nobility and peasantry in pre-industrial times), a sufficient economic range was evident to provide the underpinning for the notorious conspiratorial racist theory of the Nazis. Jews were accused of plotting to "take over" the

world, and all industrial, political, economic and intellectual life was suspected of being in the grasp of "Zionist" merchants, bankers and international capitalists. This particular brand of racism is peculiar to antisemitism and has generally differentiated it from other forms of recent racism.

Traditional economic approaches in Marxist theory to racism ignore the distinctive vulnerability of minority groups that are both working and middle class in composition, or predominantly middle class. The Left has a history of not knowing how to respond to middle-class members of a minority group who are subjected to racism. The Dreyfus case in France in the 19th century is an example, when the French socialist party split into two vehemently opposed factions over the issue of whether to defend a wealthy Jew, an artillery officer accused of treason on the basis of spurious evidence and eventually acquitted after many re-trials and a national uproar among liberals, Royalists and Catholics.

Even today, Sivanandan in *Race and Class* dismisses as "opportunistic" attempts by what he calls a "vertical mosaic" (meaning not necessarily aligned with class) of non-Black minority groups in Britain to secure funding from the GLC for anti-racist and cultural programmes. This includes Jewish groups, even though Jewish people have been the most vulnerable victim of *fascist* ideology and politics this century.

Different minority groups may fall victim to one or other of these kinds of racism, or both kinds together. Apart from being economically exploited and disadvantaged, Black people in Britain today are thrust into the position of scapegoat in contemporary National Front and Far Right literature for the economic ills of this society — blamed for rising unemployment, housing shortages, educational levels and above all, the degeneration of "the British way of life" and values. This is extended into violent racial attacks on Black people (especially Asians) by NF members, on the streets or in their homes. Nevertheless, the NF ideology continues to use Jews as the underlying explanation for this country's social and economic problems. Relying on the familiar "Zionist conspiracy" theory, Jews are still blamed for controlling industry, politics, the media, professional and educational life, and bringing Black

people into Britain to mask their own "racial" aspirations for world rule.

From racism to fascism

One of the failings of traditional class-reductionist Marxist theory is that it has difficulties explaining the shift from racial victims of economic exploitation to those of fascism, and the relation between the two. The use of imperialistic exploitation for economic benefit and profit is clearly different from, although related to, the selection of a minority group to hide the conflictual nature of economic relations. The logical, practical consequence of fascist ideology, if fascists gain political control, is to *exclude* the targeted minority group from the work force rather than to directly exploit them (although it may use a repressive combination of both methods). Sivanandan recognises the shift from the exploitative economic form of racism in the 1950s and '60s to that of a political and ideological kind of racism, notably under Thatcher's Tory government but also under preceding Labour governments. As he says, "The rationale of racism is no longer exploitation but repatriation, not oppression but repression."

Even without fascism in power, the public institutions of the British state, with the support of the Tory government, are increasingly scapegoating Black people. They blame Black youths for the rising level of crime or stereotype alienated and angry unemployed Black people as "criminals" as in the recent Birmingham and London riots without considering reasons for their grievances. Scapegoating and repression of Black people operates ideologically through the media and education or politically through the courts and police. But there comes a point beyond the range of credibility to blame Black people for all the economic difficulties of the present period. Other workers can see that many Black people are as disaffected and impoverished as themselves, frequently unemployed. And so other minority groups that seem financially more secure may be selected for blame. This might only occur if fascist parties gained political power, but we have already seen that, even without fascists in power, present-day purveyors of ideology and politics in Britain are not averse to using minorities as scapegoats.

In his article, Sivanandan dismisses "ethnic politics" such as the new ethnic

media, Community Relations Councils, race relations advisors, as a new career path that permits a nascent Black petit-bourgeoisie to rise up the system, and sees this new class division as weakening working-class Black struggle against the State. Upwardly mobile shifts in class position in minority groups, which seem likely after one or two generations of immigrant experience, do pose problems for socialist strategy and theory. But Sivanandan's position ignores the specific vulnerability of mixed-class minority groups — vulnerable precisely *because of* being mixed class or mainly middle class. It also denies the reality that many minority groups *are* mixed class in composition. The accompanying internal class conflicts within minority groups are complicating factors that must be addressed within any effective anti-racist movement.

There is no doubt that the established "leadership" of minority groups, such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews or new Black leaderships in the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities, are often manipulated by, and collaborate with, the majority State in keeping their own communities controlled and undermining any collective protest against racism. Class is a major issue and a significant factor in anti-racist struggles, but cannot be dealt with adequately by submerging race into class or assuming that all Black interests are the same as those of the working classes.

It is precisely this consistent failure by some sectors of the Left to recognise the growing risk of the second kind of racism in Britain today and the vulnerability of both Blacks and other non-Black minority groups, like the Jews, that contributes to the latter's current lack of confidence in socialist protection. Admittedly, it is difficult to draw middle-class members of a vulnerable minority group into the socialist movement, with economic and power interests conflicting with ethnic ones. But if the socialist theory of racism leaves them out in the cold, then we have still not absorbed the horrific lessons of the Nazis.

Sara Magen calls on anti-fascists and anti-racists to eschew complacency and learn lessons from the women's movement and the anti-pornography movement

Fascism doesn't just spring up out of nowhere — one day we look around and say "Oh look, there is a fascist on the street." Let's look at what is going on in our lives today. There is legislation which says you can be deported under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, just extended so that Sikhs are under threat of deportation for fighting "their own cause" in this country. We will be faced in January 1986 with new restrictions called public order laws which will prevent us, if we thought we could, from marching, demonstrating and assembling. The Police Act comes into force next January. We have deportation laws — sorry, they're called immigration controls. All these laws work together. We have a Police force which already acts outside the law and a Government that legitimises everything the police want to do and have been doing. We have violence against women on the increase not only in quantity but in, (for want of a better word), quality. We have an acceptability around pornography. We see women in bondage on the streets — we didn't see that so much five years ago. We see our children being used to sell porn.

If we walk down the street we're under threat from fascists, we're under threat as women from most men. We're under threat also from "ordinary people" who will not stand up for those of us under threat. We walk down the street and we see a wall that says "Hitler was right". We go to a synagogue and we see the same sort of thing on the walls. If we're black we're subject to constant, unrelenting and worsening police harassment. When we go home (and some of us are so frightened we can't leave our homes) we're under threat of arson attacks. If we're lucky enough to go to work we're faced with the threat of increasing unemployment that forces women back into the home. And what do we face there? Domestic violence and more arson attacks. If we're black or Irish

we face racism in unemployment. All these things affect all of us.

Lessons from anti-porn

When I was working more actively in the anti-pornography movement, and we can all learn from every radical movement, I learned that you don't need to know every single little detail to know that something is wrong. You don't need, if you're fighting porn to know how many children's bodies are mutilated. You need to know that it is wrong, you need to feel it in your own gut.

Anti-fascism doesn't need grand theories or details about how many homes were burned this week. All we need to know is that facism is bad for us and racism kills. What the fight against facism and racism does need is commitment. That doesn't necessarily mean twenty meetings a week or any meetings at all necessarily. But there to are barriers to commitment and one of the main ones is, complacency. There is the "Politico's" complacency that says "I'm doing my bit — I went on the Anti-Apartheid demo last year, week, next week, year." That's not enough. It's never enough. How many petitions have we all *not* signed? How many marches have we *not* gone on when we could?

Another part of political complacency is "this matter is too urgent to take on your issue. You're being divisive — it's a red herring — a bourgeois deviation." I've heard that used in the last few months when talking about women. It's easy to sit in a cosy exclusive group that excludes women, black people, older people, people with disabilities. Any movement which fails to recognise all the revolutionary strength is, at best, bound to waver. For example, pensioners are a group with energy, determination, a wealth of experience and masses and masses of anger, yet old people are excluded from most revolutionary groups. Why do we do that as young people?

