

DOUBLE
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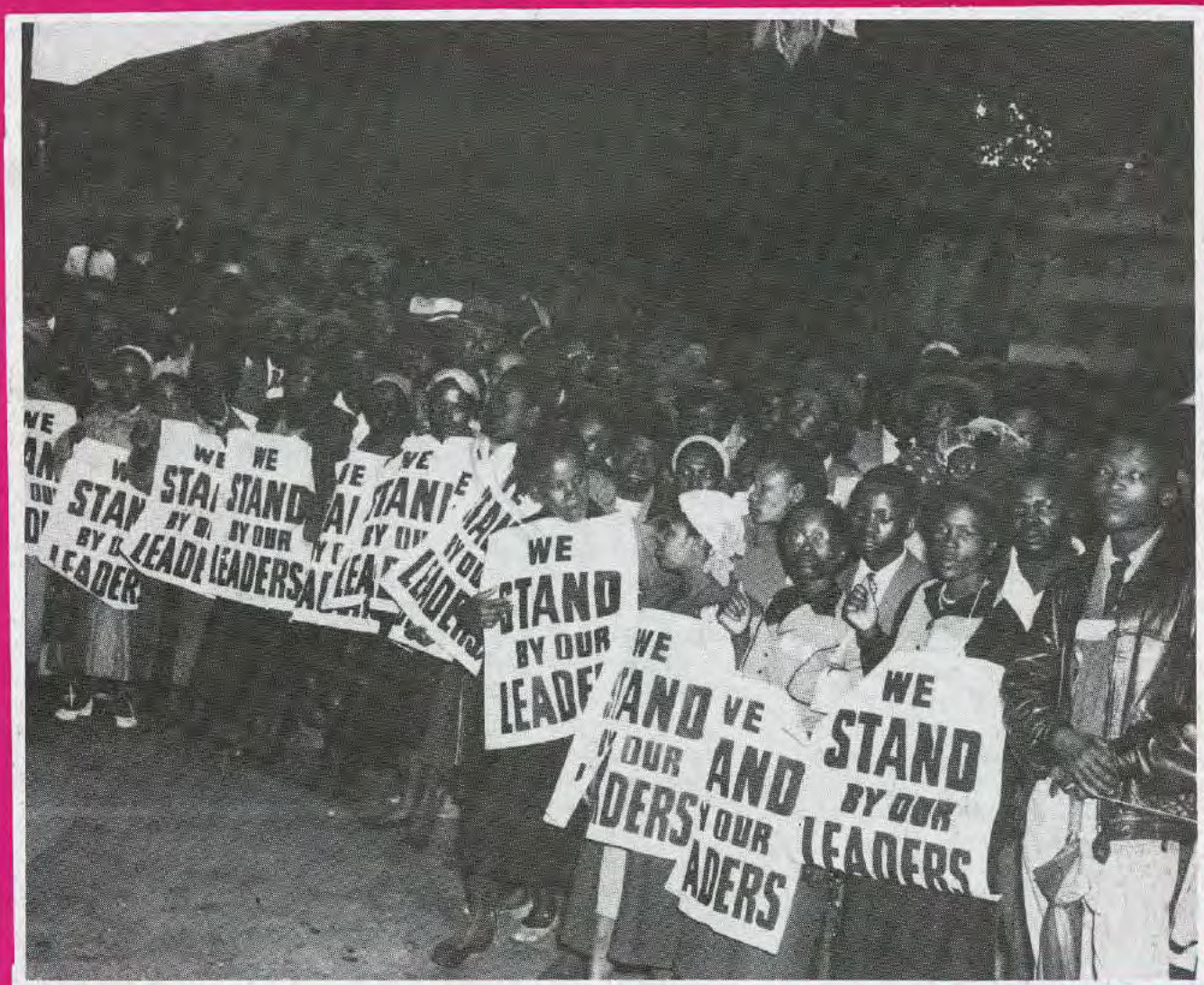
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SOUTH AFRICA: THE FINAL STRUGGLE?



ANC INTERVIEW

RELIGION IN ISRAEL

SPAIN—1936—CABLE STREET

Waldheim

The New Right

Fiction

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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EDITORIAL

All eyes are currently focused on South Africa where the white supremacist regime clings desperately to power. We are witnessing the demise of the most powerful institutionalised racist state since Nazi Germany. But the struggle is not over yet and in the midst of that struggle we must constantly remind ourselves of the reality of apartheid. Thousands are detained and tortured, people disappear in the night, infants are slaughtered, workers slave for all hours in appalling conditions for starvation wages, people are daily degraded and humiliated. This is the reality for Black South Africans who Thatcher wishes to protect from being "hurt" by sanctions. If they are seriously applied, sanctions will crucially weaken South Africa's economy and hasten the fall of the regime, but the weapon that assures victory in the long run is the courageous and determined mass struggle of those oppressed by apartheid.

In this issue longstanding South African activists — Ruth Ballin and Ben Turok recall the crucial battles of the 1950s, describe the imperatives of the struggle today and look at the role of South Africa's Jewish community. Many Jews have taken a brave stand as part of the liberation movement. Others have decided that they cannot risk that, but nevertheless are not prepared to continue living in South Africa. The vast majority though, at best by default, have tied their hopes to the survival of the white regime, and they will share its fate. Although South Africa's Jews are numerically declining they have been boosted in recent years by the influx of thousands of young Israelis. Israel's government and people will not be lectured by anyone on racism — they claim to understand it only too well. That young Israelis can go in such numbers to live in South Africa — after Sharpeville, after Soweto — suggests they yet have much to learn.

Like many other countries Israel has a close military and economic relationship with Pretoria. Israel's links are no more and no less reprehensible than any other State's. The danger for Jews though lies in any attempts to pressurise Jews here or elsewhere to support Israel's unhealthy relations, and in making assumptions that they should. The security and well-being of the Jewish people lies in supporting human rights, democracy, and combating racism and oppression wherever they are and whoever is in government. Over the years Pretoria's racism has fuelled and reinforced racists internationally. Francesca Klug's article is a timely reminder that while the struggle in South Africa may be entering its final phase, in Britain it is only just beginning.

September 1986

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Cover picture: Demonstration in Johannesburg demanding the release of defendants in the treason trial.

Photo: Eli Weinberg, IDAF.

NEWS

JEWS AGAINST APARTHEID

"Apartheid is state violence against people who are determined to be free," said Denis Goldberg, longstanding member of the ANC, and veteran of the South African prison system, at the inaugural meeting of Jews Against Apartheid in August. "It means people being shot down, arrested, tortured — dying under torture," he continued. "It means death, not only for the activists but for little children."

About 100 people — some unaffiliated, some members of a broad range of organisations — came together to express their commitment as Jews to the struggle against the Pretoria regime. As well as Denis Goldberg, Ester Levitan of Israelis Against Apartheid shared the experiences of her organisation, describing how the current crisis had generated joint action from a large number of organisations and political parties. "Israelis don't know what apartheid means," she explained, saying that their work ranges from teach-ins to petitions and demonstrations in an attempt to communicate the reality of South Africa and generate opposition to Israeli relations with the Botha government.

Jews Against Apartheid grew out of an initiative by Shalom Charikar of the Jewish Socialists Group which won the support of various groups in the Jewish community and has affiliated to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Representatives of all these organisations spoke to the meeting, including Mapam (The Israeli United Workers' Party), The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB), The Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG).

Naomi Dale of the JSG stressed the urgent need for an alliance such as JAA to ensure that Jews were not thought to be silent on the issue of racism. She drew links, both historic and current, geographically distant and close to home, between antisemitism and racism, apartheid and nazism. She also warned that we should not underestimate the pressure that will be brought to bear on the participants in JAA particularly from inside our own community, not to raise our voices too loudly as Jews who oppose apartheid.

While all the participants recognised that deep political differences exist between the various groups involved, they had high expectations that they could work together on this issue. Everyone agreed that the time and place to discuss and debate is alongside one another in the struggle against apartheid.

Further information from Shalom Charikar, 01-568 0971.

ANTISEMITIC ATTACKS ESCALATE

Further evidence of the increasingly serious nature of antisemitic attacks has emerged in recent months.

Searchlight has catalogued many of these incidents including attacks on Jewish cemeteries in Manchester and Liverpool, synagogues in Liverpool, Coventry and London, and Jewish buildings in London. In one attack on a Jewish cemetery, 50 headstones were sprayed with swastikas and SS insignia.

Schoolchildren are now in the front line in London with a series of assaults on pupils of the Jewish Free School (JFS). Initially the school's headmistress dismissed the incidents as inter-school rivalry with no racist motive, and predictably the police agreed.

As the attacks increased in scale — sometimes involving gangs of 200 children armed with knives and pieces of wood with nails in, and chanting National Front style slogans — the headmistress now concedes that the attacks are antisemitic. She also points out that 90 percent of parents seeking to place their children at the JFS after the first year cite victimisation as the reason for wanting to leave their present school.

JOE GARMAN MEMORIAL

On 20 April, Manchester Museum of Jewish History was packed with friends and comrades of Joe Garman, a founder of the Jewish Socialists' Group, who died last year.

From Spanish Civil War veterans to present day anti-fascists activists, everyone spoke of Joe's unstinting work and capacity to inspire other people.

Younger JSG members stressed Joe's ability to link different generations of Jewish socialists and pass on a militant tradition.

The wide cross section of Manchester Labour movement, as well as Jewish activists at the gathering was a tribute to Joe's lifelong work.

Thanks to the Friends of Joe Garman committee who organised the event, and not least to Diana Garman who seemed to manage a few words with everyone afterwards.

LONDON YIDDISH

FOLKSONG WORKSHOP

This workshop has been meeting fortnightly since July 1985. It will begin again after the summer vacation. No previous knowledge of Yiddish or music required, just an interest in learning, and learning about, Yiddish folksongs. Musical instruments welcome! Further details from Julia or Dave 01-482 2940 or Chaim 554-5112.

YIDDISH IN HACKNEY

An intermediate Yiddish class begins on 23 September at the Hackney Adult Education Institute, Woodberry Down Building (near Manor House tube). The class meets on Tuesdays, 10.15am — 12.15pm. £1 for ILEA residents.

LET CANON ABU EL ASSAL GO! — AN INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

Canon Riah Abu el Assal*, head of the Anglican Church in Nazareth, has been forbidden to leave Israel for one year, on administrative orders of the Ministry of the Interior. According to Minister Peretz, "his travelling freely is contrary to the security interests of the state".

Canon Abu el Assal, a Palestinian who has Israeli nationality, is also one of the leaders of the Progressive List for Peace — an officially recognised party with one Jewish and one Arab Knesset member — and of the Israeli Council for Israel-Palestine Peace (ICIPP), which has spearheaded for the last twelve years peace efforts between Israel and the PLO.

The International Jewish Peace Union asks all of you to contact the religious leaders of whatever denomination you may belong and to write to your own government, and address polite telegrams or letters of protest ending with the words, "Let Canon Abu el Assal go!" to the following: Mr Shimon Peres, Prime Minister's Office, The Kiryah, Jerusalem, Israel; Rabbi Itzhak Peretz, Minister of Interior Affairs, The Kiryah, Jerusalem, Israel; Department of Human Rights, State Department, Washington DC, USA.

*See page 34

JEWISH SOCIALISTS

A group of Jewish Socialists have begun meeting in Bristol. If you are interested contact Madge 0272-49903 (weekday evens).

The Newcastle Jewish Socialists began meeting a few months ago. They can be contacted through Henry 091 273 3868.

And even in Thatcherland there are plans to set up a local Jewish Socialists' Group. If you live in Barnet and are interested contact Frank 349 9586.

BEFORE SHARPEVILLE

South Africa is in the forefront of the news today but the struggle started a long time ago. Ruth Ballin, a white South African Jew, writes about her experiences in the 1950s.

History does not repeat itself. The mass struggle of South Africans, rural and urban, against the totality of apartheid is now manifest to the whole world. It is not new but what is different is the intensity in breadth and depth. The past campaigns, especially in the fifties, now appear on our television screens as archive material or are talked of by today's activists.

This is a partial and personal account of what I experienced in the fifties, one of a small minority who rejected the politics of white South Africa and joined the mass struggle of those denied any say or rights in their lives.

How and why did I change sides? While a number of those who unreservedly crossed the colour and political divide are Jews, they have come from a variety of communities. They included Afrikaners such as Betty du Toit and Braan Fisher (with a background which made him a front line candidate for a future Prime Minister, a road he totally rejected) and quintessential Brits such as Trevor Huddleston and Helen Joseph and hundreds more. Those who share my Jewish background are for the most part outside the Jewish community being neither religious nor Zionist, yet do not deny being Jews.

SOCIALISM AND ZIONISM

For my part I had a conventional Jewish upbringing within a liberal but orthodox framework. It was in conversations at home that I first heard mild criticisms of apartheid. I was told to speak courteously and mind my manners with everyone, including the servants. Colour prejudice was wrong in the abstract. Of Jewish persecution I knew rather more, well educated on the pogroms, the holocaust and, in terms of my own experience, the jibes and occasional fisticuffs at school.

As quite a young child I thought there was a vague parallel between colour prejudice and antisemitism but without a political context I was left believing that

all who had a minimal educational level should have a vote and that everyone should have a right to education. However, servants were taken for granted as was most of apartheid — it was the life I led — although the inconsistencies gradually became apparent. As a teenager I encountered some socialist ideas as a member of a Zionist socialist youth movement. A few years later I added to the socialism and dropped the Zionism. The total mismatch and, in personal terms, the hypocrisy of most of those I met before leaving home to become a university student became apparent. These were people who rejected the ideology of racism and who claimed to value people as equal and yet whose personal life styles and practices were sustained and based on apartheid. As a student in Johannesburg at the University of Witwatersrand, the contradictions, the socialism and a viable alternative soon became clear and I joined the Congress of Democrats (COD), part of the Congress Movement, today all unified under what was then its leading component, the African National Congress, the ANC.

The Congress Alliance at the time was made up of five movements: the ANC, the most influential, representing the largest number of South Africans; the SA Indian Congress (SAIC) with its two major bodies in Natal and the Transvaal, the NIC and TIC; CPC (the Coloured Peoples' Congress), COD and SACTU. COD had a tiny membership in comparison with the others, and many of its members were banned from active participation at meetings.