LEARNING TO FIGHT BACK

Do we think that when they are on the dustcarts we won't follow?

Lessons from women

I'd like to talk about women. Women are strong, determined, "unmanageable revolutionaries", capable of absolutely everything and anything all the time. Women have specific needs and special and very effective ways of working. Any woman who has sat in a group of energetic, committed and angry women will know what I am talking about. Any movement which refuses to acknowledge and welcome the power of women generally and particularly the power of self-determined women (I mean lesbians) is bound also to, at best waver, and I suspect fail. The Anti-Nazi League was male defined and male determined. It was largely white-controlled and it completely ignored anti-semitism. It failed. We cannot afford to fail. We cannot afford to let anti-racism die a GLC-funded death. We don't have that choice. We are facing reality in our everyday lives. Our sisters are being burned alive in our homes. We cannot afford complacency. A rut is the same shape as a grave, it's just narrower.

Another barrier to commitment is when people say "it's not my fight." Now that manifests itself in several ways. There is (and I'm ashamed to say it) the experience we've had from the Jewish establishment. "It's not my fight; we're British now." Read any NF literature recently? Seen the graffiti on the walls, the hate mail through the synagogues? We're not safe. Any Jew who thinks we're safe — I'm sorry. And anybody else who thinks that Jews are safe — you're wrong. To the Jewish establishment I would also say that pushing someone else to the bottom of the ladder that you are sitting on is very dangerous. Ladders have a tendency to slip and fall. We have a responsibility to fight injustice. When they come knocking on our door — and we should be so lucky they should knock

— we will want somebody else to be there for us. If we want somebody else to be there for us we have to be there for everybody. All of us have to be there for everybody.

Gut feeling

We as anti-fascists need to translate that slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all" into reality — we need to feel it in our gut. When Cherry Groce was shot, and nearly killed by armed police in Brixton I know I felt (and I know that many, many sisters felt) "that's my sister". When we can all feel all the time "that's my sister" then we're getting somewhere.

Commitment means that there are no fences — fences are something you sit on they're not only what you use in the ghetto. If we're not fighting we're condoning something. I'll give you an example. I was sitting on the bus and this bloke ahead of me suddenly started saying "well he's Jewish you know, they breed like rabbits and they do this and they do that and you can spot one anywhere." I was under my seat. But what frightened me was that nobody else on that bus said "shut up John". I looked round and thought "they all think he's right because if they don't then they would have said something."

I'd like to quote a sister a lot of us have respect for, Audre Lorde. She said "Our silences will not protect us." And they won't. We must disallow fascism and racism. We must not allow it to grow. We must instead create a climate of opinion where those things are shocking and that's a word with a lot of loaded meanings. We must remain to be and keep everyone else shocked at racism, shocked at fascism and not think "oh well, what do expect?" We must take risks. We must on every occasion that we can, fight back. We've got to keep saying "that's my sister." And we can do it everywhere each of us in our own ways can do it everywhere. Feminism says you start from where you are — on a bus, in a

launderette, in a trade union, in a women's group. Everywhere. All of us are capable of fighting fascism in some way or other. We can support the uprisings recently. We can try and stop someone from being deported. We don't have to be loud and confident. One small voice in a room full of people which says "well, actually I don't agree" can be the most powerful voice there.

Tradition of resistance

In the anti-porn movement, a lot of us spent a lot of time spraying "Women say no to porn" on every wall, lampost, bus stop and anything we could find. I know that loads of women looked at those and thought "Yes I do say no to porn" and a lot of other women looked at it and thought "Yes alright I will". And that's what we must do as anti-fascists. We must give ourselves and each other permission to say no to fascism, no to racism and we have to validate the experience of those who are already saying it, to carry on saying it.

I'm a Jew and I come from a tradition of resistance, bravery and determination. I'm a Jewish woman and that multiplies it. Many of us come from those traditions — women, Black people, Jews and Irish. Sorry if I've missed anyone out (that's not a flippant comment). We need to carry that tradition forward, to the next generation, the generation after that and the one after that. My little niece, five and a bit, said to me the other day "Sara, what's a revolutionary?" Now in a way that was lovely but it made my blood run cold because my niece is Jewish and if I don't fight fascism now she won't be alive to tell her niece. I won't be alive to tell my grand niece. The fight against oppression, all oppression for all of us is a matter of life and death. What we have to do is develop strategies, ideas and plans for effective action so we can go forward. We're not just saying "never again" we're saying "stop it."



FIGHTER FROM GALICIA

Leopold Trepper's life
of commitment to fighting fascism and building
socialism went largely unrecognised – until he died,
when everyone tried to claim him as one of them,
says Charlie Pottins

Lenin once remarked that it was often the fate of great revolutionaries and fighters for the oppressed to be "canonised" after their death, turned into harmless icons to console and dupe the masses, by those who hate and pillory everything they had stood for when alive. Were he able to look down from the beyond on his own mausoleum in Moscow, he would often have seen ample confirmation for that aphorism!

When Leopold Trepper died in Jerusalem in 1982 and it was reported that Israel had awarded him a posthumous medal, presented to his widow Luba by Ariel Sharon, it brought to mind once more Lenin's prescient observation.

Claimed alternately in *Socialist Worker* as "one of us" and by the *Jewish Chronicle* as having been "a Zionist almost in spite of himself", Trepper was truly neither. The wartime chief of the famous "Red Orchestra" spy network was a lifelong socialist, a proud and devoted fighter for the Jewish people and a firm internationalist. His heroic and brilliant activity as an anti-Nazi master spy certainly deserves recognition from the Jewish people; but he and his wife and comrade Luba also deserve something better than a medal from the soiled hands of Ariel Sharon!

On the Road to Socialism

Leopold Trepper's life and outlook might be summed up by the remark with which he opened a chapter in his book *The Great Game* (1977): "I became a Communist because I am a Jew".

Like many of his generation and background, as a youth Trepper had been drawn almost instinctively to the side of the October Revolution and the cause of socialism. For him the year 1917 had also seen, after the loss of a brother in the World War, the early death of his father from overwork and poverty. Trepper felt repugnance for the religion of the Rabbi who preached acceptance of one's fate and the will of "the Almighty". "Instead of being fed, the people were crammed full of opium. I found out this truth not from reading Marx, whom I had never heard of, but from life in rural Poland – a good book for anyone who wanted to learn."

From this point on, the young Leopold Trepper became convinced that humanity must solve its own problems, and the Jewish problem with them – and not by prayer. His encounters with antisemitism and class struggle hardened his will to fight.

The long and winding road which was to take this boy from the poverty-stricken Galician town of Novy-Targ, by way of both Nazi and Stalinist prison cells, to his death in Jerusalem, first landed him on the shore of Palestine in 1924, as a *chalutz* (pioneer) and militant of Hashomer Hatzair, the socialist Zionist youth movement. The youthful ideal of creating a new Jew in a socialist Israel soon brought him and his comrades into conflict with both the British Mandate and with the Zionist bourgeoisie and with the Histadrut (Jewish trade union) leadership, too.

The young Jewish workers and pioneers were confronted with the difficult question of what to do about Arab labour. Leaders like Ben Gurion and Golda Meir saw their task as getting rid of the "problem", taking the path of separatism and national conflict, worker against worker. Trepper and others like him chose the harder, less "realistic" way, striving to achieve Arab-Jewish unity in a spirit of working class internationalism. They were increasingly isolated, attacked on all sides, and ultimately defeated. We are still paying the price of that defeat today. But we can take some inspiration from the courage and resolve of these early Palestine Communists who tried.

Political Exile

The hardship of victimisation, unemployment, repression, imprisonment by the British in Acre's medieval dungeons, deportation and the wandering life of a political exile, all strengthened Leopold Trepper's revolutionary commitment. In Paris, he worked tirelessly to organise the Jewish workers, launched a Yiddish community newspaper, took part in cultural work, and mobilised immigrant Jews into anti-fascist activity. Luba, who joined him after being hounded by the police in Palestine, was equally active, and represented the Party's Jewish section at the big 1931 anti-fascist congress.