The decade was an active and turbulent one, beginning with the Defiance campaign through a succession of protests, demonstrations and strikes, building and mobilising membership and "ending" with the nationwide actions against the pass laws and the Sharpeville massacre. The militant activity and struggle had not included a recourse to armed struggle — but the '60s saw this decisive change with

the birth of Umkhonto We Sizwe, referred to popularly as MK.

SEGREGATION ON CAMPUS

Studies apart, political activity was in two spheres, overlapping but rather different: student politics and the national politics of the Congress movement. Two universities in particular in South Africa, Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and UCT in Capetown, had a liberal tradition, with socialist activists prominent among student leaders. They were also, until Government legislation ended this in the late fifties, "open" universities admitting on equal academic terms a few hundred African, Coloured and Indian as well as thousands of white students. Yet despite the fact that they were "open", as with much in South Africa there were qualifications. University residential accommodation was segregated; "academic freedom" did not extend to defying the apartheid laws of the land. Lectures and exams were shared and equal but sports facilities were for whites only. There were therefore many students, who did as I did and never used the swimming baths and tennis courts of the campus as we could not include our fellow Black students in such recreation. Socials were similarly restricted, because liquor was for the consumption of white students only. Needless to say we were not deprived of such occasions, as parties were held in private homes off the campus and, legal or not, we all shared the drinks on offer and, subject only to the occasional police intervention, socialised to the full as one does at such times, with scant regard to the colour bar.

There were also no Black students in faculties such as engineering. Even in medicine where study was equal, white students could do their hospital practical work in white or African hospitals, while Black medical students could not work in white hospitals, nor, when having passed their exams, did they earn the same rates of pay. Yet even so, the opportunities of



Photo: Eli Weinberg (IDAF)

equal studies, even with the invidious restrictions, were valued by the small number who were able to enrol. It was intolerable to the Government which in the late '50s legislated for separate universities. The majority of students and staff fought hard to keep the universities "open" with sit-ins and meetings and resolutions. The new legislation went through the minority and wholly unrepresentative Parliament but at least some of those who demonstrated learnt something of an alternative to apartheid. For students the slogans were of Academic Freedom and of "separate but unequal", as the US Supreme Court had stated in the course of the American Civil Rights' campaigns.

But national politics also had a place on the campus. Congress members put their case for an end to apartheid and on the left various socialist groupings debated and argued on the strategy and tactics of struggle and forms of the new South Africa after apartheid was toppled.

Congress mass activity was evident, sometimes on a national scale or in a particular area where people were evicted from their land to enforce the Group Areas Act. In Port Elizabeth, the Eastern Cape, then as today, there were trade union strikes, despite laws making these illegal. Towards the end of the '50s into the early '60s came the rural response, the Pondo Revolt so well documented and analysed by their leader Govan Mbeki, arrested at Rivonia and in his seventies, still incarcerated on Robben Island. His book *South Africa: the Peasants' Revolt* deserves to be read now for the insights it gives into the springs of political militancy in the Transkei, deeply rooted in a succession of struggles which continue in the mid-eighties. A similar

tradition of fundamental opposition was shown in the Greater Johannesburg area and the Rand, in Moroko, Jabavu and other townships now part of what is Soweto.

Now high points in the history of the fight to end apartheid, five campaigns and events in particular stand out. Education is a recurrent focus of opposition; Soweto in 1976 was by no means the first protest. In the mid '50s the campaign against the extreme form of inferior "Bantu Education" resulted in thousands of children being withdrawn from government schools where risible syllabuses and conditions were enforced. As unregistered schools were illegal scores of alternative schools, called "cultural clubs" were set up in the open air with the red dust as slates. Equipment was collected and young women ran them for a while as a protest against the pernicious so-called education which was on offer under apartheid. Educational materials were collected and clubs were visited and supported. The struggle could not be sustained permanently but while it lasted it was a visible demonstration against schools for servitude.

MASS PROTESTS

In 1956, having helped with the run-of-the-mill office work which is behind all political campaigns, I joined 20,000 women from all the corners of the country in a mass demonstration at Union Buildings, Pretoria, the administrative centre of Government. It was organised by the Federation of South African Women and led by, among others, Lilian Ngoyi and Helen Joseph. We filled the show gardens and walked proud and angry under the purple jacaranda trees with petitions against passes

for women. Women, children and babes filled the amphitheatre and sat en masse in silence followed by a mighty burst of song telling Strijdom, the Prime Minister, "You have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed." There was a magnificent rendition of the real national anthems, and, shades of Jericho, the surrounding walls seemed to judder as frightened civil servants peered nervously down and saw the potential power of the South African masses on the move.

The Congress of the People, again an event which had involved tens of thousands of people, drew up, met and endorsed the Freedom Charter at Kliptown in 1955 and was attended by delegates from rural and urban areas from many parts of the country. The following year came the treason trial of 156 people held at first in the Johannesburg Drill Hall. Four years later all were acquitted. At this time, with many leaders out of action, I helped run the COD office so that my day was often divided between the university campus, the office and the Drill Hall. Opposition continued, despite the treason trial, although on the university campus some students were wary of visible commitment — the regime rule of fear affected some — but the townships' protests continued with the Alexandra Bus Boycott where virtually the entire population voted with their feet and refused to ride in buses of a monopoly company which charged inflated fares. Instead they walked over 20 miles to work daily.

Within a few months of my arrival in England to study came Sharpeville, and the State of Emergency. A few of us here responded to the Congress call and founded the Anti-Apartheid Movement now active in many countries.

At this time a fellow student, a brilliant young lawyer, Ishmael Mahomed, once said wistfully of the Treason trial then in progress, "One day if apartheid has not ended I would like to take on the defence like Becenge and Maisels." (They were leading advocates. Among the solicitors was the firm of Mandela and Tambo.) In 1985-86 in Pietermaritzburg there was another treason trial and like his predecessors, Mahomed as defence gained acquittal for all on trial. The Rivonia trial of 1964 and its aftermath sent hundreds of activists and leaders to Robben Island. Since then many have been killed or tortured while under interrogation and detention. The Soweto uprising is a decade back. Now, under the current state of emergency, apartheid in its last phase has increased in brutal intensity. The cosmetic changes are exposed for the sham that they are. It seems clear that the South African people have now a confidence in struggle which will not cease until the power structure on which apartheid stands is destroyed.

The ANC cry, "Amandla Abawethu," power in our hands, is in the process of becoming a reality. □

SOUTH AFRICA

Ben Turok has been active in the struggle for liberation in South Africa for the last 40 years. He was formerly National Secretary of the Congress of Democrats, which was allied to the African National Congress (ANC). As a result of his activities against the apartheid regime, he stood with Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and others in the treason trial from 1956-60. He later served three years in Pretoria Prison followed by a period under house arrest. He has lived in England since 1969, continuing to be active in the ANC, and is now the director of the Institute for African Alternatives. *Jewish Socialist* interviewed Ben Turok about the current political developments in South Africa, the issues facing the liberation movement, and the role of the South African Jewish community.

JS: What is the background to the current situation in South Africa and where do things stand at the moment?

BT: There was the big school demonstration in Soweto in 1976 followed by a relatively quiet period as the crack-down had effect. Now there has been a build up again particularly since the creation of the United Democratic Front. People had thought that the only politics possible was underground, but they really broke through the legal barrier. That enabled people to come together and mobilise in a new way and created the new momentum.

JS: In the last year we have seen states of emergency declared. What is the nature of the current threat to the regime?

BT: The Government tried to go for a policy of cosmetic reforms. They realised that the feeling among the Black population was very strong so they tried the democratic tricameral parliament approach. The Black people as a whole saw through it, (not to say everybody) and

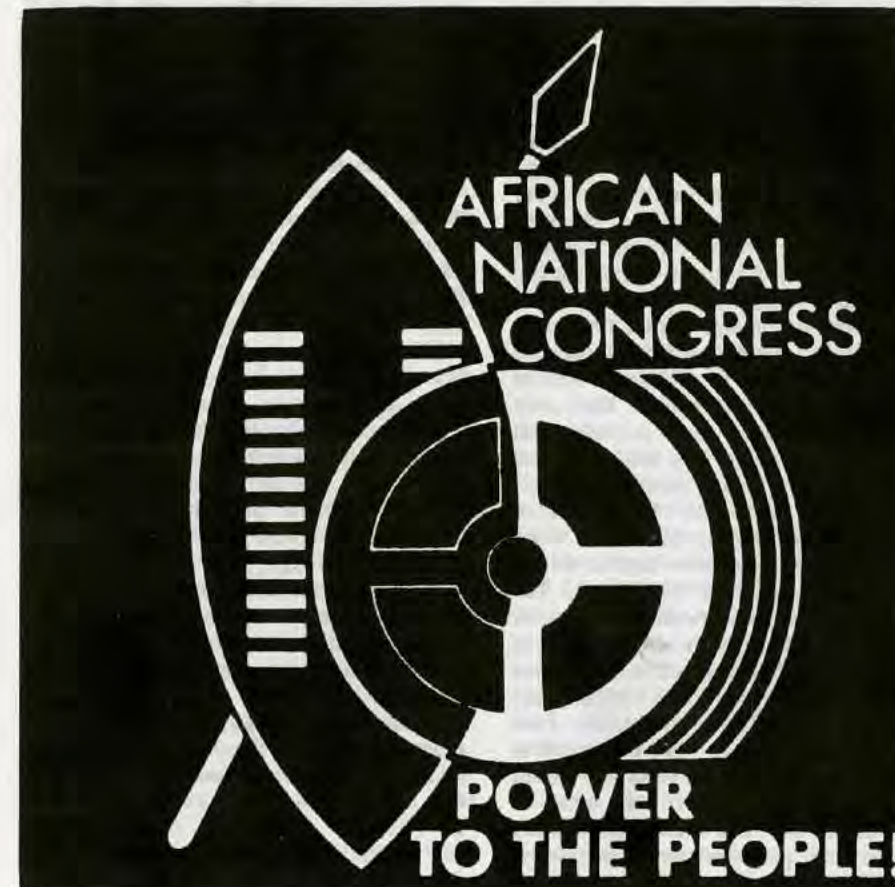
mounted a campaign against these "reforms" which they saw was a hoax and a diversion. The Government kept talking about reform while using repression. The people rallied behind a rebellious mood and now from the Government's point of view, the rebellion has got out of hand. What was initially supposed to have been a process of "adjustment" has turned into a process of revolution. In the townships there are many no-go areas where the young people in particular are in command and they have taken two steps. One is they are cleansing the townships of collaborators. That is a very nasty business which has the aspect of Black on Black violence. But in most cases it is violence against collaborators, police informers, policemen, or Bantu authorities personnel. These are really state personnel and it is not really Black on Black violence at all. The second aspect is taking on the authorities. There are some arms in the townships but most of the actions against the authorities are in the form of mass

riots. There is an element of spontaneity and an element of community about it and deep hatred of the authorities. These two things now happening are bringing a very serious crisis into the system because the Government doesn't know how to handle it.

JS: What are the options for the Government and what pressures does it have to face in its own terms?

BT: The options for the Government are very limited in their own terms because they are afraid of the right — there is a serious right-wing backlash — they're very afraid of the mass struggle, and they are also extremely afraid of the international community. Don't be misled by the seeming coolness of the regime about sanctions. They are extremely worried. It could be the thing that turns the balance of struggle against them, and they know that. We have always said that there is no middle way with this regime. The options are closed off and they have increasingly closed them off themselves.

The Final Struggle



been very good at preventing the emergence of such a fascist movement. Our movement has always debated whether South Africa is fascist or not. One argument against calling it fascist is that unlike Germany, Italy, or Spain had, it does not have that grass-roots mass movement among the civil population. It depends on state institutions, and apparatuses to maintain its power. Now a new development is emerging, a force critical of, and even opposed to, the state itself, standing to the right of the state. This could well cause a rupture within the state apparatuses between those who remain loyal to the regime and those who don't. It is extremely alarming because if it happens it will take the Argentinian form of killings in the night. It is already happening. Groups of men with balaclavas are attacking members of the UDF or other groups and pretending to be something else. We suspect they are vigilantes who might well be Special Branch acting privately, in alliance with the AWB. Whereas before, the state apparatus was itself responsible for repression, we are now having a fracturing of that repressive apparatus. It is very alarming because there is no defence against it.

JS: Do you think the fascists have a potential mass base?

BT: Yes. As the crisis deepens and unemployment hits the whites more, the chances are that these white workers, who are lumpen anyway, will not turn left because that option is for them one which would undermine their privilege, but will turn right because that they will see as a kind of Chilean solution.

JS: What are the main issues now for the liberation movement?

BT: To build grass-roots support and to facilitate and increase people's power at the grass-roots in the townships. That people's power is the natural sea within which political activists may swim. It is the environment in which militants can survive police action. It is the natural environment which limits police power because police and their informers and Government institutions of control can't operate, and also because the military cadres of the ANC are able to survive. Without a friendly border it is extremely difficult for underground activists, either political or military to survive, and the casualties are high. But with people's

JS: Presumably though there are some reasonably far-sighted big business interests that would want change brought about in as peaceful a way as possible. Have their options been closed off?

BT: Less so. South African business has been very loath to say anything or do anything politically which would in any way diminish the activities of the state but in recent years business has become very worried that this state can no longer protect their interests. This is even more the case abroad, particularly in America, and that is why they are beginning to disinvest quite substantially. Many big international financiers, rather than disinvest, would put pressure on the state to change. Pressure could grow and become very significant in what the Government does. This is a fragile government, vulnerable on the gold question, vulnerable because it is a trading country, and vulnerable because of communications. It's a modern country, dependent on

supplies, materials and business intelligence from abroad. If it was isolated it would be hurt very much. With government big business could pull a lot of clout. Very recently the Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Industry in South Africa made a statement calling upon the Government to change apartheid, to change certain rules and call off the state of emergency. Public declarations have been made for years, and the Government has never taken them seriously because the business community has never been willing to back it up with political activity. If the business community were to give a large amount of money to the United Democratic Front to facilitate its work, then the Government might sit up.