As Trepper frankly acknowledges, during this period he also loyally carried out the Party's orders to combat the Trotskyists, whose influence he says "was very strong among Jewish communists."

Forced again to move by police repression, the Treppers went to the Soviet Union in 1932. At this time, there seemed much to bear out the high hopes he had placed on Soviet Communism. He saw a lively Jewish culture growing from the new life of Jewish workers and thriving Jewish collective farms and districts where Yiddish had become the official language. Five or six Jewish daily papers, Jewish writers published in editions of millions, university courses in Jewish literature, and Jewish students freed from the old discrimination, graduating to make their contribution to Soviet science and arts. From being synonymous with antisemitism and pogroms, the new Russia was becoming a serious contender with "the Promised Land" for Jewish aspirations. But these fruits of Revolution were not to last.

A new counter-revolutionary wave, and new "Black Hundredism" was about to be launched by the Stalin regime. Trepper in his book faithfully records the fate of his old friends and inspirers who perished in the Stalin purges, like Daniel Averbuch, a leader first of the Left Poale Zion and then of the Palestine Communist Party, who was recalled to Moscow and died in the Lubianka. He describes how Esther Frumkin, once spokesperson for the Communist fraction of the Bund, and rector of the Marchlevski University for national minorities which Trepper attended, was sentenced to death on trumped-up charges in 1937. He recalls also the words of Averbuch's son: "My father was accused of being a counter-revolutionary, but I say that it is the leaders of the country, starting with Stalin, who are the real counter-revolutionaries". He too ended up in a Stalinist camp, as did most of the Averbuch family.

Although he was naturally closest to the Jewish victims and saw the devastating effect of this period on Jewish life, Trepper does not separate this from what was happening to the Soviet Union and international communism in general. His

book refers to the frame-ups of old Bolshevik leaders and Red Army generals, and to the grim fate of German, Polish, Bulgarian and other communists who fell victim. Thus, while his feeling for the Jewish people is not in question, it is free from the narrow outlook which led others to merely see in this period reinforcement for their own prejudices and to draw reactionary conclusions.

He is unforgiving to those who pretended they knew nothing until Khrushchev's 1956 "revelations", but who were, in reality, "knowing accomplices of the liquidations, including those of members of their own parties." (a charge that applies to the British CP leaders, for example). Less fairly, one feels, he even accuses himself among those who did not rise up and who share responsibility. "But who did protest at that time?" he asks, "Who rose up to voice his outrage?"

"The Trotskyites can lay claim to this honour," Trepper answers, "following the example of their leader who was rewarded for his obstinacy with the end of an ice-axe, they fought Stalinism to the death, and they were the only ones who did." In a remarkable tribute to those who were, after all, once his political opponents, Trepper praises the bravery of the Trotskyists who defied Stalin, even in the Siberian camps, going on to say: "Today, the Trotskyites have a right to accuse those who once howled with the wolves. Let them not forget, however, that they had the enormous advantage over us of having a coherent political system capable of replacing Stalinism. They had something to cling to in the midst of their profound distress at seeing the revolution betrayed. They did not 'confess' for they knew that their confession would serve neither the party nor socialism."

At War with Hitler

Leopold Trepper earned his place in history through activity in which his role and name had to be kept concealed, of course, and in which one mistake or indiscretion could mean death for himself and others. It required selfless dedication, courage, constant alertness and self-discipline. If his years of hard work and clandestine international activity had provided an apprenticeship, then his powerful desire to do something against Adolf Hitler was sufficient motivation. When General Jan Berzin of Red Army intelligence (himself to be a victim of Stalin's inquisition) approached Trepper with the opportunity to leave Russia and continue working for Socialism, the Jewish communist from Galicia did not hesitate: here was his great opportunity, he said, to fight the Nazis.

Fight them he certainly did. His network, a veritable "International Brigade" of dedicated agents, penetrated right into the heart of the Nazi state for its secrets. Hidden radio transmitters nightly relayed their information back to the Soviet Union – on the latest German tank, the

Nazis' forces in Western Europe, the state of the Italian army.

Relentlessly the Gestapo sought to silence this "Red Orchestra" and above all, to track down "the Chief". But even after capture, Trepper managed to outwit them and continue in the game.

His greatest scoop, however, shared to an extent with his lone colleague in Tokyo, Richard Sorge, was the one the Soviet leadership ignored: the warning of Hitler's invasion plans, of "Barbarossa". The all-powerful and brilliant genius Stalin knew better, his lackeys dared not contradict him and twenty million Soviet citizens were left to pay for the Great Leader's little "mistake". For that and for the previous murder of the Red Army's officer cadre – at which Hitler had openly rejoiced. The purges had also hit the Soviet intelligence service badly – Trepper's network was compromised and exposed to Gestapo attention largely through the stupidity and ineptitude of those Stalin protégés who had replaced men like Berzin.

"I know that youth will

succeed where we have failed,

that socialism will triumph."

Unlike Sorge, who was executed by the Japanese, Trepper survived the War, and to embarrass the Soviet leaders with what he knew. His return to Moscow brought him "postgraduate study" in the cells of the Lubianka and Lefortovo prisons, to further his knowledge of Stalinism. Not till 1955 was he released, and granted a Soviet pension. But Trepper's odyssey was still not over.

Disappointments, But No Regrets

In 1957 Leopold Trepper returned to Poland where he aimed to serve the remnant of Polish Jewry. There were the Warsaw Ghetto revolt commemorations; a post at the Yiddish Buch publishing house and then as president of the Jewish Social and Cultural Association. Most of the Jews of Novy-Targ, including many of Trepper's family, were in a mass grave. But antisemitism was not yet dead or buried. The veteran fascist Piasecki was alive and well and rumoured now to be a Soviet agent. There was a new figure looming from the security police, General Moczar. In 1967, and more so in response to the student unrest of 1968, the new regime resorted to the tried weapon of old: "Yes", wrote Trepper, "more than 25 years after the end of the war, in the country of the Warsaw Ghetto, where the

Jews had suffered more than anywhere else from Nazi barbarity, and under a regime that called itself socialist, the monster of antisemitism was rising from its ashes."

Against this background, the Treppers waged a long fight for permission to leave the country, winning international support as their case became known. It was, he would write, the "last and most painful battle of my life."

I have in front of me a photograph of Luba Brojde, taken in 1973 when the couple were in Denmark. It is the face of a woman who has fought and suffered, a tough face – but with all the warmth and irreverent good-humour that neither suffering nor oppressors could defeat. From Trepper's account, as a young and beautiful girl when they first met, Luba was not only a "born rebel" but one with a mischievous sense of humour; no respecter of authority. Having early in her career spent two periods in jail at the hands of the Palestine Mandate and the Jewish police, at a time when the Zionist Establishment regarded her and Trepper as outcasts, perhaps Luba sees a funny side to getting a medal now from the Israeli authorities!

For Trepper, who regarded the period when he was outwitting the Nazis and in constant danger as the finest hour of his life ("if I had to start all over again, I would do so with joy", he declared) perhaps an equally gratifying tribute came soon after he had left Poland, though it was unintended as such. The French security authorities deemed him still a dangerous character who must not be admitted to France.

Leopold Trepper epitomised a generation of Jewish militants won to the communist cause when the Russian Revolution was still young and uncorrupted. Despite all the pain and bitter betrayals, he never deserted the cause to which he had committed himself in youth, that of the Jewish people, of humanity and of socialism. He remained firm in his principles, and frank in his willingness to render a true account of what he had seen, however painful.

In 1973 at a meeting in Denmark he was asked whether he had not sacrificed his life for nothing. "No," replied Trepper. And he adds in his book: "No, on one condition: that people understand the lesson of my life as a communist and a revolutionary, and do not turn themselves over to a deified party. I know that youth will succeed where we have failed, that socialism will triumph, and that it will not have the colour of the Russian tanks that crushed Prague."

We must pay tribute to Trepper, not as a dead hero, but as living inspiration for those of us who must take up the struggle he waged. If we can recognise the continuity, if we can learn as much as possible from the lives of fighters like Trepper, this will not only be the finest tribute, but a vital asset in our own struggles, today and tomorrow.

POLISH JEWRY

Beyond the final chapter....

Polish Jewry has been given a new lease of life.
Stanislaw Warecki describes Poland's "new Jews"

When we think of Polish Jewry today, images come to mind of long-lost shtetls, the Warsaw Ghetto, or other nostalgic or tragic visions of the past. If we think of Polish Jews, we usually tend to imagine people living in New York, Jerusalem, London or Paris, whose ancestors came from that past. Geography and history do not seem to coincide. We do not usually imagine that the term "Polish Jewry" can refer to Jews living in Poland today.

But remnants of what used to be the greatest Jewish community in the world continue to exist in present-day Poland. Although not exactly thriving, this small group still considers itself as existing – and they vehemently deny that the last chapter of the history of the Jews in Poland has been written. In a paradoxical way, their challenge is supported by many Christian Poles, who consider that the history of their country is incomprehensible without an understanding of the history of Polish Jewry, and that the continued presence of Jews is important for the country.

The final chapter?

Hitler's Holocaust did not entirely destroy the Polish Jewish community. About a hundred thousand survived within Greater Poland – many of them thanks to the help of their Christian compatriots, and in spite of the efforts of other Poles, who co-operated with the Nazis. To these must be added some 150,000 returnees who survived in the Soviet Union. A wave of pogroms immediately after the war

made many of those who had decided to stay in Poland flee the country. Others left after 1956, when de-Stalinisation seemed to mean primarily de-Judaisation. This was due to the involvement of many Jews in the Communist Party and secret police apparatus. A final wave of Jews emigrated in the late sixties, following a government sponsored antisemitic campaign connected with a power struggle inside the Party. The ten thousand who stayed behind were too old, and too tired, to flee once again. They continued to worship in half-ruined synagogues, and tried not to be noticed. They were old, and were gradually dying out. It looked like the final chapter had been written.

The Poles did not seem to care. Anti-Semitism continued to be a common attitude. The Holocaust did not create, in Poland, a moral shock like it did in the West. Just as many Christian Poles as Polish Jews were butchered by the Nazis, and the vicissitudes of post-war Polish history seemed a convenient excuse for not engaging in national soul-searching. The situation changed, however, after 1968. During the political crisis of the time, the authorities attacked the intelligentsia, as violently as the Jews.

Feeling of solidarity

Common persecution gave rise to a feeling of solidarity. The Church too, which had been anti-Semitic during most of Polish history, had changed its attitude. In the early seventies a group of young Catholic intellectuals started organising

a yearly Jewish Culture Week in a Warsaw Church, during which objective and honest lectures and seminars alternated with voluntary work on the restoration of Warsaw's Jewish cemetery. Articles of Jewish interest – usually on a high scholarly level – started to appear in Catholic monthlies.

In the late seventies, within the framework of the growing movement for political and intellectual freedom, a Jewish Flying University (ZUL) was organised in Warsaw. This independent group, met each fortnight in private apartments, and discussed a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from Hassidism or the Kabbalah to the question of Polish antisemitism and Polish-Jewish relations during World War II. Some sixty persons were involved – half of them Christian Poles, half of them Jews – young Jews.

They all shared a common biography. Coming from assimilated families, mixed marriages, often with a Communist background, they all encountered the problem of their Jewish identity during the anti-semitic campaign of 1968. They were forced to consider themselves as Jews, and assuming that identity was a long and painful process for them.

Reconstructing Jewish identity

Almost none had any Jewish education whatsoever, or even an inkling of Jewish culture or religion. They discovered, however, that documentation was available – in libraries, in books brought from abroad. Like archaeologists, they started reconstructing their Jewishness from scratch. This brought some of them back to religion, while others assumed a secular Jewishness. Others still found their psychological problems were resolved through participation in the group and gradually dropped out.

However, for all those who stayed behind, the basic problem remained – what does it mean to be a Jew? They found that communication with the old-timers at the synagogue was often more difficult than with their Church-going Polish friends, that they did not want to stop being Poles, if this was the price to be paid for becoming Jews. On the other hand for many, the decisive factor in regaining their Jewish identity was a sense of loyalty to their past – and a sense of being vulnerable.

"My grandparents", said one, "came from a family who had been assimilated two generations earlier. They went to the Ghetto during the war and were surprised to find that their fate was the same as Jews with whom they felt no connection

They were murdered in Treblinka and, to me, their story means that your Jewishness is like a membership card which you can not return at will. My non-assimilated ancestors knew this, and throughout the ages they prepared their children by giving them sound roots in the history, culture and faith of the Jewish people. Assimilation and the Holocaust had broken this chain of tradition, and now I want to rebuild it. I consider myself free to choose my own form of Jewish identity, to become, if I want, a Pole of Jewish extraction, but first I need to know what it is in Jewishness which was so important that throughout the ages people were willing to die for it – and risk death rather than relinquish their right to pass it on to their children. I was brought up as a Pole and did not have a chance to choose. At least I want to have that choice."

Involvement in Solidarity

Their Polishness is an oft-recurring theme. Many of them were involved in the "Solidarity" movement or the groups which preceded it. For better or for worse they consider themselves a part of Polish society. For some, their political engagement has a religious basis.

"The way I understand Judaism", says another 'Zulnik', "the basis of Judaism is being God's witness, the witness of truth against falsehood. And here we have a nation which is trying to recover its

right to live in truth. Being with them in their struggle is my way of expressing my Judaism – I did not choose my date or place of birth. But this means telling the whole truth – and this is not easy."

Antisemitism is still prevalent in Polish society, and "Solidarity" also could not help expressing this dark aspect of Polish national consciousness. The philosemitism of large sections of the intelligentsia is far from representative of society as a whole. But then again, it too was expressed in the movement. And "Solidarity" did not hesitate to publish, in its national weekly, a long historical article – the first to be published in the Polish press – about the Kielce pogrom of 1946, squarely facing the question of the historical guilt of the Poles. On the other hand, an official policeman-turned-historian has recently published a book in which he attributed responsibility for the pogrom to "... a Zionist provocation".

The authorities' position is ambiguous. Although the secret police and part of the propaganda is overtly antisemitic, the authorities in 1983 celebrated with great pomp and solemnity the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and invited many Jewish delegations from abroad, including an Israeli one. Most of them came, regardless of an appeal for boycott launched by Marek Edelman, who was an "Uprising" hero and "Solidarity" leader. The consensus seemed to be

that Jews should not meddle in inter-Polish conflicts. The official Jewish delegations boycotted the unofficial commemorative ceremonies which were organised by "Solidarity" sympathisers, including ex-comrades-in-arms of the Ghetto fighters. On a day when there were more rabbis in Warsaw since before the War, the prayer for the dead of the Ghetto was recited, during the unofficial ceremonies, by a Catholic priest.

"Our place, our country"

Poland's "new Jews" continue to exist. They meet for shabbos or the Seder. They continue to debate among themselves, with Polish friends or visiting Jews from abroad the eternal topic of Jewish identity. Having emerged from Polish society, they have no intention of leaving the country. Although they strongly sympathise with Israel, they are not Zionists.

"This is our place, our country. Our cultural heritage – from Remuh to the Bund – makes sense only here. We are a part of Poland. So is antisemitism – true. But we are prepared to gamble on the future. In a free Poland there are many other people like us who would have the courage to regain their Jewishness. There still is a hope that we may stop being just a microscopic minority, and perhaps write a new chapter in the history of Polish Jewry. And the best of Poland is with us."