JS: We have witnessed the recent growth of a neo-fascist movement, the AWB. How much support do they have among the army and the police?

BT: It is hard to tell because the South African Government over the years has

power must come the greater effectiveness of the political, military and the industrial struggle. The struggle is multi-faceted and requires many directions rather than any single one.

JS: The clampdown has hit the trade unions heavily. The trade union struggle has not generally been highlighted in South Africa. Is the Government from its point of view hitting the right target?

BT: In 1973 after many years of silence there was a spontaneous development of trade unionism and strikes. The Government was alarmed. Conditions were deteriorating, living standards were falling and the workers reacted. The Government created several commissions of enquiry which recommended creating institutions for the control of trade unions. The law was substantially amended and in that gap of legality and permissibility there developed trade unions on a large scale. The Government thought they could co-opt them and control them. So there very rapidly grew COSATU, this huge confederation of 600,000 workers. The Government have now had second thoughts because COSATU has emerged as a political movement, allied to the ANC. Its leadership is, from its point of view, dangerous, militant, and by no means confining itself purely to factory disputes, so they recently cracked down very hard. It has a clear policy now to smash the top as they did in 1963. We are seeing the repeat of a cycle; stagnation, then a spontaneous eruption and development of a political movement, then the Government crackdown and so on.

JS: Are there signs that this cycle will be different?

BT: It is hard to say, when you lock up five thousand trade union officials, whether that will smash the union. The answer lies in the temperature in the townships and factories at grass-roots. The evidence is that the feeling in the townships is very strong. We hear daily reports of deaths from official sources. It would seem on the face of it that the rank and file are determined to carry on the struggle with or without their officials.

JS: How important is the international move towards sanctions?

BT: The economy has taken a terrible dive. The financial Rand is now at seven to a pound. It used to be one and a half. The Rand is worthless internationally and South Africa is above all a trading country. Its books have only been balanced by virtue of the export of gold. Now the gold price is down, the currency is almost worthless so exports don't earn much. The economy, though internally strong (there is a big productive base), internationally is very weak. They could screw down the hatches and hold the whole thing down at a very low level but that creates problems too because the South African whites are only there for the luxury. If there is no luxury they won't stay or they won't defend it. The key lies in what the banks do. The failure

of the Swiss banker Litwalle to create a situation where there would be a fairly mechanical provision to enable South Africa to roll-over its debts again and again, is very meaningful because it means that the international community are very alarmed. It could be that Mrs Thatcher's last political action in office is to defend international finance.

JS: Is the international community serious about sanctions? Can sanctions be effective?

BT: I remember the days after Fidel Castro took over in Cuba. American sanctions nearly smashed the country. Because it was a trading country with the United States, when the embargo was imposed, it almost crushed the whole thing. Cuba survived because they got socialist aid from Eastern Europe. I was in Southern Africa during Smith's last years and sanctions were doing enormous damage to that economy. Smith put his hands up finally because the economy was crumbling. People say sanctions don't work. The only reason they didn't work initially was because South Africa was bailing it out. Without South Africa Smith wouldn't have survived a week. Even limited sanctions of a serious kind can work with a big country like South Africa which doesn't have a big friend. The significance of the African actions over the Edinburgh games must be seen in that way too. These Black states which actually trade with South Africa, are not going to bail South Africa out.

JS: We've talked about the Government and the far right and we've talked about the liberation movement, but what of the groups in between such as Buthelezi's and also the parliamentary opposition, the PFP? How are they to be understood and what is their role?

BT: Buthelezi has put himself in the camp of the Government as part of the forces of law and order. His actions are very violent against the UDF. These vigilantes have killed people and broken up meetings. His future is very much tied up with the survival of the regime. Of the PFP some of them, like Helen Suzman, deserve full credit for having taken a very good stand over the years on many issues like human rights and prisoners. She has shown a lot of courage and done a great deal for Nelson Mandela. Of course she is not on the side of liberation but of reform and her policies are still rather 19th century. Her moderation is that of 19th century laissez-faire liberal philosophy and politics, so in the South African situation, pretty irrelevant. As is Slabbert and all the rest. Perhaps they want to see a change in society, at least the weakening of apartheid and white supremacy, but really they belong to a different epoch. They don't seem to realise it or if they do they are not brave enough to do anything about it.

JS: Will they be squeezed out?

BT: No. A grand coalition of democracy

is growing and, these people, like the Black Sash and the Institute of Race Relations are quite important. Liberal established institutions add weight to the democratic side. They are not a substantial political force; they can't bring battalions to the struggle. The polarisation is between the state and the ANC. But the possibility of additional forces coming on to the side of democracy is there and that is why the ANC talks to these people, and with the churches. The ANC talks to Afrikaans students as part of an attempt to build a democratic alliance in which the ANC is leader. We wouldn't follow behind the PFP or Helen Suzman, but if they are willing to identify with democracy and liberation, good, we don't push them away.

JS: How representative of the PFP is Helen Suzman. We have heard another PFP MP, Harry Schwartz, putting a different line.

BT: It is not really a single party but a broad coalition. I cannot say how representative she is but she is its most senior and respected personality. She has a huge support in the Jewish community, and in the white community as a whole. Even people who feel she is not left enough, as I do, give her full credit for what she's done. If one is to put on a scale Harry Schwartz and Helen Suzman, there is no question as to who is the more influential personality.

JS: How would you characterise the recent history of the Jewish community in South African politics? What has their role been and what could their role have been?

BT: I think it is a very sad history that doesn't make one proud of the performance of South African Jews. It's sad on two grounds due to two factors. The first is Israel. The Jewish community mistakenly identified very closely with Israel; they gave an awful lot of money to Israel and became caught up in that whole exercise, so that their own interests in South Africa and their own allegiances, political alignments, in South Africa became mixed up in a cold war outside of South Africa. It was a total distraction from their own interests. Israel became a distraction and a distortion for what might have been a better role for the Jewish community in South Africa. With Israel's collaboration with South Africa, training South African Special Branch, collaborating in Intelligence fields, the arms trade, even supplying nuclear information to South Africa, this has put the Jews in South Africa in a bad light and a bad position. The second thing is the internal aspect. The Jews in South Africa, like all whites, were faced with the challenge: are they on the side of human rights and democracy or on the side of white privilege? The great majority of Jews chose white privilege which inevitably meant a certain

alliance with the authorities; the Jewish Board of Deputies collaborated with the National Party — Verwoerd and subsequent leaders, privately and even publicly. It gave money to the National Party. It is quite extraordinary that the Jewish Board of Deputies and Jewish senior people should give money to a fascist party. They have made their bed in a way that will tell in the future. This is not to deny that many Jews have been active in the liberation movement. There have been some very heroic personalities who have, as democrats, identified with the struggle of the Black people and still do so. Even now among the students in the universities there are a great many young Jewish folk who demonstrate, who go to prison, who stand up, who have had a damn hard time.

JS: How did Jews like yourself arrive at that position and involvement? Did you come from socialist backgrounds?

BT: Yes. My parents were Bundists and they belonged to the Jewish socialist movement in Russia, so I grew up in that environment. Socialism was certainly not strange to me and my Jewish upbringing was extremely Yiddish. I still today read Yiddish. What I reacted against to some extent was the ghetto character of that Yiddish life. The Yiddishisten in South Africa buried themselves away in this culture. Because they were not friendly to Hebrew or Zionism they were a small community within a small community with a small scale, introspective way of life. I wanted to be part of the world. That introduced me to a broader conception of socialism and brought me into closer touch with the progressive movement.

JS: Did most radical Jews come from socialist backgrounds?

BT: Every case was different. But there was good reason for a young Jew who was a socialist to become involved in the liberation movement. It was a breaking away from a very nasty society, which everybody recognises to be rotten and diseased. Anyone with a conscience and a feeling for change would naturally look to the ANC, the UDF, especially as the organised Jewish community was so negative.

JS: Did you feel you have to choose between the Jewish community and the liberation movement?

BT: Yes I did, because the Jewish community was not moving in the right direction. The Jewish community was extremely self-contained and inward looking. This personally made me dissatisfied. I wanted to get beyond that horizon. I never rejected Yiddish. It's the limits on the horizons I resisted.

What baffled me was that the concerns of this Jewish community were to do with pre-revolutionary Russia. There were endless discussions about what Trotsky said to Lenin, never related to the real conditions of South Africa at all. Secondly I became increasingly aware

of the reality of how the colour bar was operating in the country around me. I couldn't see how the Jewish commitment matched with that. It seemed to be a different world. I knew I was growing up in South Africa, faced with these problems, and that I just couldn't wish them away, as my parents had. **JS:** Some Jews who are on the side of liberation have expressed fear about antisemitism in the liberation movement. Is this fear groundless?

BT: There is no history of antisemitism in the liberation movement. I can't recall any antisemitic incidents. The movement has got much bigger problems to worry about! There is no social basis for it. If you are going to choose a scapegoat, the Afrikaners, the Boers, are a much better scapegoat than the Jews. I wouldn't have thought that the role the Jewish community has played over the years, politically, is going to be a serious problem either. I don't think people are going to say, "yes, we know the Jews were on the other side and therefore..." — the real enemy is far too big and powerful to worry about that. If there is any attack against Jews it will be because they are white and elitist rather than because they are Jews. **JS:** Can the confusion of Jewish interests and Zionist interests affect this?

BT: The ANC is a very sophisticated movement and it distinguishes between people and parties, between populations and systems. Is the ANC anti-white? It isn't. It's anti white-domination. The ANC goes back 70 years and people have had a long time to distinguish between individuals and a particular population group and the system. You don't become a racist in fighting racism. Of course there will be incidents but I don't see that Zionism and South African Jewry are going to be identified. At the same time South African Jewry have sometimes been very unwise in the way they have publicly identified with Israel. When an Israeli leader comes to South Africa the Board of Deputies fall over themselves to be nice to them; these men who have collaborated with the South African authorities, the police, South African Jewry does play an extremely unwise role in relation to them, in terms of their own future. That might provoke a certain reaction but I don't see it as a major problem.

JS: Has the liberation movement approached the Jewish community?

BT: I had a meeting with Gus Seron, the General Secretary of the Board of Deputies in the 1950s, when one saw the way things were going. This period was important because there were a group of backbenchers in the National Party who kept attacking the Jewish community in Parliament and were trying to get the Government to take an antisemitic position. Verwoerd was rather careful because he knew he had passive support from the Jewish community

and didn't support antisemitism too much. But in that atmosphere there was a considerable amount of antisemitism in the Afrikaans press, for example, the classic figure in the cartoon was "Hoggenheimer" (Oppenheimer, a Jew) — a big fat man with a big nose, moneybags, — this was the classic Jewish financier. In that environment of antisemitism I went to see Gus Seron on behalf of the ANC. I said to him that the future was clearly running against white domination and surely the Jews would at least make a sign of their democratic and anti-racist positions, but he wouldn't have it. He said at a personal level he agreed, but at an official level the Jewish community was so vulnerable because they were all in business and they needed import licenses and export licences and they also wanted to have the right to send money to Israel and therefore they had to be seen to be friendly to the regime. That line has persisted ever since.

JS: Could they not have supported the liberation movement in a covert way?

BT: They wouldn't do it because they thought it would get out. We were not asking for any major demonstration. We wanted the Jewish Board to give some recognition to the fact that the Black people of South Africa had legitimate aspirations. We were not asking them to get guns and fight. We were asking them to make some gesture of recognition. They refused to do that. **JS:** Finally, what should Jewish and non-Jewish socialists here be doing now in relation to South Africa?

BT: Get stuck in on the sanctions question. This is the issue of the day. At a broader and more long-term level, Jewish socialists should get closer to the ANC and build a positive relation of solidarity. A certain modest material support for the ANC school in Tanzania — that kind of aid is very much appreciated. The ANC gets an annual grant of five million pounds from the Swedish Government, and a very large grant from the Dutch Government. We also get an enormous amount of material aid from the socialist countries, but the aid from Western governments is all restricted to certain "humanitarian", "educational" functions. The ANC is looking for money that is not tied. In the sense that you are a part of the wider socialist movement in Britain, we must get a commitment from the movement, in particular the Labour party, to a policy which will stick. Labour governments and the trade union movement have had their weaknesses as they admit. Not long ago they recognised the white trade union federation and not the Black one. Socialists in Britain whether in or out of the Labour Party have got to make damn sure that a future government of the left in Britain will stand firm on South Africa notwithstanding the fact that Britain will remain capitalist under Mr Kinnock. □

WALDHEIM'S AUSTRIA

Kurt Waldheim's electoral success following the World Jewish Congress revelations of his complicity in war crimes shocked many people outside Austria. To understand it, John Bunzl argues, we must look at the "privileged" treatment Austria received after the War.

In order to understand post war Austrian history, and recent developments surrounding the Waldheim affair, it is necessary to go back to what the Germans call *Lebensluge*, a basic lie about one's existence. Understandably, Austrians do not want to be reminded of some of the following truths. The removal of Austrian independence by the *Anschluss* of 1938 did not remove Austrian responsibility for Nazi crimes; from this date onwards they shared the responsibility with the Germans. There was no resistance to speak of against the *Anschluss* although Austrians must have known of the inhuman measures Nazi Germany had taken between 1933 and 1938 for instance the Nuremberg Laws. Leading Austrian figures like the socialist Karl Renner and Cardinal Innitzer (for the Catholic camp) greeted the *Anschluss* without being forced to do so, thus giving legitimacy to the new state of affairs.

Therefore the vote of over 99% in favour of unification with Nazi Germany and Hitler in the plebiscite held on 10 April 1938 did not reflect just coercion and manipulation. In which other conquered countries could plebiscites be held at all? Where else was the male population recruited to the army (Wehrmacht) on a universal basis? Finally the notion that the liberation of Austria from Nazi rule came from outside and from above. Indigenous resistance was no stronger than in Germany itself or in the Sudetenland.