The Belgian Connection

On a recent visit to Belgium, Michael Heiser met Jewish socialists and took a look at their political activities, cultural institutions – and recognised some of the problems they face

The Union of Progressive Jews of Belgium (UPJB) is based in a three storey building in an old district of Brussels. Before and just after the Second World War this was a 'Jewish' neighbourhood; now many Jews have moved out to more suburban and salubrious areas. One of them, Forest, was apparently referred to as the 'Quartier Adenauer', in recognition of the number of Jews who had received reparations from Germany enabling them to buy flats there.

UPJB traces its origin back to Jews who fought in the Belgian resistance during the Second World War, and to the existence of an Ashkenazi Jewish Left which drew on the climate existing in Poland before the Second World War. There was an intense life where

Bundists, Jewish communists and socialist Zionists debated with each other and each had a whole network of cultural institutions.

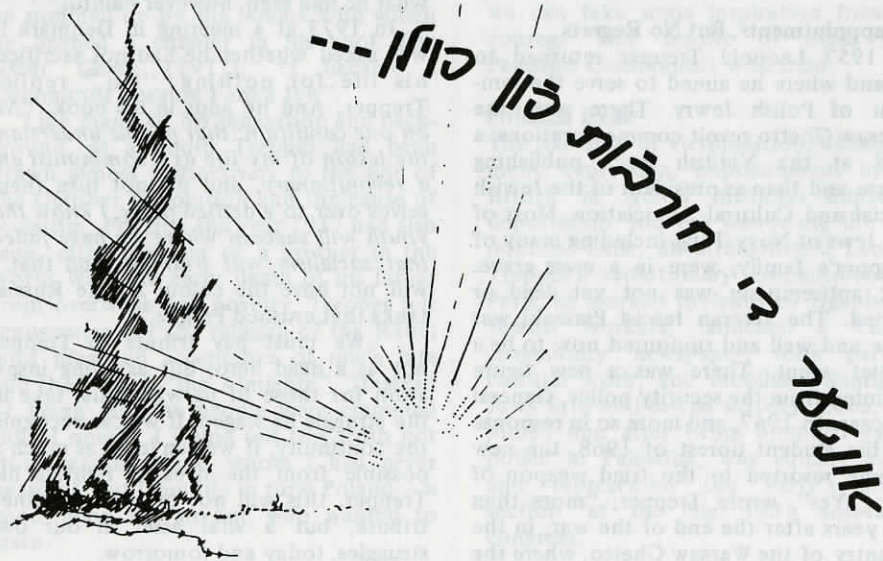
UPJB, at one time close to the Belgian Communist Party, but not now, has managed to keep important elements of this tradition alive into the 1980s. It runs activities for children from six to fifteen years of age and has its own country house in the Ardennes where holiday camps are organised which encourage autonomous self-development.

For adults there are a variety of social and political activities. UPJB has its own social area and coffee bar. In recent months it has hosted debates on the Belgian elections, a film about French communist Jews, and regular folk-singing

performances. For the older people, UPJB has its own Yiddish-speaking *Club Cholem Aleichem*, which meets weekly and has a variety of speakers on cultural and political subjects. UPJB takes part in demonstrations – it recently participated in the demonstration against nuclear missiles for instance.

Henri Liebermann, President of UPJB, believes that this structure, covering all ages, is an element of strength. The 30-40 year-old members who constitute the UPJB leadership have spent most of their lives in an UPJB environment.

The UPJB publishes its own quarterly magazine, *Points Critiques*. In the last year or so it has included features on Revolutionary Yiddishland, Jews in New York, immigrant communities in Brussels



and impressions of the orthodox Jewish community of Antwerp.

Just around the corner from the UPJB building is another Brussels Jewish institution, the Secular Jewish Community Centre (CCLJ), which has just celebrated its 25th birthday. It publishes a bi-monthly magazine, *Regards* and sponsors a wide variety of cultural activities. There is a restaurant in its premises, open five days a week and its own auditorium, where there are regular performances.

A look at an issue of *Regards* reveals a kaleidoscopic range of activities, again for all ages — a school on Sunday mornings, Hebrew lessons, a talk on Yiddish writers in the USSR and their tragic fate, not to mention jazz and self-defence. So secular Jewish life in Brussels looks alive and well.

But it is interesting to look at the differences between the two institutions. Style is one. Decorating its walls, UPJB has reminders of the Belgian resistance. CCLJ has pictures of life in Israel. Up to a half of the articles in *Regards* concern Israel and the Middle East; the articles in *Points Critiques* concentrate more on Jews in the Diaspora and the Left in politics.

It is revealing to note how each covered the recent Belgian general election. UPJB organised a forum with invited representatives from the parties of the Left — the Socialist Party (French and Flemish-speaking varieties), the Communists, the Ecologists, Christian Socialists and Trotskyists. The advertised themes of the meeting referred to debates about what economic and social policy should be followed in Belgium and in Brussels.

CCLJ, on the other hand, posed questions to representatives of all parties



Poster for anti-missiles march in Brussels. UPJB was there.

standing, Left or Right, which are answered in an issue of *Regards*. The first question was, "What is your attitude towards, and what solutions would you propose, to the Israel/Arab conflict?" The next question relates to the approach of different parties to national or religious minorities in Belgium. A number of spokespersons take the opportunity to refer to the need for "firm control of immigration" as a response to this! Jean Gol, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice (as well, incidentally, as being an ex member of CCLJ) says that "In times of crisis, all new immigration must be stopped." He is himself the author of a restrictive immigration law which anti-racist groups, including UPJB demonstrated against.

The approach towards the Middle East also differs. UPJB has long advocated talking to the PLO, and sponsored the first joint conference between Israelis and PLO representatives in Brussels.

CCLJ, though, adheres more, it would seem, to the line of the mainstream Left in Israel. Pride of place on its walls is accorded to a photograph of the President of CCLJ, David Susskind, meeting Anwar Sadat.

So CCLJ, whilst being by no means totally Israelocentric, is more so than UPJB. Their attitudes towards the organised Jewish community also differ. CCLJ is affiliated to the Co-ordinating Committee for Belgian Jewish organisations; UPJB is not.

In the words of a contributor to *Points Critiques*, Marcel Liebman, "Jewishness yes, 'Judeocentricity' no way." Elie Gross, a member of the Editorial committee of *Points Critiques* elaborated, saying, "UPJB sees itself as part of the Left and participates with the rest of the Left, for instance in anti-racist demonstrations. CCLJ is more orientated towards being Jewish as the sum total of its existence."

According to *Regards* journalist Bernard Sucheky UPJB has "problems with their Jewish identity. When they write about Belgian Jewry they write in terms of experience, of reminiscence. They do not analyse." However, according to members of UPJB, it seemed that they are "being Jewish" in their own way, and that way includes an involvement with the Left.

Antwerp is only 30 miles from Brussels, but has a totally different atmosphere. Although its Jewish community is smaller than that of Brussels (around 15,000 strong to Brussels' 25,000) it is much more concentrated and visible. There is a clearly defined "Jewish quarter", with many Hasidim in evidence. Yiddish is spoken in shops and restaurants. In a Kosher pizza parlour, the proprietress kept up a constant stream of conversation in Yiddish (with customers and their children), English and French (over the telephone) and Flemish (with the shop assistants).

In the evening I went to a Yiddish play, given by a touring company from Israel. The audience, of all ages, was appreciative. However, the loudest applause of the evening came when the principle character embarked upon an overblown paean of praise to the State of Israel which was quite irrelevant to the plot of the play.

Secular Jewish diaspora culture is alive and well in Belgium, but as in Britain it has to content with pressure from the twin poles of religion and Israel. But more so than Britain there is, at least in Brussels, a thriving network of secular Jewish institutions. Jewish socialists in Britain can take heart from their vitality.

THE GHETTO and THE GREAT WAR

Historian Julia Bush writes about the effect of the First World War and Russian revolution on immigrant Jews in London's East End.