In spite of these facts, Austria was treated differently from Germany at the end of the War. Germany was punished (perhaps mildly), suffering partition,

ostracism and reparations. But Austria was "rewarded": no partition; no ostracism; few reparations. This privileged treatment was achieved, superpower considerations apart, by a reinterpretation of the *Anschluss*. The accomplice posed as victim! Here was the basis of a new Austrian patriotism that allowed it to shake off its responsibility in common with Germany. Therefore any revelation of Austrian involvement in the Nazi past, especially when it comes from non-Austrian sources, produces an almost hysterical reaction. Repression, irritation, belittling and tactical acrobatics follow suit. This was precisely what happened in the Waldheim case. Antisemitism became a central issue. Many Austrians identified with Waldheim because they felt accused themselves and, indignation against the World Jewish Congress (WJC) became less and less distinguishable from outright antisemitism. Studies revealing how widespread antisemitic attitudes in Austria were showed the discrepancy between the international image and the popular mood. To give just a few examples, when in 1973 a poll asked if Austrians should feel special responsibility towards Jews, 67% said "no"; 13% were undecided; 15% agreed in part and 5% agreed entirely. In 1976 people were asked if, 30 years after the war, trials of war criminals should be stopped. 83% agreed and 16% were opposed. In the same year the question was asked if Jews were not themselves partly to blame for what happened to them. Of those questioned 56% agreed and 43% were opposed. When the question was asked again in 1982, 22% agreed, 52% agreed partly and 21% disagreed.

In the Waldheim affair, the *establishment* (mainly the leadership of the big conservative party, OVP, the Austrian People's Party) itself used antisemitism. For once it was revealing to see popular attitudes reflected from "above". It was not the accusations themselves, but the line of defence taken by Waldheim and his supporters, which gave the green light, suggesting a removal of some sort of censorship of suppressed feelings. Add to this the statements rehabilitating service in the German army ("I only did my duty") and you have the spirit of defiance that was created. If Waldheim was the victim of a Jewish conspiracy, the Austrians could also consider themselves as such. As they were not forced to regret, mourn or be ashamed after the war, it appeared that they had always been blameless.

Antisemitism took different forms. There was the classic theme, voiced by Waldheim himself, that the international press was "dominated" by the WJC (*Le Monde*, 3 May, 1986). There were also several threats directed against the WJC that unless it stopped its "campaign" of "calumny" "emotions" that (allegedly) "nobody wants" would be awakened. Such statements were in line with popular convictions that Jews themselves are responsible for antisemitism. The way the WJC was portrayed was in line with another antisemitic theme: the allegation that Jews behave as wild persecutors, as groundless haters, or as vicious wrongdoers. Only in this way can the historical record be put straight. Although guilt is not admitted, it is

somehow felt; it looks for relief — and finds it in fantasy of Jewish guilt.

Of course such motives are not the only reason why Waldheim was elected. Also votes for the other candidate, Mr Steyrer, do not automatically signify opposition to antisemitism. The Socialist Party did not face the issue but quite clearly avoided it. Claiming not to be interested in Mr Waldheim's past and not having been involved in the revelations about him, they tried to be part of a patriotic consensus. Instead of dealing with problems of the past, they suggested, in all innocence, that people should concentrate on peace and progress. The Greens (the ecology movement) did not behave in a substantially different manner. Opposing both candidates as equally bad was just another way of not dealing with the fact that Kurt Waldheim had become a figure antisemites and Nazi-nostalgics identified with. Only a small group of bourgeois liberals and the small section of the Trotskyist Fourth International took up the challenge to swim against the stream. The lack of mass opposition in these last months is an even better indication of popular attitudes than opinion polls.

As for the Jewish community (10,000 strong, compared with 200,000 before the war), it was of course in a very difficult position. Two thirds had had to flee and the rest were murdered by the Nazis. Austrians participated in these crimes out of all proportion to their numbers. This, combined with the lack of Austrian self-criticism, made it hard for Jews to feel at home in Austria after 1945. They could not become patriotic Austrians and they were not (as in Germany) needed to give legitimacy to the post war regime. So they concentrated on their private lives and on Israel. There is also almost no continuity from the pre-war community. The present community mostly originates from waves of recent Eastern European immigration. A community in such a precarious situation, unsure of itself, feeling alienated in spite of several public gestures in their favour, reacted cautiously and hesitantly. Some thought they should distance themselves from the more exaggerated declarations of the WJC, others thought they should not react at all, and others again felt the community should go on the offensive. Only after the elections did the community hold a press conference accusing Waldheim's supporters in the OVP of using antisemitism for electoral purposes. One of these politicians reacted promptly by saying that through this press conference the Jewish community was causing damage to Austria's image.

Plus ça change . . .

THE NEW RIGHT

Making Racism Respectable

From the *Guardian* to the *Sun* the new right's ideas are gaining legitimacy throughout the political spectrum.

Francesca Klug analyses its sources and growth in Thatcher's Britain.

NEW RIGHT, NEW RACISM

All the opinion polls tell us that Thatcherism is in decline. The majority of the population is apparently rejecting the results of six years of radical right rule. The signs are that a new consensus politics is getting its act together. The SDP is building on the heritage of the Macmillanites; the Heathites in the Tory Party are preparing to take-over once more; the Labour Party appears to be reproducing Wilsonianism for the video age. At the same time most of the fascist and revolutionary left Parties have split and split again.

But whatever the outcome of the next general election, the legacy of the new right will probably be with us for many years. In practical terms, British industry has been devastated, the health service seriously run down, trade union rights slashed and police powers signifi-

cantly increased. On the ideological front, the population has been bombarded with such homilies as "uneconomic industries must no longer be subsidised by the taxpayer" or "rate-payer's money is being squandered by loony left councils on fringe groups" or "individual workers need the protection of the state from bully boys of the Trade Union movement" and so on.

The present leadership of the Labour Party appears by and large to have caved into this ideological onslaught. Freedom and fairness have replaced collectivism and equality as the slogans of the working class party. The red flag fades into the distance.

All this has received considerable attention from academics and commentators on the left. But there is another aspect to the new right legacy which has attracted less security. Simply put, it is the new racism of the new right.

REALIGNMENT OF THE RIGHT

The new right is not a political party. It has no membership or manifesto. The term is generally used to describe a realignment of different forces on the right of the political spectrum. This has been largely in response to what they perceive as the failure of the Keynesian economic policies and Beveridge social policies practised by successive post-war governments.

This 'realignment' is composed of two distinct but related trends which co-exist in a state of both mutual tension and mutual support. The libertarian tradition is based on the free-market philosophy of 19th century liberalism, updated and expanded by contemporary economists like Friedman and Hayek. The social authoritarian tradition, on the other hand, takes its inspiration from the 19th century conservatism of the philosopher Edmund Burke. Present day exponents such as *Sunday Telegraph* associate editor Peregrine Worsthorne and Birkbeck College philosophy lecturer Roger Scruton have not so much updated Burke's conservatism as applied it to the present social order which they depict as in danger of moral collapse.

To some extent the social authoritarians see themselves in opposition to the libertarians and in particular to their pre-occupation with market freedom rather than state authority. However, the difference between the two strands is primarily one of orientation rather than substance. In practice the libertarians are often staunch supporters of increased state power as the only means of enforcing the free enterprise economy on those who lose their jobs or homes as a result of it. Likewise the social authoritarians are in fact strong supporters of private property and the accumulation of individual wealth, even if they measure their worth in terms of hierarchy and order rather than freedom and profit.

THE BRIDGE OF THATCHERISM

Thatcherism has received intellectual, moral and political support from both wings of the new right and is both a product and generator of its development. Ideologically speaking Thatcherism acts as a bridge between the libertarians and authoritarians, reconciling the different strands of the new right at the points at which they are most compatible. In practical terms, while drawing from both wings of the new right, Thatcherism takes a blueprint for political action from neither. However ideologically motivated the Thatcher government may be, it

wants to stay in power. Whatever its commitment to new right ideas, Thatcherism has tried to pace the radical changes it has wrought in a way which does not leave the electorate behind.

It is partly for this reason that the worst scenario foreseen by sections of the left when Thatcher first came to power have not, thankfully, come true. It was variously predicted that a police state was on its way, that the repatriation of Black people and other minorities was about to be introduced and that civil liberties were to be all but suspended. Six years later the picture appears far more muddy than this. While there have been major attacks on cherished collective and individual freedoms — attacks which have affected Black, Irish and working class communities more than others — post-war liberal democracy has remained more or less intact.

In fact there has been a major decline in support for fascism, at least as far as electoral support for the ultra right is concerned. But at the same time what has been called the new racism has received sustained support and legitimisation from the new right establishment.

NATURAL SELECTION

The central proposition of the new racism is not that Black people or other minorities are genetically inferior to white Anglo-Saxons but that it is "natural" for people of 'one kind' to group together and "natural", too, for them to be wary of "outsiders". This approach receives a daily airing in the national press whether it is the *Daily Star* commentator Robert McNeill arguing that, "Any fool knows ... that the process which Darwin called natural selection means that, on the whole, people prefer their 'ain folk' — their own ethnic stock" (18.4.84) or *Guardian* feature writer Jill Tweedie stating that, "so much is a kind of racism built into humanity that it could well be considered a primeval, possibly genetic, inheritance from our most distant ancestors, of whatever race or colour" (24.1.84).

The relationship between the new racism of the new right and its other political positions is indirect but apparent. Both libertarians and social authoritarians use their various pressure groups and think tanks — from the Social Affairs Unit to the Monday Club — to argue against the iniquities of what they call positive discrimination. This is an extension of their free market philosophy which decries any interference in the "natural" workings of the economy. But underlying this is a fear and anger at

what they see as the growing power and influence of minority communities.

This same perception lies behind the new right's call for the complete "assimilation" of minority groups into the dominant culture — in Peregrine Worsthorne's terms, "a Tory-led programme of positive assimilation based on a fervent faith in British superiority" (*Sunday Telegraph* 15.4.81). As Keith Joseph's parting shot as Education Secretary demonstrated when he condemned multi-cultural education — opposition to the affirmation of the multi-racial nature of modern Britain is not confined to the social authoritarian wing of the new right. Both wings place great emphasis on the supposed enduring qualities of the British nation, as the Falklands escapade amply demonstrated. It is in this context that the new racism of the new right is most frequently expressed. The order to Black and other minority communities is to buckle under and conform. The 1983 Tory election advert, "Labour say he's Black. We say he's British", encapsulated this position perfectly.

The convergence of the two wings of the new right on race matters has even extended to repatriation. Individuals from both wings called for the repatriation of Black people following the 1981 and 1985 riots and in response to the Metropolitan Police statistics which tried to show that a disproportionate number of Black youth are involved in certain kinds of crime. In a sense support for repatriation is the logical consequence of the vigorous assimilation position. For when minority groups demonstrate that they cannot, or will not, merge into the great British bowler hat and "know your place" tradition, the repatriation card gets played. What is out of the question from this perspective is that it is British society — its institutions, power structure, values — which needs to radically change.

Support for so-called "voluntary repatriation" is much more commonly associated with social authoritarians like MPs Enoch Powell and Harvey Proctor and the pressure groups with which they are connected. But Thatcherite libertarians like Ferdinand Mount (former advisor to the Prime Minister) and John Biffen (Leader of the House of Commons) have also argued that "voluntary repatriation" could be considered in certain circumstances provided (to paraphrase them) it is generous, humane and not advocated too aggressively (*London Standard* 10.11.81 and *Guardian* 29.11.83).

RELIGIOUS COERCION IN ISRAEL

Elfi Pallis explores the background to recent violent campaigns by Israel's religious Jews.

REVIVAL OF ANTISEMITISM

In this ideological climate it is hardly surprising that antisemitic sentiments have been expressed in the media and elsewhere in a form as crude as the anti-Black racism already described. One example was the *Daily Telegraph's* editorial in response to the release of the Mosley papers by the Home Office. The leader of the British Union of Fascists "opposition to the Jews", according to the editorial, "struck a certain chord for the Jews, by the very nature of their history, were thought (before the holocaust) to represent the cosmopolitan principle and to be associated, on the one hand, with international banking, and on the other, with international revolution" (10.11.83). Once again the liberal *Guardian* is not exempt from this crude stereotyping so characteristic of our times. In a recent feature by the political commentator Hugo Young, Thatcher was described as "an honorary Jew" who has gained much of the inspiration for monetarist policies from Jews and Judaism (27.5.86).

In addition a number of lifelong antisemites have come crawling out of the woodwork. The 1983 Enquiry by the Young Conservatives (YC) revealed that social authoritarian pressure groups — like the Monday Club, Tory Action and WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scots, English) — have made considerable inroads into the Tory establishment, acting as a bridge between the Conservative and fascist right. It was in this context that some individuals who formerly represented ultra-right parties stood as parliamentary or council candidates for the Tory Party in the last few elections (although recently selection procedures have reportedly been tightened up as a consequence of the YC report). On top of all this, the hounding of former Trade and Industry minister by the Tory establishment appeared to have strong antisemitic overtones. Yet for the likes of Keith Joseph and Alfred Sherman (another Thatcher guru) the prime task for all, regardless of ethnic origin, is the elevation

of the (white) British national heritage. What they totally fail to appreciate is that the chauvinism and bigotry generated by the new era, of which they are an integral part, does not exempt Jews from its path.

LEGACY FOR THE ULTRA RIGHT

Now that, hopefully, this era may be drawing to a close, what will become of the new racist ideology? Any attempt to answer this question must take on board the fact that Black people have been fighting back over this period, in different ways and from a variety of perspectives. By and large they have not accepted that knuckling down and assimilation provide the way forward (partly, of course, because it is very difficult for Black people to just merge into the dominant landscape). It is quite possible, therefore, that the consensual politics may find a way of including positive action and other anti-racist policies in its programme even if in a much diluted form. In this context the new racism of the new right may well be vaunted with much less confidence than we have witnessed in recent years.

On the other hand a French-type scenario is not impossible. As the centre-left attempts to pursue its new realist policies the ultra-right may pick up strength with muted (or more) support from the flagging new right. For though it may, ultimately, have lost the argument on tax cuts versus employment creation, it is still far from clear that the new right has suffered the same defeat on the nationalism versus internationalism or positive assimilation versus positive action fronts. The ideology of the new racism will in all likelihood succeed the political dominance of the new right. If this is the case the ultra-right will have been left a menacing legacy on which to try to build its recovery. □

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Given the experience Israelis have had of real wars, it seems initially hard to understand the passions aroused by the "war against the bus shelters" waged by Jerusalem's black coated ultra orthodox Jews this summer. Why should conflicting values suddenly be such an issue in Israel? After all, the different ways in which Israeli Jews conduct their life, ranging from the hedonism of Tel Aviv's younger generation to the piety of Mea Shearim's residents, suggest a successful coexistence.

This coexistence, however, is not based on equality. Less than a quarter of Israelis are religious, and even in the Knesset only 12 out of 120 parliamentarians represent orthodox parties; but the religious sector controls crucial aspects of public life. As a result of its insistence on Sabbath observance, there is no public transport almost anywhere in Israel between early Friday afternoon and Saturday night. Weekend family pursuits such as visiting relations or taking the children to the country are only within the reach of Israelis prosperous enough to be car owners.

The orthodox sector, which alone has official status in Israel, to the detriment of Reform and Conservative Judaism, is also in charge of family law, and thus determines whom Israeli Jews can and cannot marry. For instance, the *Halacha* — the body of post biblical Jewish law which guides orthodox thinking — says that every man called Cohen is a descendant of the biblical priests, the Cohanim, who could marry only virgins. Today, no Israeli of that common surname can wed a divorcee. *Mamzerim*, the offspring of a married woman's adultery, of whom the Chief Rabbinate keeps a list, can only marry one another.

MARRYING IN

Nor can people in Israel marry a partner of different religion. Mixed marriages may not actually be illegal in Israel, but there is no civil agency that can perform them. Jews must be married by Jewish religious officials to Jews, Muslims by Muslim officials to Muslims, Christians by Christian officials to Christians and so on.

To perceive oneself as Jewish, moreover, is not enough. The rabbinical officials to whom couples have to apply

for a marriage licence make sure prospective partners fully comply with their criteria for Jewishness, ie descent from a Jewish or orthodox converted mother and a known Jewish community. Blue eyed brides may have to bring witnesses confirming their Jewishness. Bridegrooms from countries in which there has been much inter marriage may have to prove that they have undergone circumcision. What scenes such scrutiny can create was shown by a recent letter to the Israeli press from an Israeli mother whose daughter was reduced to tears by the rabbis' questioning. When told that the bride's family had immigrated to Israel from a smallish Indian town, a rabbinical official had informed the shocked girl that she could not be Jewish, since there was no recognised community of Jews there. She tried to explain that her family had moved there from Iraq and was therefore "properly" Jewish, but was told that she would have to provide minute details of her family history to prove this. She left crying.

Falasha Jews face a specific obstacle if they want to marry. Unless they undergo a conversion rite not demanded of other, light skinned immigrant groups, which many refuse to do since it implies that they are not really Jewish, they cannot marry in Israel. Orthodox rabbis will not perform marriage ceremonies for them, and those carried out by their own religious elders are not valid there. This June, a group of 26 Falasha couples decided to formally register as common law spouses to publicise their plight and become eligible for at least some family benefits.

Those who try to mislead the rabbinical authorities about their religious origins commit an offence. This July, a young woman who had immigrated to Israel from Uruguay was charged in court with fraudulently claiming to be Jewish when applying for a Jewish marriage licence, although she was not. Had she been rich enough she could have married her Jewish fiancée overseas instead, but this would have left her future children with the same problem. Segregation continues in death. The body of Theresa Angelevitz, a Roumanian woman who had protected her Jewish husband during the Nazi years before immigrating with him to Israel, was dug up by orthodox zealots and dumped in a plastic bag in a Muslim cemetery last year. The case shocked many Israelis, and the men were (mildly) punished, but the orthodox *Kadisha* burial society refused to condemn them, and is now demanding the reburial of several hundred non-Jews who it claims are buried in Israel's Jewish cemeteries.

Even being a "proper Jewish wife" is not always to a woman's advantage, especially if a marriage breaks down. As in the not so good old days of traditional Jewish family life, divorce in Israel is in male hands. If a husband refuses to grant a *get*, disappears, leaving his wife an

aguna, or is too mentally ill to consent, his wife has little hope of extracting a divorce from the rabbis. Battered wives have long complained about the official's insistence that they must return to a violent man sometimes several times and try for "domestic harmony" before considering divorce. Nor can women simply opt to "live in sin". Should a separated wife enter another relationship without waiting for divorce and children are born into it, they become listed *mamzerim*. A group of Israeli women has now founded an organisation called "the prisoners of the rabbinical courts" to highlight the female divorce petitioner's plight.

Orthodox rule also affects children. In custody disputes, the rabbis tend to grant custody of boys over the age of six to the divorced father. If he shows himself more *frum* (religious) than his ex-wife, he can even hope to be awarded all the couple's children. Women can appeal against custody decisions and divorce refusals to secular courts, but this starts a long, costly and rarely successful process few dare to embark on.

TOWARDS THEOCRACY?

Although this state of affairs is perceived as religious coercion by many non-observant Israelis, it is spreading. As a result of increased government finance, religious bodies can extend their attention to new areas of public life. Examples are an orthodox campaign recently conducted against "immoral" theatre plays, and the orthodox riots against Friday night cinema performances which preceded the burning of bus shelters displaying posters showing scantily clad women. Religious efforts are now directed towards getting mixed bathing and weekend football banned.

Liberal Israelis warn that Israel may be "slouching towards theocracy", but are divided on the reasons for this. Israel's parliamentary system, which fragments power by allowing MPs to enter the Knesset on a low proportion of votes, and so enables the orthodox parties to extract religious concessions from the main bloc in exchange for political support, is often blamed. However, it was itself partly instituted to ensure religious representation. Moreover, the present Labour-Likud coalition government commands an absolute majority and so does not need the religious parties' numerical support. Nevertheless, it has already made more concessions to them than many of its predecessors. Nor can the situation be attributed to some Machiavellian plot by the religious sector. Orthodox Jews in Israel are not even one group, but a spectrum of congregations loyal to different practices and rabbis. There are four different religious parties and both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Chief Rabbis who frequently issue contradictory rulings. Politically, most of the religious community is firmly nationalist, a smaller group perceives itself as neutral and a tiny minority is anti-Zionist.

What most have in common, however, is their ability to offer a solution to the moral problem posed to Israel by the existence of the Palestinians. It is not a new one. The young Zionists of the Second Aliya (1904-1914) had left Europe, often accompanied by the curses of their anti-Zionist rabbis, to create a "normal" yet progressive nation state. Few had expected to find in their new homeland quite so many already "normal" people, the Palestinians. If they were going to develop and control it against the wishes of a population that was itself becoming imbued with the new ideology of Arab nationalism, they needed a justification. The Bible, which many had wanted to leave behind, provided that.

Initial attempts to treat it as a mere history book proved inadequate. The archaeological digs encouraged by leaders like David Ben Gurion discovered indisputable proof of a Jewish high culture in ancient Palestine, but they also confirmed the existence of other, if less advanced, early cultures, such as the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Samaritans and the Amorites, in the area. Only if one accepted God and thus the divine promise of "to thy seed I shall give this land" did the Jewish right to a state in Palestine become a supreme one.

Orthodox Jewry also gradually underwent a change of mind. Rare Zionist rabbis such as Rabbi Yehuda Hacohen Kook were gradually joined in their stand by others who had escaped or survived Nazism. In 1947 Ben Gurion could reach an agreement in which most of the remnants of Europe's and Palestine's orthodox Jewish leaders endorsed Israel's existence in exchange for certain policies making it more observant, and exclusive recognition as Judaism's spiritual authority. In the early 1950s, Labour handed over family law to them. Other large chunks of public life followed, and for the last 16 years religious power has been reinforced by the Minister of Interior being an orthodox Jew from a religious party.

If the religious sector's side of the bargain was to resolve ethical questions, it is doing its job. Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which has meant that today 3.6 million Israelis are ruling over 1.3 million disenfranchised Palestinians, have called into question Israel's democratic nature, but the rabbis are not flummoxed by this. Basing himself on biblical sources, *Gush Emunim* leader Rabbi Levinger ruled some time ago that "democracy must be subordinated to the goals of the Jewish people". *Kach's* Rabbi Meir Kahane, even argues that "democracy is an alien value".

Even formally politically neutral religious authorities are firm about the supremacy of Jewish territorial rights. When asked recently by Jewish inhabitants of the Neveh Yacob to help stop the sale of local apartments to Arabs, Israel's

continued on page 16

SHECHITA AND HALAL to be butchered?

Stephen Ogin examines the real issues behind the recent attack on Jewish and Muslim religious methods of animal slaughter.

The current controversy over Shechita and Halal (the slaughter of animals by religious methods by Jews and Muslims) follows a report by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) to the Government in 1985. The most controversial recommendation of this document is that slaughter without pre-stunning should be phased out within three years. The Chief Rabbi has stated, in a reply on behalf of the Jewish community, that this requirement "would effectively deprive Jews of the possibility of eating any meat or poultry." The Muslim organisations in the UK point out in their response, that "to make stunning compulsory would be highly offensive to the Muslim community." To understand the problems posed by this recommendation we must briefly describe current slaughter practice.

SLAUGHTER BY NON-RELIGIOUS METHODS

There are two stages to slaughter by non-religious methods: firstly "stunning", that is rendering the animal unconscious, and secondly cutting the animal's throat so it may be bled out and die. Stunning is performed with either a captive bolt pistol or electric tongs. In the captive bolt method, a blank cartridge fires a bolt into the brain. The bolt causes the animal to lose consciousness. An RSPCA report adds that when stunning cattle, many abattoirs use a yard-long flexible rod made of metal or plastic to stop any reflex kicking movements. The rod is introduced through the hole in the forehead made by the captive bolt, passing through the brain, down the spinal column and thus disrupting the central nervous system. In the case of electric stunning, electric tongs are placed on each side of the head and sufficient current passed to stun the animal. Most sheep and some calves are stunned by electric tongs. Cattle and other sheep and calves by the captive bolt.

After stunning, the animal is shackled using a metal cuff around a hind limb hoisted and then the throat is cut so that blood drains from the body.

What are the objections to stunning in Jewish and Islamic Law? In Jewish Law no animal is fit for consumption "if it has a physical defect (or suspicion of a physical defect) sustained prior to Shechita." Hence the injuries caused to the cranium and brain tissue by the captive bolt or the lesions or haemorrhages and other suspected injuries caused by electric tongs automatically render the meat prohibited. In Islamic Law, the prescription is *tazkiyyah*, that is purification, which is obtained by the blood draining away from the meat following slaughter in the method laid down.

THE SCIENTIFIC CONTROVERSY

The fundamental objection brought against Shechita and Halal is concerned with the question of the time taken before the animal loses consciousness and hence the ability to feel pain. The Jewish and Islamic authorities argue that the cut itself, by severing major arteries to the brain, causes immediate loss of consciousness. This is not accepted by the FAWC which cites evidence that upwards of 17 seconds elapses before consciousness is lost. However it is clear that the scientific evidence is by no means conclusive and it is worrying that such fundamental demands are made of the communities on the basis of such hotly contested evidence.

What is accepted by all parties is that there are deficiencies in current stunning practices, for example animals regaining consciousness after electric stunning or two captive bolt attempts being required. The Chief Rabbi argues that "even if further improvements in stunning procedures could be achieved, such procedures could not attain the precision associated with Shechita."

In summary then, the Jewish communal authorities believe that "Shechita is at least as humane as, and probably more humane than, slaughter of animals following conventional stunning." They have accepted, however, the criticism made of the "Weinberg pen". This is a

restraining device: a metal crate, in which a cow is held and slowly revolved until the animal is upside down, at which point the throat is extended and cut. The Weinberg, or equivalent, has been in use in Britain for over 50 years and has been mandatory since the Slaughter of Animals Regulations of 1958. It should perhaps be noted that when first introduced, the RSPCA gave its approval to the use of the pen. The Jewish authorities accept that improvements may be possible here and have asked for 5 years to examine any modifications.

SLAUGHTER BY RELIGIOUS METHOD

The Farm Animal Welfare Council and the RSPCA (which supports these recommendations) contrast the non-religious methods with the "inhumane" methods of Shechita and Halal. Both these methods are essentially the same and consist of cutting the throat of the animal with a single, swift, uninterrupted sweep of an exceptionally sharp knife. The trachea, oesophagus, carotid arteries and jugular veins are severed, but not the spinal cord. It is argued that the cutting of the arteries stops the supply of blood to the brain causing unconsciousness and immediate loss of pain and sensation. The time taken till the loss of sensation is the major contentious issue between the FAWC and the two communal authorities.

The difference between Halal and Shechita lies in the management and the religious motivation (to which we will return). In Jewish practice, an official (the *Shochet*) is trained, licensed and supervised by the communal authorities; in the Islamic community, the organisation of Halal is less formal.

THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The FAWC report succeeded in deeply offending the two communities by dismissing these Laws as being only of cultural or historical significance. The Chief Rabbi's angry response to this is

that these are "rules ... which constitute, in the Jewish view, a part of eternal and unalterable Divine Law incumbent on all Jews." In a similar vein, the Islamic reply states that "Muslims have a duty to adhere to these laws of the Eternal, Omniscient God. ..."

We might expect the religious authorities to respond in this way. Socialists concerned with ethnic minority identity may suggest that all three parties fail to give adequate weight to the cultural importance of dietary laws, although this is doubtless a controversial area. What is clear, however, is that many within the two communities (and not just those who keep to the letter of the dietary laws) are concerned about what they perceive to be an attack on the rights of the communities.

COMMUNAL ALLIANCES

There are a number of areas of concern here touching on the necessity for communal alliances and the possible use of this issue by racists. Firstly, there should have been, and should be, closer co-operation between the Jewish and Muslim authorities and communities on this as on many other areas. Both responses to the FAWC recommendations are similar in tone and content but there is an exception which may not have

occurred with greater interchange. The Muslim organisations accept the FAWC recommendation that meat be labelled according to the method of slaughter. The Chief Rabbi points out that this subject was not even within the terms of reference of the Committee which were to undertake a comprehensive review of the welfare of livestock "at the time of slaughter". The FAWC ask that meat at the retail level be clearly labelled - to which the Chief Rabbi's response is that this "would tend to create feelings of animosity against a minority group".