The first World War faced many East London Jews with a cruel dilemma. Should they accept the *Jewish Chronicle's* advice and prove "more English than the English" in their support for Britain's war effort, or should they reject military service, since Britain fought in alliance with their Tsarist persecutors and against countries which contained large Jewish communities? When I spoke on this subject at a recent JSG meeting many people present felt the war service dilemma was significant for the present and the future: some knew that its historical reality had deeply affected their own families.

In 1914 internationalism was a living reality for the "Children of the Ghetto". About half of the 120,000 Jews in East London were foreign-born, including 35,000 Russians, 16,000 Poles, 6,000 Germans and Austrians, and substantial minorities from Holland and the Balkan States. Their community was described in 1903 by a Stepney Member of Parliament as "a solid and permanently distinct block . . . an enduring island of extraneous thought and custom". Immigration slowed in the wake of the 1905 Aliens Act. But though this induced a lull in organised antisemitism, there was every likelihood that the outbreak of war would revive and accentuate gentile fears and suspicions of the Jewish population.

In the first days of the war "German-Jewish" bakers' shops were looted. Widespread and indiscriminate violence against East London Jews' homes and property followed the sinking of the British passenger ship *Lusitania* in May 1915. As war dragged on and conscription was introduced (January 1916), their position as natural scapegoats became more and more intolerable. Non-serving Jews were seen at best as "shirkers" stealing loyal Englishmen's jobs, at worst as traitors. Accusations flew not only in the columns of the local press, but also during the semi-judicial proceedings of the Military Tribunals set up in each borough to adjudicate on conscription appeals.

In March 1917 local government and Tribunal representatives from all over East London urged central government to end the scandal of "unequal sacrifice", predicting serious public disorder if no action was taken. Their pleas fell on willing ears. Within days Whitechapel suffered something in the nature of an official pogrom: a police round-up of



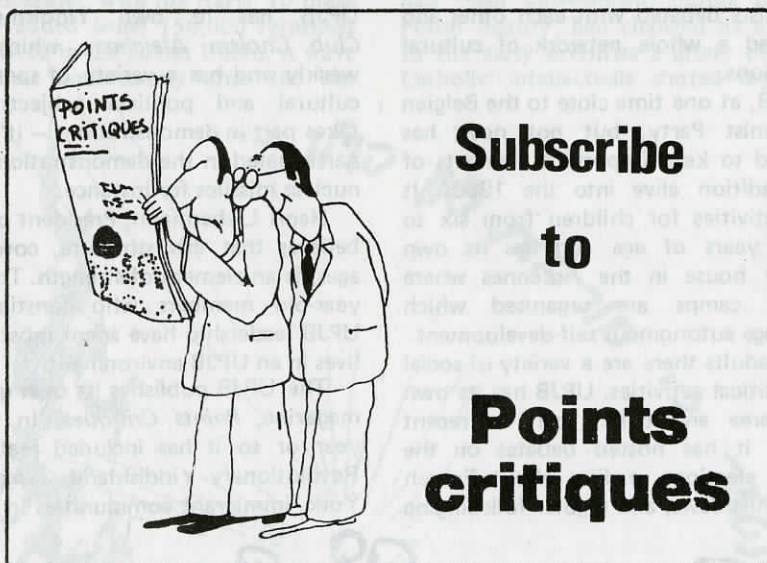
Jewish shop in East London during the Anti-German riots

thousands of young Jews on the pretext of a search for "alien eligibles" evading conscription. Nine men were eventually charged with evasion; a mere four were finally handed over to the army! A few weeks later the government enacted its earlier threat to conscript foreign Jews, deporting those who resisted to their countries of origin. Thousands chose deportation — a choice made easier for some by the Tsar's recent overthrow — while thousands more lodged final appeals which were still being processed when the Bolshevik revolution ended Russia's military involvement. The confusion and rancour surrounding East London Jews' war service continued to deepen to the very end of the war.

Yet, for all the virulently anti-semitic propaganda and occasional violence suffered by their community, many Jews experienced the First World War as a period of widening contacts with the world beyond the Stepney ghetto. Jewish resistance to conscription had been far from passive. Demonstrations in the public gallery were a regular feature at the hearings of the Stepney military tribunal. Resistance took a more organised form after the establishment of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee in July 1916. Representatives of a broad spectrum of Yiddish-speaking organisations attended the FJPC, with trade unions and socialist societies pre-

dominating. After a year's existence as an active campaigning body, the Committee was forcibly disbanded by the government and its leaders disbanded. However its stand had won it influential friends among British anti-war socialists. The Russian revolution redoubled the latter's enthusiasm for contacts with East London Jews of leftist and pacifist sympathies. George Lansbury, Sylvia Pankhurst and E.C. Fairchild of the British Socialist Party were prominent among the speakers at both Jewish and gentile rallies called to greet the revolution. Sylvia told an audience of 2,000 Jews that to her "the fight of the Jews Projection Committee on behalf of their compatriots was a fight for the freedom of every section of the British people".

At a less dramatic level, the growth of Jewish trade unionism during the war was also an important step towards closer collaboration with the English-speaking labour movement. By 1918 Jacob Fine's London Ladies Tailors Union was sufficiently well established to join the United Garment Workers at the TUC. War-time labour shortages helped all unions to expand and consolidated, and it became common practice for Jewish and gentile unions to present joint wage claims to the government arbitrators. The earliest unions to affiliate to the Stepney Labour Party



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(formed in 1918) were to include Jewish tailoring unions, Cigar makers, Boot and Shoe Operatives, Bakers, Costermongers and furniture makers.

Trade unionism provided the new local Labour Party with numbers and finance. But still more vital to its success was the political inspiration of its socialist affiliates, among whom Jews were equally prominent. Some joined up through the British Socialist Party to which the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation had formally affiliated after the revolution. Others came to the Labour Party from the Stepney branch of Lansbury's Herald League, also formed in 1917. Both groups took a strong stand against renaissance Zionism in East London.

As Joe Fineberg told a BSP conference, "Though both suffer oppression, there is no unity between the Jewish capitalist and the Jewish workman. The latter must ally himself with the workers in the country in which he lives".

In November 1919 Labour won a sweeping victory in the Stepney local elections; a few years later it achieved parliamentary victories too. But the achievements of the new Labour Party were only the most obvious sign of the gradual integration of the Jewish community into East London society. Integration at a non-political level was causing serious concern to local religious leaders by the end of the war. One Jewish chaplain wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle*, on the basis of his ministrations to East Londoners in France, "Men who before had lived a fairly Jewish life, will now, after these years of de-Judaising tendencies and influences, find it difficult to recover their faded Jewish consciousness. Army life has produced a sort of Jewish anaesthesia". The economic opportunities of war-time had also tended to undermine traditional customs and beliefs within the ghetto. So too, perhaps, had the homeward-bound departure of thousands of traditionalists, as well as Bolshevik sympathisers, in the wake of the Russian revolution.

It would be easy to overstate the war's responsibility for Jewish integration in East London. Doubtless integration was inevitable in the long run, as Jewish immigration slowed to a virtual halt and the first British-born, English-speaking generation of East London Jews grew to adulthood. But it is fair to claim that, for all the antisemitism it provoked, World War I ultimately accelerated the process.

Julia Bush is the author of "Behind the Lines - East London Labour 1914-19" (Merlin Press, £5.50).

SHUL FOR SCANDAL

She only does it
three times a year, but Dee Parker
enjoys every minute.

I know someone who enjoys going to barmitzvahs and weddings. When he admitted it rather sheepishly everyone was aghast. I don't as a rule enjoy "functions" either. (I once went to a shiva and, in a moment of confusion, said "Please God by you" to the bereaved.) But I do understand what he means.

I also like watching and listening to Jewish conversations. I like Jewish people. I don't always forgive them but I do like them. (There are of course exceptions - Rabbi Kahane, Topol, Sue Slipman.) Each year as Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur approach I announce my intention to go to synagogue. Non-Jewish friends are politely quizzical while Jewish friends groan in sympathy. But I enjoy going.