The Jewish response is surprisingly explicit (in view of the Chief Rabbi's more recent interventions - see *Jewish Socialist* issue 5) about the dangers of racism arising from anti-Shechita agitation. A historical link between anti-Shechita proposals and antisemitism is made with some force in a section on Comparative Legislation. In the 1890s in Switzerland, a referendum following anti-Shechita agitation voted 3 to 2 against Shechita causing the newspaper, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, to comment: "One cannot avoid the conclusion that what we have witnessed is antisemitism under the guise of humanitarianism." In Norway in the 1930s, the principal mover was a Nazi. And, of course, Hitler made stunning compulsory in 1933 in Germany. These

are strong arguments in favour of being at least wary of anti-Shechita agitation, although we must not be so foolish, nor so offensive, as to view any critic of Shechita as a potential racist.

Secondly, it must be a concern that the timescale for the radical changes demanded by the FAWC is only 3 years. It is strange that although the FAWC accepts that a "denial of Kosher food is an attack on the distinctive Jewish way of life", it still demands only 3 years for change. This contrasts unfavourably with recommendations in an earlier report on general slaughter practices which were not subject to similar time restrictions.

Finally, every vegetarian knows how guilt borne by many meat eaters can be translated into hostility. It is possible that much lay criticism of Shechita and Halal is not so much a matter of kindness to animals as transfer of guilt. In addition, we must be aware of the hypocrisy of concentrating on animal welfare at the time of slaughter. Our food industry and society permit not only the misuse of drugs on animals to raise their weight but also the barbarities of battery/factory farming. If there are any differences in the humaneness of religious and non-religious slaughter methods, these differences appear insignificant in comparison. □

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Chief Sephardi Rabbi declared that the *Halacha* forbids the sale or lease of land in *Eretz Yisrael* to non-Jews. When Israel was shelling Beirut in 1982, army rabbis issued soldiers with leaflets reminding them of God's command regarding the Amalekites (Samuel 15,3) "thou shalt slay both woman, infant and suckling," and described Beirut as "Beerot, the patrimony of the tribes of Asher and Naftali".

The fact that the religious sector has an answer to Israel's moral dilemmas has, in turn, increased its public appeal, especially among the young, and it has adapted to accommodate them. Believers are no longer pressed to totally immerse themselves in prayers and the scriptures, forsaking all other interests. Orthodox men, though not women, can nowadays

combine military service with religious studies in a *Hesder yeshiva*. Most rabbis permit their followers to enter secular universities, political life and even discotheques, as long as it is not on a Sabbath and they have fulfilled their religious duties. A few months ago a senior rabbi explicitly authorised a group of orthodox young men and women to spend the night together in a tent, since this was in the pursuit of a *mitzva* (good deed), the establishment of a new wildcat settlement.

It is this role played by religion in Israel's relationship with the Palestinians that Israelis opposed to religious coercion need to address themselves to. As the country's politicians intensify their courtship of the orthodox sector (even Trade

Minister Ariel Sharon has taken to wearing a skullcap), those wanting a different kind of Israel also require a different kind of outlook on the Palestinians. An Israel that can accept that they, too, have human needs, national aspirations and legitimate rights does not need to justify itself in religious terms, and can defeat religious coercion. In fact, some of the most active campaigners against it, the magazine editor and radical former parliamentarian Uri Avneri, and the Citizens' Rights Party leader and Knesset Member Shulamit Aloni, are also advocates of Palestinian rights and a Palestinian state in the West Bank. The anonymous Israelis who recently tried to get rid of religious rule by setting fire to a synagogue may have merely succeeded in obscuring the real issue. □

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SCHOOL RACISM

have teachers learned their lessons?

A number of schools are now producing statements on multi-cultural education, but how does the reality match up to the words? Anne Frances describes the situation in her school.

A couple of years ago my education authority decided that all schools should produce a multi-cultural policy. A Working Party was established within my school, an East London comprehensive with two-thirds Black children, a large proportion of them Asians. I joined the group. It was comprised of mainly Asian teachers. We began to share stories of our experiences of belonging to minority groups and the way that the pupils perceived us; I remember a Moslem woman explaining how white children's behaviour changed when she wore traditional dress and how she found herself dealing with more problems. These insights were considered superfluous. Our job was to get a statement out by a certain date. We duly drafted a document that pledged our commitment to equal opportunities for all children, nothing controversial. My sentence about the needs of working-class children was deleted, as it was considered too provocative by the hierarchy. We took the statement to the staff. They voted to accept it. And that was that. We moved on to the next item on the agenda. We could say we had a policy statement like every other school. Finished.

My own cynicism is not about the aims of multi-cultural education. If I have any philosophy, it is embedded in a commitment to learning about the children I teach, in planning work based on their own experience and background, and in coming to know them as individuals. What bothers me is the mismatch between what we state and what we do, and the difficulty in reconciling in-school values with out-of-school reality.

The day before *Yom Kippur* last year, I was disturbed to find a note in my staff pigeon-hole which stated that I could not take the day off for religious observance unless I was prepared to find someone who could cover my lessons. This borough directive applied to both Jewish and Moslem teachers on the staff (it was also the Moslems' New Year), and was a way

of playing cat and mouse with the unions who were refusing to cover lessons as part of union action. After our efforts on the multi-cultural committee, it seemed highly ironic to see the borough treating their ethnic minority employees with such disrespect.

While our own education authority blatantly contradicted its own guidelines, our own staff proved that our policy had no teeth. Our head of Geography was proud to declare on paper that his department did not "distinguish unequally between any culture" and that "pre-occupation with the Afro-Caribbean axis and Asia" did not occur within his lessons. This attitude was tolerated, as was a teacher who frequently made antisemitic comments. "Why should you have extra holidays," he once asked, "I might as well invent a religion and have days off." When I told other members of staff they laughed and said he was always like that. There seemed to be a remarkable tolerance towards people who acted in opposition to our policy. They were viewed as harmless eccentrics.

We seemed unable and unwilling to affect teachers' views, or to change what was happening in their classrooms. Equally, it was difficult to touch some aspects of the children's lives. There were white against Asian gang fights which flared up from time to time and which seemed independent of school. These incidents were not perceived in racial terms, but as boys fighting. As I saw white and Asian members of the same form pitted against each other, I felt negative about what we could achieve within school, if it was simply reflecting tensions in the community outside.

While school was quick to take action on fights, as they looked bad and destroyed the order of the institution, other instances of racism remained ignored and unchecked. After a difficult lesson with my third years, which looked at racial

stereotypes in popular TV programmes, two Asian girls from the class came up to me and revealed that they had suffered three years of bullying and racial abuse from two girls in their class. Later, they wrote down their story for me:

"I used to hate PE lessons, it was terrible in the changing room when the teacher wasn't in. The Asian girls would sit in one small corner of the room while they took up the rest. And they'd shout out racist comments and also bully us. I can remember lots of fights which no teacher ever noticed. They'd gang up on us and act tough. In the form class it was me and Manjit who were their targets. We were never allowed to answer them back and if ever we dared to it would lead to serious trouble. I never told anyone, because I thought there was no end to it and even if I did tell a teacher, there was nothing they could do to stop it. And I thought if the bullies knew that we had told, it would lead to trouble after school."

The girls' reasons for not informing the school spoke volumes. They saw us as powerless and uncaring. After our conversation, I did take the matter further and the ring-leaders were suspended from school for a few days "for aggressive behaviour". This hardly seemed to compensate for the Asian girls' years of anxiety and suffering.

Institutional aims often fail to reflect the needs of the individuals within them. That is nothing new. Yet when we deceive ourselves on paper that we are working together to defeat racism, we are deeply affecting the lives of the children in our care. I have met many teachers on the left who are dispirited by institutionalised multi-culturalism, its surface gloss and its tokenism. We work in isolation, concerned for the future of working-class children, giving lessons that confront racism. Our statements are filed away; we cultivate our own gardens. □

LETTERS

WHAT ABOUT THE IRISH JEWS?

As a Jewish woman who is also second generation Irish, I was extremely disappointed that Brid Boland's article on Irish women made no mention of Jewish people at all. I would not expect to have to point out in your magazine that Jews are everywhere. The relationship between Irishness and Jewishness is made very complicated by the context of English imperialism, and it is beyond the scope of a short letter to explain the ways they combine to oppress. However, I did want to point out that such a problem exists and deserves to have been sensibly explored in an issue of *Jewish Socialist* which was claiming to make connections between different struggles.

Yours in solidarity
Naomi Levy
London N16

A SPECIAL SPACE

I read your magazine for the first time yesterday, and loved it. My background is of an assimilated Jew of Eastern Europe; none of my Hungarian relations admit to being Jewish and my English side is Christian. As a marginal, I find Zionism and antisemitism both terrifying, so a paper like yours that holds a special space open is wonderful.

Love and solidarity
Amanda Sebestyen
London N4

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NO PASARAN

The number of Jews who fought in Spain was greater proportionately than any other minority or nationality. Mike Gerber salutes their contribution to the fight against fascism.

The Jewish radical tradition is long and proud, surfacing at all levels of left consciousness. Great numbers of Jews have been active in the anarchist, communist, syndicalist and trade-union movements from the earliest days. With this background, there is no doubt whatever that the Jewish presence in the Spanish republic during the revolutionary civil war years would have been formidable in any circumstances. However, with the filthy streak of antisemitism inherent in any fascist "crusade" against the left, many unpoliticised Jews participated simply in order to fight fascism. This is a statement by General Quieppo de Llano in a radio broadcast on 10 October 1936: "Our war is not a Spanish civil war, it is a war of Western civilisation against the Jews of the entire world." Epic words for such craven deeds! With this sentiment all too typical of an age in which Jews were to experience a level of cruelty unsurpassed in their long troubled history, surely even the most assimilated Jewish-born radical must have been as conscious of fighting as a Jew against fascism as for any revolutionary ideal.

That Jews figured prominently in Spain should therefore come as no surprise. Yet the extent of Jewish participation is not widely realised. To my knowledge, Dr Albert Prago's nineteen-page pamphlet, *Jews in the International Brigades in Spain** is the only literature available on the subject in the English language, and therefore, the basis of all the information used for this article.

It is estimated that, of the 40,000-50,000 volunteers in the International Brigades, 7,000-10,000 were Jewish. That is, not less than 15.5% and perhaps as much as 25%. A national breakdown of

Jewish volunteers shows the following: Poland - 2,250; USA - 1,250; France - 1,043; Britain - 214; Palestine - 267. There was a further estimated 1,095 from a combination of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Canada, Italy, Scandinavia, Germany and Russia, plus 1,602 from 40 other countries. A total of 7,758. To this must be added the many exiled Jews whose national origins were difficult to ascertain, and who were randomly distributed among the battalions. The figure for the Palestinian contingent may have been even higher. One source puts it at not less than 500.

Several sources claim that Jews accounted for 45% of all Polish participants, and 30% of the Americans. Even if the lowest estimates are taken, it is clear that the number of Jews who fought in Spain was greater, proportionately, than that for any other minority or nationality.

These figures do not include medical staff. Data supplied by Nurse Fredericka Martin informs us that of the 124 personnel from the American Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy, 59 were Jews. She also notes that most of the Polish nurses, nurses' aides and doctors were Jewish.

In fact Jews were active in Spain well before the formation of the International Brigades. The Workers' Olympiad was being held in Barcelona, as a protest against the forthcoming Berlin Olympics, when 'the uprising began. Among the athletes were many Jews who stayed to fight the fascists. Most of the athletes from the Palestinian *Hapoel*, for instance, immediately joined the Popular Militia fighting in Barcelona. Other volunteers were political refugees then resident in

Spain. Two Jewish garment workers from the East End of London, Sam Masters and Nat Cohen, were cycling in France when they heard the news of the revolt and immediately crossed the border, soon founding the Tom Mann Centuria (named after the famous Libertarian-Syndicalist) in Barcelona. Other groups and individuals joined them in the months prior to the formation of the first brigades, after which their numbers rapidly grew.

For the volunteers from the central and Eastern European countries already in the grip of fascist or sympathetic reactionary regimes, the journey to Spain was especially perilous and difficult. It took Bobrus Nissenbaum, a Polish Jew, a record five months to get from Warsaw to Paris, through which most combatants passed en route to Spain. He was imprisoned twice and slept on park benches in winter before finally arriving at his destination. In Spain, he was killed fighting with the Palafox Battalion. Josef Rubenstein, after being imprisoned for seven months in his native Poland, crossed Europe with the aid of the underground. Whilst in Spain, he became editor of a Yiddish newspaper, and died fighting in Aragon.

Many volunteers were extremely young. When Eslanda Robeson was in Spain visiting the American volunteers

along with her husband Paul, she approached Maury Colow to ask his age. He was 18 and one of several young Jewish volunteers from the lower East-side slums of New York.

It was not until 12 December 1937 that a specifically Jewish unit was established. Named the Botwin Company, it formed part of the Polish Dombrowski Brigade, and consisted of about 200 combatants. They fought on the Extremadura Front, in the Aragon, at Sierra Quemada, Sierra Caballs, and Lérida, and were among the first units to cross the River Ebro in the famous and crucial battle of that name. Not all Botwins were Jewish. There were some Poles, one or two Arabs (depending upon the source of information), an Italian, a Greek. There was also a German who, to spite his Nazi father, chose to fight alongside Jews as comrades.

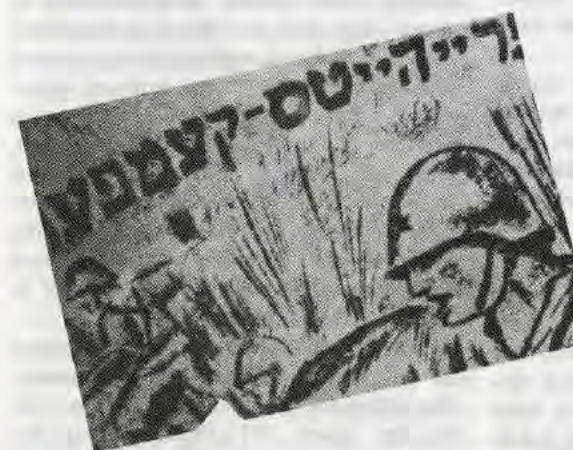
Later, with the coming of World War II, many veteran Jewish Brigadiers fought with the French partisans, or joined the partisans in their native countries. Often they had to contend not only with Hitler, but with antisemites among the partisans. Pinkus Kartin helped organise the heroic defence of the Warsaw Ghetto. Joseph Farber was assigned by the underground to a hazardous task in Birkenau concentration camp. Underground movements also operated somehow within the Nazi

death camps, and David Shulevitch took action photographs of the crematoria at Auschwitz, which were smuggled out in order to refute the pious denials of the Nazis. Isidore Springer and "Camille" (the alias of a Palestinian Jewish ex-Brigadier), played important roles in the Soviet "Red Orchestra" spy ring, which exposed Nazi military secrets throughout the war. Irv Gorf, one of three Americans chosen to fight with Spanish guerrillas behind enemy lines, was later one of the five ex-Lincoln brigadiers, four of whom were Jews, who operated behind enemy lines for the OSS during the Second World War.

If one takes account of the strength of the Jewish radical tradition, and of the terrible implications for all Jews in a Europe daily cowering before the shadow of Hitler, then the extent of the Jewish contribution in Spain is not extraordinary. The point of this article is emphatically not to score points over other volunteers. No individual contribution counts for more than any other. The story needs recounting, however, because it provides the most eloquent answer to those who, ignorantly, and with complete lack of understanding, proclaim that Jews bowed passively to 'the greatest ever threat to their existence. □

* Available from Jewish Currents, 22 E17 Street, Suite 601, NY10003, USA.

Charlie Goodman, a
volunteer for liberty,
remembers



Frayhets kemfer - the first Yiddish frontline newspaper in Spain

After 4 October (the battle of Cable Street) we felt the acute need for a continuation of an active fight against fascism. I wasn't a member of any political party at the time, just a confirmed anti-fascist. The struggle of the Spanish people caught the imagination of all those opposed to fascism. We had a feeling that fascism was getting closer.

I made an application through some people that I knew. I was told I was accepted but I would have to go to Paris for final confirmation. I had to take three guys over with me. I was about 21 at the time. I had to meet these three guys at a Lyons tea shop opposite Charing Cross Station - I would know them because there would be a packet of Swan Vestas standing upright on the table! I went in there and found them - three Scottish guys who were deserters from one of the Highland Regiments. They had been driven into the army because of the unemployment but they were quite progressive in their thoughts. When we got to Paris we were met at the station and taken to a place where we had a physical examination, and were asked various questions. The following evening we boarded a train for Perpignan, the last big town before Spain.

The frontier was closed and we had to climb over the Pyrenees, being shot at by French fascists in the mountains and also by Spanish fascists. Quite a number of the guys never made it. We looked down and our guide said that's Spain, get there as fast as possible! We scrambled down the hill to a little house.

I shall never forget a place called Fegeros, just inside the Spanish border. All people from all over the world went there first before they were sent to the training camp at Alberetsi. I was there when all of a sudden I could hear singing in the distance. I rushed out to have a look. There were people of all different countries singing *The Internationale*. It was so thrilling; it seemed like the revolution had come at 10.30 in the morning!

The International Brigades who went from Britain were giving a warning that fascism was coming. It was summed up by a poem one of the Brigadiers wrote in our magazine *Volunteers for Liberty*, which was published monthly in different languages. It was Miles Tomlyn; he wrote: "Before me stand the homes of Spain, Behind me stands my own".

BUNDISM IN ENGLAND

Written histories of Jewish radicalism in England tend to concentrate initially on the Jewish anarchist movement and later on Jewish involvement in the Communist Party — Benjamin Nadel redresses the balance with a historical sketch of Bundism in England.

As soon as the Bund was created in Tsarist Russia there also arose Bundist groups in the countries of emigration in Western Europe, as well as in Galicia and Bukovina, which at that time were part of Austria. The Bund's contact with England dates back to those days.

Already in the year 1900 there existed in London a Bund association *Der Veker* (The Monitor). Arkadi Kremer, one of the founders ("the father") of the Bund came to London and founded a printing shop for the Committee of the Bund outside Russia. In it they printed the leaflets, pamphlets and periodicals of the Bund which were then smuggled into Russia for distribution there. In this printing shop the journal *Poslednia Izvestia* (latest news) was printed, beginning with number 44, intended mainly for the Russian intelligentsia, and also several editions of the pamphlet *To the Jewish Intelligentsia*, in Russian. Arkadi himself did all the technical, administrative, typographical and distribution work necessary to publish the Bundist literature, and together with Vladimir Kossovski, was also the editor.

He lived in great poverty because the money that his wife Pati used to send him each month from Russia he gave to the party funds. Later when Pati came to London she created a commune for Arkadi, Kossovski and herself. Apart from all this work he was also active in the circle of sympathisers of the Bund and for a time was their leader. Arkadi and Kossovski were helped to a great extent by a Bundist from Vilna, Max Nadel, a worker in London, who, through self study, managed to pass an examination in dentistry and was practising as a surgeon-dentist. He was the author of a 20-page pamphlet in Yiddish entitled *Ratavet Ayere Tseyner* (Save Your Teeth) in which he explained the importance of the teeth for the whole organism and especially for the digestive organs. This pamphlet was issued in London in 1904.

In 1907 Nadel met Lenin in London.

Right away he realised what kind of a person Lenin was. In a conversation recorded in the book *Early blossom* by Leon Bernstein he thus described Lenin's autocratic nature: "He (Lenin) keeps all the reins of power in his hands ... he will bow to nobody ... should this man succeed in his desire to obtain power the whole world will be shaken." To that Bernstein adds: "When the world did become shaken after Lenin took power in Russia, I remembered many times this conversation with Nadel."

The London association of the Bund — *Veker* — conducted quite a number of campaigns. For instance, their members took part in a demonstration of 25,000 Jewish and English workers to protest against the pogrom in Kishinev; they celebrated the First of May and the anniversary of the Bund; they organised protests against the Russo-Japanese war; they collected money for the Bund's self-defence groups in Russia. In a house-to-house collection on 30 July 1905 they received over £106 from 325 donors. In June-July of the same year there began to appear in London a weekly, *Di Pogromen Blat* (The Pogrom Paper) issued by the Bund's self-defence committee.

Similar Bund groups sprung up in many towns away from London such as Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool. In a leaflet of the Bund group in Leeds at the time of the 1905 Russian Revolution, we read:

"Long live the truth. Good Luck to the workers. Workers of the world unite. The liberation of the workers will be brought only by the workers themselves. Full of energy and sincerity we bring you the joyful news that at 59 St Lukes Street in Leeds a union has been established whose aims and tactics are the same as the Jewish Labour Bund in Russia. Our aim is to save the Jewish workers here from the torments that fill

their lives! And also to give support to the Russian and Jewish workers in Russia in their noble struggle for their freedom. Our principles are those of international brotherhood and truth."

The plain language of this leaflet shows that it was written by an ordinary worker, one of many to come here with the emigration stream from Russia on their way to America. Of the thousands of Bundists who passed through England in the Tsarist times only small groups stopped in London and other towns in this country. The English law of 1905 against the immigration of foreigners was aimed mainly against the Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe.

Today the same story is being repeated with the difference that the immigration restrictions are of a racist character aimed against Black people. Notwithstanding the restrictions then, 120,000 Jews, half of them recent immigrants lived in east London, the area of Jewish concentration. Their main problems were the struggle for daily bread and equal rights for themselves in this country and for those left behind in Russia. The Jewish trade unions were powerful in those days and the Bund groups were active in fighting antisemitism in general and, in particular, in the workers' movements. They helped, materially, a great number of families in need, on the spot, and sent help to intending emigrants in Russia. For this purpose they established a special Workers' Fund under the Chair of Berl Rosner, a Bundist from Lodz who had become naturalised in 1909.

The association — *Veker* — managed to conduct a protest campaign against the infamous Beilis court case in Kiev in the years 1911-1913. During the years of the First World War, until 1917, Victor Alter, who came to England as a refugee from Belgium after it was invaded by the Germans, was active here. He worked in a factory on the

work bench and later as an engineer. He became a leading member of *Der Veker* and at the same time was also active in the British Socialist Party to which the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation formed largely with the participation of Bundists was linked.

After the First World War the Bundists concentrated in the Jewish Socialist Organisation which became a base for campaigns of aid for the Bund in Poland. In it were such comrades as Berl Rosner, Modecai Masover, Note Kaufman, Sam Leff and others. They were instrumental in establishing a Yiddish Secular School through the Workers' circle whose organisation had a membership close on 4,000 in the 1930s. They reacted sharply to the growth of Hitlerism and antisemitism in Poland. They celebrated in a most imposing manner the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Bund. At that time there came to London a number of delegates to various international congresses: Henryk Erlich, Victor Alter, Shlomo Mendelsohn, Gershon Tybert, Leibman Hirsh. They all met with local Bundists and helped to stimulate their activities.

The Jewish Socialists' Group's cultural and anti-racist project (JCARP) celebrated May Day this year with an event held in Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel, in London's East End. More than 50 people heard a talk by veteran trade unionist, Mick Mindel, on "Jewish workers' struggles in the East End in the 1930s" which emphasised particularly the area in which he and thousands of Jews worked — the tailoring trade. His talk was followed by a concert of Yiddish songs of work and struggle performed by Majer Bogdanski, Barry Davis, Chaim Neslen, Julia Bard and David Rosenberg.

Majer Bogdanski recalled a number of songs sung by the Bund on May Day parades in Poland in the 1930s. He finished his set with *Di Shvue* (the Bund's oath) and *The Internationale* (in Yiddish). Here we print the words of these two songs with phonetical English transliterations based on the Yiddish Institute (YIVO) standard.*

* ay as in my
ey as in they
kh as in Loch Ness

During the Second World War there were a number of well known leaders and organisers of the Bund in Poland active in London, such as the martyr Szmul (Artur) Zygielbojm, delegate to the Polish National Council in exile — then in London; his successor in that same National Council, Dr Emmanuel Sherer, Lucjan Blit, Leon Oler, Moshe Lokiec and others. Although the war put an end to the Jewish socialist groups in the provinces in England, the Bundists were an exception. As soon as the war ended they activated a Bund group under the name Jewish Socialist Organisation in England in which, together with the pre-war immigrants, newly arrived immigrants such as Lucjan Blit, Moshe Lokiec, Leon Kucynski, Majer Bogdanski and others were active. They have been in close contact with the Co-ordinating Committee of the Bund in New York and with other Bund organisations in Western Europe. They have worked also among the youth, held regular meetings and are continuing their Bund activities until the present time. In 1947 they also started to publish their own periodical, *Yiddische Sotsialistishe Shtime* (Jewish Socialist

Voice) of which only two issues appeared.

Recently there arose in London an independent Jewish Socialist Group whose ideological position is very near to that of Bundism. This group is publishing their own journal, *Jewish Socialist*. The journal, which began in Spring 1985, expresses an interest for the Yiddish language and culture as well as for the past and present of the Jewish workers' movement in the widest sense, and especially so for the Bund. True, some articles reflect Trotskyist inclinations. The same inclinations are quite strong also in the Labour Party. The authors who themselves grew out from this environment, came independently to the position of Jewish socialism. This in itself is already a positive fact.

The discovery by the Jewish Socialist Group in England of Bundism as an alternative Jewish and socialist ideology tells quite a lot about the strength of our ideas and the indefatigable efforts of generations of Bundists in England. □

This article, slightly abridged, has been translated from Yiddish by Majer Bogdanski from the Bund's monthly journal *Unser Tsayt* No. 3, 1986.

Di Shvue

Brider un shvester fun arbet un noyt
Ale vos, zaynen tsezeyt un tsheshpreyt
Tsuzamen! tsuzamen! di fon zi is greyt
Zi flatert fun tsorn fun blut is zi royt
Tsu shvue, tsu shvue oyf lebn un toyt!

Refrain:

Himl un erd vet unz hern
edes — di likhtike shtern
a shvue fun blut un fun t'ren!
Mir shvern! Mir shvern!

Mir shvern tsu kemfn far frayhayt un rekht
Mit ale tiranen un zeyere knekht
Mir shvern bazign di finstere makht
Oder mir heldnmut faln in shlakht!

Refrain . . .

Mir shvern tsu hitn a blutike has
Tsu merder un roiber fun arbeter-klas
Dem Kayzer, di hersher, di kapitalistn —
Mir shvern zey ale farnikhtn, farvistn

Refrain . . .

Mir shvern tsu firn dem heylikn shtrayt
Biz vanen di velt vet nisht vern banayt
Keyn kaptn, keyn nogid, keyn her un keyn shklaf!
Glaykh zoln vern ven shtark iz un shlaf!

Refrain . . .

Mir shvern a trayheyt on grenetsn tsum Bund
Nor er ken di shklafn bafrayn atsid
Zayn fon di royte iz hoykh un iz breyt
Mir shvern in trayheyt oyf lebn un toyt
Refrain . . .

ברית

און

אונזערע

Di Shvue was written and dedicated to the Bund by the writer and revolutionary, Sh Anski. "Brothers and sisters of toil and struggle, dispersed everywhere, swear an oath before our flag stained red with blood. We swear to struggle for freedom and justice. Heaven and earth will bear witness to our oath of blood and tears".



The Internationale was popularised as the song of the Paris Communards in 1871. It has since been translated and sung by workers' movements in many countries. The song urges the workers to rise up and destroy the society that violently oppresses them. "So comrades come rally and the last fight let us face. The Internationale unites the human race".