As children, though, it seemed we were the only family that drove to shul. My sisters and I would crouch in shame in my father's ancient taxi as it rattled past the devout and belched exhaust fumes at them. My mother was no better as each year she insisted the Rabbi's road was the only place she could find a parking space. The year she excelled herself and stalled the car by the synagogue forecourt.

We tip-toe into the synagogue where the murmuring is as grave as a court inquest. It is either prayer or a collective "mustn't grumble" but it provides a smooth backdrop to the chazen's (cantor's) lonely wailing. This harmony is occasionally interrupted by the choir who line the back row like the lads from the rugby club. The rest of the congregation

are mildly resentful of the boisterous bellows for they drag out the service. "Amen" has two syllables - one if you mutter just "min" to your navel. The choir pause and yell "Armeyen" - three syllables and six seconds.

We take our seats and watch relatives and friends mouth greetings or gesticulate wildly to half-asleep husbands. I look for familiar faces and note which of my contemporaries are now wearing hats. My mother whispers to me that a girl I was at school with is now engaged to a jeweller and wearing a ring the size of an ice-cube. (I think I'm supposed to be jealous.)

Despite the choir the service is concluded. The Rabbi gives a sermon that is beyond the comprehension and patience of several hundred bottoms twitching at the thought of overdone casseroles. However all is forgiven as we stand, sing and embrace each other.

But the bottleneck of people by the exit brings us to a halt and I am surrounded by Jewish conversation in quadrophonic.

"I couldn't talk for long, she was serving."

"All he ever says to me is I'm fat."

"She was in such a state."

"Yes, I thought it was your old problem."

"It was just after the barmitzvah - the photos came back and he said 'look at my face, it's all swollen'."

But above all the noise of my father's voice is booming across the forecourt:

"Where did you park the car?"

Continued from p13

trainers wielding too much power in sessions. Finally, Naomi Dale from the JSG, in agreeing with much of what Ahmed Gurnah had said, added that anti-racist training for trade unionists could serve a useful purpose.

Strategies for the future were the subject of our last session, with the speaker from the newly-formed Anti-Fascist Action, stressing the need to oppose the fascists on the streets. Sarah Magen, an activist from CROWD and Lespop, in a moving and hard-hitting speech, drew lessons from the anti-pornography movement to illustrate the need for us all to be committed, to learn from other peoples' struggles and to make them our struggles too. Michael Heiser, for the JSG, emphasised the need to mobilise Jews against racism, and to mobilise anti-racists against antisemitism. JCARP will be producing a publication which will include all the speeches made at the Conference. Look out for details.

Other activities we have been involved in include producing an anti-racist resource pack for use in Jewish and non-Jewish schools and youth clubs, and we have the support of the All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism in this project. We are attempting to find funding for a video about current day antisemitism. We contributed to the Pensioners' Link Jewish Awareness Day by providing our exhibition, a JCARP speaker and inviting a Jewish pensioner to address the meeting, and we have contributed the text for part of the exhibition on Racial Harassment which was displayed at the Racial Harassment Conference at County Hall in November. We have been involved in discussions with the National Union of Students regarding its Anti-Racist Roadshow, to which we will be contributing the exhibition and a speaker and we have made contact with the Anne Frank House in Holland which teaches people about both the history and the reality of antisemitism.

More publications are on the way - as well as the transcripts from the Conference, we will be publishing pamphlets on the politics of Yiddish by Barry Smerin and on Jews as an ethnic minority by Michael Heiser. In the meantime, David Rosenberg's *Facing Up to Antisemitism* is still selling well.

Next year will bring a Yiddish concert, a day school on the German Jewish experience, and we also hope to develop our relationship with the many and varied groups we have established links with. If you require any further information about JCARP, please contact us at JCARP, Southbank House, Black Prince Rd, London SE1 7SJ, 01-587 1506.

SOCIALISM AND NATIONALISM

Citizens and comrades - Socialism in a world of nation states by Brian Jenkins and Gunter Minnerup (Pluto Press, £4.95).

Socialism and nationalism have traditionally coexisted uneasily. Socialists are unhappy at appeals to patriotism and nationhood like those which emanated from Margaret Thatcher at the time of the Falklands/Malvinas conflict or with an opposition to the EEC that rests upon such concepts as "national sovereignty". Yet socialists support national struggles in South Africa, Ireland or Nicaragua. Frequently these are supported not in the name of nationalism but of internationalism, or rather using a *supra-national* theory (such as opposition to imperialism) to dictate which nationalism you support and which you don't. George Orwell ridiculed this school of thinking as one which supported every country except one's own. But the reverse trap, a sort of patriotic "little-Englandism" is equally unappealing.

So any analysis which sets out to untangle this confused web of theory, received ideas and moralising cannot but be welcome and Jenkins and Minnerup set themselves an ambitious task. They sketch out how socialist thought on the nationalities question evolved. Nationalism and the nation state are, according to them, products of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, but this process did not

occur smoothly or uniformly across the whole of Europe. In Western Europe the classic case was France, where there was a decisive break with absolute monarchy, which was replaced by a government based on a national-democratic ideology. But in Eastern Europe absolutist monarchies survived into the capitalist era and this was to influence the way socialist thinkers approached the question of nationalism and the nation state.

Marx and Engels, for instance, equated "nation" and "nation state". Using the Western European model as a prototype, they saw some nations as progressive and others as regressive. They supported Polish nationalism but saw Slav nationalism as backward. The socialists of the 1890s and 1900s, particularly in Eastern Europe, had to come to terms with a context where nationalist ideas enjoyed widespread popular support.

Austro-Marxists like Otto Bauer, operating in a multi-national empire, evolved a theory of national-cultural autonomy whereby different national minorities would coexist within the same territory and the same economic system but would have their own autonomous, linguistic, cultural and educational institutions. Lenin, on the other hand, rejected the demand of the Bund for autonomous status within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. As far as both he and Stalin were concerned, a nation needed to have a common language and territory. If a group did

not enjoy these it was not a nation. After the Revolution Lenin elaborated the theory of the USSR as a voluntary union of nations, each of which enjoyed the right to secede. But Lenin hoped they would not decide to exercise this right, and needless to say none of the nationalities of the USSR has thought it opportune to do so.

Jenkins and Minnerup go along with Lenin and Stalin in seeing territoriality and the desire to constitute a state as a crucial condition of nationhood. They write baldly: "Ethnic and linguistic communities which never develop the desire to constitute their own state are not nations." So nationalism is defined, "not as a state of mind or emotion", but as a "political movement and ideology dedicated to establishing a national state based on the notion of popular sovereignty." They go to pains to distinguish this concept from chauvinism or racism, which they see as the superiority of one's own country or group, understood in the terms of the ruling class or group. The nation state is, they admit, used by the ruling class to impose its own class interests on other classes. But nationalism as a movement can counter this, and thus have a progressive content. It is at the level of the nation state that the socialist movement is most developed. Ultimately, "the emergence of the citizens from their civil war depends on the victory of the comrades."

Yet this analysis leaves a number of problems unsolved. Firstly, by defining nationalism as a progressive movement, they fail to take fully into account the widespread currency of the term "nationalism" to mean what they would define as chauvinism. I would contend that it is not possible to separate the two concepts by definition in the way Jenkins and Minnerup do.

The centralisation of states and evolution of "national" cultures in and by these states has involved the suppression of the cultures and languages of various ethnic, regional or national groups in the interests of the culture and language of one particular group. This then becomes the "national" culture. It does not matter whether this precedes the institution of capitalism (as in Spain) or postdates it (as in Germany). In a capitalist state this process will work in the interest of the ruling class or group. For instance, "Spanish" nationalism is really Castilian and involves the suppression of the cultures, languages or dialects of the Basques, Catalans, Galicians or Andalusians. This "integralist" Spanish nationalism has been used by the Right in Spain to defend its own class interests. The same point could be made about France or Britain. Or to make it in a slightly different way, the nation state has used and distorted the national identity of one particular group in the class interests of the ruling group in that state. This has occurred both within

states and, in the age of imperialism, involved exporting this national ideology to enable European states to dominate large chunks of the globe.

This is why the Left is unhappy with concepts like German, British or French nationalism (and why these nationalisms have been exploited, with varying degrees of success, by fascists) but may see Basque, Scottish or Welsh nationalism as progressive.

Jenkins and Minnerup do, in fact, consider Scottish, Welsh and Basque nationalism. In each case they conclude that the comparative success of nationalist parties was due to the failure of either "capitalist conservatism or reformist socialism". So in Britain the success of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru in the 1970s was more a reflection of the failure of either the Conservative or Labour parties to appeal to Scots or Welsh people. This explanation sees cultural factors and national identity as determining why this should lead to support for nationalism in Scotland but not Tyneside, but attaches no more weight to it than this.

Here the weakness of Jenkins' and Minnerup's framework becomes most apparent. According to them the French Canadians are a nation, but the Italian Americans are not because in one case there is a movement to build a nation state but not in the other. But although there is undoubtedly a strong separatist movement in francophone Canada, the success at the polls of the Parti Quebecquois has not led to an independent Quebec (*pace de Gaulle*). One might speculate that this is because a majority of French Canadians wish to live in a culturally French environment with French institutions but in a federal state. The same point could be made with reference to support among SNP voters in the 1970s for devolution but not independence and the wish of Catalans and Galicians for autonomous status within the Spanish state rather than independence (although admittedly the support for ETA means that in the case of Euzkadi this is not clear cut).

So nationalism is not necessarily linked with a nation state. Nor need it be, on a strict basis of territoriality, as the Austro-Marxists, but not Lenin, saw. The Bund in the Russian Empire from its foundation to 1917 and in Poland up to the Second World War, articulated demands for autonomous national status for Jews, but not in a particular territory. Demands of Black Asian and Afro-Caribbean people in Britain relate to their cultural and national assertion but are not based on a particular territory. And the existence of the Jewish Socialists' Group and *Jewish Socialist* magazine are indications of the feeling, at least among some Jews that a group based on ethnic identity and a shared radical history is a valid form of organisation in the socialist movement.

A crucial weakness of Jenkins and Minnerup is that there is not one word about the position of ethnic or national minorities within majority ethnic or national groups. Linked with this, and also missing, is the notion of autonomy for a particular group within a wider movement. The only time it is touched upon is when the demands of the Bund for autonomous status within the Russian Socialist Party (RSDLP) are considered, but this is brought in more to show the context in which Lenin's ideas on nationalism evolved.

These two concepts enable us to assert that a person can simultaneously be a member of a particular ethnic or national minority and a citizen of the state of the ethnic majority — Black, Jewish or Scottish and British or Basque, Catalan or Galician and Spanish. The problems with this formulation relate not to the minority's identification with its own cultural or national identity but to the fact that the nationalism of the majority is bound up with the domination of a particular class through the mechanism of the State.

In fact I do think it is possible to construct, albeit painstakingly, a progressive British national identity — one which will have to be aware of the autonomous demands of minorities. But it certainly cannot be done by a "four legs good, two legs bad" type assertion.

Jenkins and Minnerup rightly castigate the British Labour movement for having been for too long the "junior partner of British imperialism" in terms of its attitudes towards, for instance Ireland or British membership of NATO. But they fail to make the corollary point that the attitude of the British labour movement and Labour Party towards ethnic and national minorities has been one of assimilation into the culture and national values of the majority. The resistance amongst large sections of the Labour movement to autonomous organisation has been shown recently by the hostility generated towards the idea of Black sections within the Labour Party.

Similarly, they rightly hold up to scorn the pusillanimous attitude of the Labour Party towards the abolition of public schools. But there is not one word of recognition of the demands of ethnic and national minorities for educational institutions that reflect their cultural aspirations, whether these are inside or outside the state system.

This book contains much valuable material on the history of socialism and nationalism. But because the authors follow Lenin in seeing a nation as a territorial entity, and because they consequently fail to see the applicability of the concepts of minority status and autonomy to the problems of socialism and nationalism they fail to answer satisfactorily some of the more pressing questions currently confronting the Left.

MICHAEL HEISER

"Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has not made me a woman," (Singer Prayer Book) — an inauspicious start for a woman looking for her place within Judaism. In this country the prevailing image of the Jewish woman is still of a home maker and mother. This poses a dilemma for women who have rejected being defined solely in terms of home and husband. Are we to reject the freedom and choices women have gained in the last hundred years or so, or are we to completely turn our backs on Judaism? Many women find their own individual compromise between the two, but all too often they feel guilty whatever they do.

There are, fortunately, more positive and assertive alternatives. As in many spheres of life, women are reclaiming their histories and seeking out information on strong women from the past who have been largely ignored or misrepresented by writers of patriarchal history. Once the tales of such women are more generally known and are told in in our own terms rather than from a male narrator's perspective, young women will feel there are more genuine choices open. By asserting that there are ways in which women can be culturally and spiritually Jewish in our own right, rather than being limited by other people's ideas, the way is open for more positive choices which don't make us feel deficient or guilty.

An important recent contribution to the discussion about possible ways of being a Jewish woman was *Woman of Worth*, a play devised by Yehudit, a group of women who are 'questioning and redefining our positions as Jewish women'. The play consists of a series of scenes, present and past, with songs and poems in Yiddish and Hebrew, punctuated by a flute accompaniment. Simply dressed in black, the cast take on a variety of roles with the minimum of props. They held workshops at each performance at which the audience and cast could discuss the issues which had been raised.

Exploring some of the contradictions between the position and status of young men and young women within Judaism, the action is centred around 12-year-old Deborah's *Bat Mitzvah* (confirmation) and it becomes obvious that, despite certain similarities, this ceremony is treated with far less importance than her brother Jonathan's *Bar Mitzvah*. Is the *Bat Mitzvah* simply a token ritual to redress the balance, or is it a genuine celebration of entering Jewish womanhood?

WOMAN OF WORTH

Sarah Heiser reviews a play which explores the contradictions between Feminism and Judaism and examines the choices open to Jewish women.

Deborah's mother is portrayed as a 'typical' Jewish wife and mother, and her daughter wonders if she's likely to end up in the same role. But other possibilities are demonstrated within the action of the play. At one stage Mrs Glassman, the Hebrew teacher explains to the girls how and why she goes to the *mikvah* (ritual bath). Another woman is seen praying with *tefillin* (phylacteries worn by orthodox women when they say their morning prayers). The question is raised: if a woman feels justified in taking on this role is there any reason why she shouldn't?

Deborah's current life is juxtaposed with scenes from the past in which historic, mythical and biblical women tell her about their concerns and aspirations. The themes of the imposition of a male perspective and of the women's worth and courage are brought out. In one particularly powerful scene, bearded rabbis stand in a semi-circle and tell Deborah what a woman is and should be.

The play was performed to a variety of audiences, from Jewish youth groups to groups of more disparate age and ethnicity. Diane Samuels, who played a leading part in the production of

"Woman of Worth", said that they found women were much more willing to talk amongst other women, but that they tended to remain silent in mixed discussions as men expounded on how "Women should . . .". Many Jewish women expressed enthusiasm, recognising elements of their own experience, and talked frankly about their responses and feelings. A few found parts of the play distasteful, such as the *tefillin* scene and the discussion on menstruation.

For non-Jews, the play was sufficiently accessible to be informative as well as enjoyable. To Diane the project has been about reclaiming visibility for Jewish women who are kept down in many ways — even more, perhaps, as a result of their English culture than their Jewish one.

The play aimed to show that the Bible was written by men from their perspective, rather than by God, and it reasserted women's right to describe the world from their own experience — an experience of equal worth to that of men. It has made an important contribution to the debate about different ways to be a Jewish woman in Britain in the 1980s.

WHERE WE STAND

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.

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

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