The Internationale

Shteyt oyf ir ale ver vi shklafn
In hunger lebt ir un in noyt
Der gayst, er kokht, er ruft tsu vafn
In shlakht unz firn is er greyt

Di velt fun gvald-tatn un laydn
Tseshtern veln mir, un dan
Fun frayheyt, glaykhheyt a gan-edn
Bashafn vet der arbetsman

Refrain:

Dos vet zayn shoyen der letster
Un antshedener shtrayt
Mit dem international
Shteyt oyf ir arbetslayt

Neyn, keyner vet unz nisht bafrayen
Nisht got aleyn un nisht keyn held
Mit unzer eygenem kley-zayen
A retung brengen mir der velt

Arop dem yokh, genug shoyen gelitn
Genug fargosn blut un shveys
Tseblozt dos fayer, lomir shmidn
Kol-zman dos ayzn is nokh heys

Refrain...

Der arbetsman vet zayn mamshole
Farshpraytn oyf der gantse velt
Un parizitn di mapole
Bakumen veln fun zayn shverd

Di groyse shturem-teg, zey veln
Nor far tiranen shreklehk zayn
Zey kenen ober nisht farshteln
Far unz di hele zunen-shayn

Refrain...

When Jews were deported

David Cesarani describes the discriminatory treatment suffered by immigrant Jews and their families in the 1920s — and sees parallels today.

In February 1930, a 56 year-old Jewish man, resident in Britain since the age of five, was convicted of obtaining money on false pretences and sentenced to one month's hard labour to be followed by deportation. Had he not been an "alien", that is to say a non-naturalised immigrant, his punishment would not have been so draconian. But at this time, as for the previous decade, tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants were subjected to a system of laws and regulations of unprecedented severity which discriminated against them on the grounds of their place of birth and that of their parents.

It is now well known that Jewish immigration into Britain at the end of

the 19th century was a subject of heated controversy and political agitation at street corner and national levels. Less familiar is the continued harassment of these immigrants and their children decades after they had settled in this country. The key to understanding the latter period lies in the domestic effects of the First World War and the international impact of the Bolshevik Revolution, both of which stirred up new depths of anti-immigrant, and specifically anti-Jewish feeling.

FOR TSAR AND COUNTRY

During the 1914-1918 War, popular chauvinism inevitably rubbed off on the Jewish community. Jewish financiers

and Jewish-owned shops in the East End of London were the subject of verbal and physical assaults because of their "German" sounding names. Resentment also built up against Russian and Polish Jews who used their foreign status to avoid serving in the British army. They had no desire to fight on the same side as Tsardom, but their feelings hardly mattered to the British population which saw its own young men going to join the casualty lists in France. In Leeds this anger led to a two-day riot when the Jewish district of the Leylands was invaded by thousands of people from neighbouring districts. Meanwhile, the Government and the Jewish community negotiated an agreement with

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

In Leeds, Jews from Austrian Galicia were rounded up and only narrowly avoided deportation because the new Polish regime accepted them as Polish and, hence, "friendly" nationals. Jews trying to re-enter the country from Russia faced Immigration Officers with powers to refuse "aliens" the right to land and to have them deported without any kind of judicial procedure. Since they were obliged to supply proof that they had served in the army in Russia — an almost unreasonable condition given the chaos prevailing there when they had arrived — many slipped into the country "illegally". There is also evidence

in Government papers that there was a deliberate policy to deny entry visas even to those men who could prove war service in Russia. As a result, many Jews resettled in England as "illegal immigrants" and found themselves vulnerable to the new, strict Aliens Act of 1919.

Under the Act, "aliens" had to register their address with the police. Any change or deception could lead to immediate deportation on the orders of a magistrate. An "alien" who committed a crime, no matter how petty, could also be deported by a magistrate or the Home Secretary — with no right of appeal. Illegal entrants were frequently identified then fined or imprisoned and deported. Often they had gone undetected for months and had resumed their work and family lives: some had even married and become parents. Hundreds of these "illegal landers" and immigrant Jews convicted of various offences were expelled between 1920 and 1927. So many were detained at Brixton prison prior to being shipped out that a rabbi attended them regularly for the conduct of services. Families were split up; men who had lived most of their adult life in England were banished for failing to register a change of address; the police, who administered the regulations, acquired unheard of powers over immigrant Jews who could not even appeal to a court if they were apprehended for a breach of the rules.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ALIENS

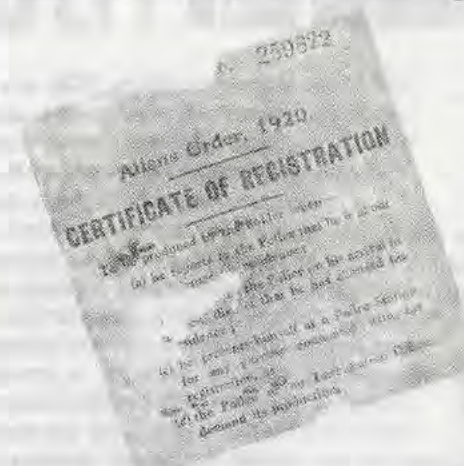
The Board of Deputies did what it could to help "Convention men" get back into the country and tried to stop the deportation of those who came back illegally. Deputations from the Board lobbied successive Home Secretaries during the 1920s, to little effect. In fact, discrimination against "alien" Jews actually worsened. New legislation for the provision of old age pensions and unemployment relief was framed in such a way that non-naturalised Jewish immigrants were excluded from receiving benefits. The London County Council (LCC) refused to employ anyone who was not British-born or of British-born parents. Jewish immigrants and even the children of naturalised immigrant

parents found themselves denied scholarships to LCC schools or housing in LCC accommodation. The Civil Service adopted similar discriminatory provisions in 1923.

The President of the Board of Deputies described the action of the LCC as "a blot on the history of the Council as a democratic institution." As well as making protests, the Board tried to end discrimination against Jewish "aliens" by securing their naturalisation. Here, again, the Jews suffered from differential treatment based on prejudice: the naturalisation process was deliberately slowed up in Jewish cases because it was considered by the Home Office that Jews had to prove their worthiness by residence in the country for far longer than the necessary statutory period. The Government also refused to lower the naturalisation fee which, at £10 per person, was a heavy burden on a family of immigrants. Without the protection of full and equal citizenship, Jews remained vulnerable to deportation until 1931 when an Aliens Deportation Advisory Committee was set up. The network of discrimination continued to operate for even longer.

PARALLELS TODAY

Time and again, the leaders of the Jewish community confessed that the atmosphere in the country made it impossible to obtain concessions regarding the treatment of immigrant Jews. Frequently, their requests for immigration tribunals were interpreted as efforts to increase immigration and were dismissed with reference to the high levels of unemployment in Britain. The parallels with the contemporary scene are depressingly close. The official attitude towards Jewish "aliens" in the 1920s forces a reconsideration of the bland depiction of the Jewish immigrant experience in England and the attempts to differentiate it from that of New Commonwealth immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to popular prejudice Jews, too, suffered from the action of the state which limited and, at times, abrogated their rights. They were subjected to administrative justice, selective laws and widespread, officially sanctioned discrimination of which deportation was the most feared and hated. During one deputation to the Home Office in 1924, Sir Stuart Samuel, President of the Board of Deputies, protested that "The Home Secretary's powers in this respect were taken under an Act of Parliament passed in times of emergency. They were powers which previously would not have been dreamt of or tolerated; they were too great to be left in the hands of any one man ... to banish a man without legal trial was antiquated, savage and revengeful ... wrong in principle and unjust from an English point of view." Similar powers exist and are exercised today — except that Jews are no longer the victims. □



CABLE STREET — 50th ANNIVERSARY

THE BATTLE OF CABLE STREET

The Tramp Poet

You ask me how I got like this, Sir,
Well I don't care to say,
But I will tell you a little story
Of when I was in a big fray.

I'm not very well in my old age,
And as I sits drinking my broth,
My mind goes back to 1936,
That Sunday, October the fourth.

I was walking down Bethnal Green Road, Sir,
Just walking about at my ease,
When the strains of a famous old song, Sir,
Came floating to me on the breeze.

I stopped, I looked and I listened,
Now where have I heard that old song?
Then I dashed to the Salmon and Ball, Sir
I knew I wouldn't go wrong.

It was the Internationale they were singing,
They were singing it with a defiant blast,
And holding up a big red banner
With these words: THEY SHALL NOT PASS.

We then marched on to the East End,
We were five thousand of us, I am sure.
And when we got to the Aldgate,
We were met by three hundred thousand more.

"Red Front! Red Front!" these workers cried,
It was a sight I wouldn't have missed
To see these thousands of defiant workers
Holding up their Mighty Clenched Fist.

The police said "Now move along, please,
This is all we ask",
But we said "No, not for those Blackshirts,
Those rotters, THEY SHALL NOT PASS".

We then marched on to Stepney Green, Sir,
You could see that this fight was no sham,
For there were thousands and thousands of workers
Marching from Limehouse, Poplar, Stratford and
East Ham.

You could see that Mosley wouldn't get through, Sir,
That our slogan that day was no boast,
And I shouted "Hip, hip, hurrah",
As I saw our flag being tied to a lamp-post.

The children shouted from the windows "O, golly",
For Mosley no-one seemed sorry,
But someone had had the goodness
To lend us their two-ton lorry.

We got it over on its side, Sir,
It wasn't much of a strain,
But the police kept knocking our barricade down
So we built the damn thing up again.

The police said we worked mighty fast,
As with a hanky their faces they mopped,
So we got out our big red banner,
And stuck it right on the top.

The police then charged with their truncheons.
They charged us, the working class,
But they couldn't pinch our red banner
With these words THEY SHALL NOT PASS.

I wish you had been there to see it,
You would have said it was a ruddy fine feat,
How we kept that old Red Flag flying
On those barricades of Cable Street.

So this is the end of my story
And I must get back to my broth,
But I hope you will never forget, Sir,
It was Sunday, October the fourth.

...and what the papers said

by Julia Bard

All kinds of theories were put forward in the newspapers of 5 October 1936. Scotland Yard saved some of them the trouble of working out why or how the Fascists had been stopped from marching on that fine Sunday afternoon. "YARD BLAMES THE SUNSHINE" ran the heading in the *Daily Express* above the official police account of events. "Fascist assembly was held in the East End today, and, largely owing to the fact that the day was one of the finest of the year many people were attracted to it including a large number of women and children."

Notwithstanding the weather, the *Express* launched itself with gusto into the free speech argument: "Now, Sir Oswald is absolutely entitled to hold his meetings and expound his beliefs, subject, of course, to the law of seditious libel.

He can dress himself as he pleased, and if

he can persuade his friends to dress the same way that is nobody else's business. He is entitled to the protection of the police against hooligans who deny him free speech."

"Hooligans" was an odd word to use for the hundreds of thousand of people who came out on to the streets that day. According to the *News Chronicle*, "The greatest East End crowd in living memory — one estimate is 300,000 — awaited the Fascists. If the march had gone on London might have had a new black page to its history. Blood flowed. Barricaded streets round Royal Mint Street — the Fascist rallying ground — were strewn with wreckage. Fierce scuffles took place in Cable Street where police stormed the barriers. . .

"It all began when the Blackshirts — about 2,000 — strode out through the comparatively deserted streets of the City.

"In the teeming East End Streets the people

waited for them."

The *Daily Sketch* was more concerned with the Fascists' feelings than describing what had happened. Under the heading "HITLER AND MUSSOLINI SUFFERED TOO" most of the paper's impressions of the day came from an extensive interview with Mosley. "The Government have capitulated to terrorist tactics that are intended to make free speech impossible," he said. "I do know that hundreds of anti-fascists came from the provinces to London determined to provoke trouble. Their expenses were paid.

"Where did that money come from? That is a question the authorities should answer." The front page of the *Daily Sketch* was devoted entirely to a photograph captioned "Above is the exciting scene in Royal Mint Street as the crowds were being dispersed by baton-armed police."

On July 26th 1936 a conference was convened under the auspices of the Jewish Labour Council, attended by 179 delegates representing 86 organisations, consisting of Workers Circle branches, trade unions, political organisations, friendly societies, synagogues, Zionist bodies, youth organisations, and ex-servicemen's organisations. They met on the basis of a shared conviction that there was a need for a strong and popular Jewish anti-fascist body that would be capable of taking the necessary practical steps for Jewish defence. They acknowledged that the established leadership of the community was assembling fresh defence structures, but they were unwilling to place their faith in the efficacy of these new steps, since they believed the Board of Deputies to be constituted on an obsolete basis and did not extend the franchise to the widest sections of the community.

A 26 member delegate council emerged from the conference and this was later constituted as the Jewish People's Council. The central tenet of its analysis, which clearly distinguished it from the Board of Deputies, was its contention that antisemitism could not be separated from its political necessity to the fascist movement. The Jewish People's Council characterised antisemitism as "both a rallying cry and a smokescreen, thus hiding from the British people as a whole the true purpose of fascism". It was understood primarily as a political instrument, but with an appeal rooted in economic conflict within the society in which it arose. Whilst recognising that its proponents were influenced by political developments abroad, its ability to gain some degree of mass support rested on home grown roots. This characterisation of antisemitism had implications for the nature of responses to it and the formation of working alliances. The Jewish People's Council argued that:

The struggle against antisemitism is as much a task for the British people as a whole as for the Jews; and the struggle against fascism is a task for Jews as much as for the British people as a whole.

They therefore believed that it was impossible to combat antisemitism purely through anti-defamation work as this was merely attacking the symptoms. They organised a campaign of public protest meetings — often open air and close to British Union of Fascists platforms; appeals to Parliament, particularly on the question of political uniforms and racial incitement; speakers to Jewish and non-Jewish organisations, and co-operation with other anti-fascist groups. A particularly strong co-operative relationship was established with the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL); they organised joint conferences and NCCL speakers regularly appeared on Jewish People's Council platforms.

The intense flurry of activity which was set in motion prompted the formation of numerous other groups wishing to take practical steps in defence of the Jewish community. The Association of Friendly Societies organised speakers' classes with a view to holding open air meetings. An ex-servicemen's movement against fascism was founded and within six weeks of its formation claimed a thousand members including seven hundred Jews. In North West London a rapidly growing Jewish Council of Action had been formed which took as its charter a critical article by a *Jewish Chronicle* columnist on "The Question of Defence". It later merged with the Jewish People's Council. These independent initiatives represented a diversity of approaches to Jewish defence, derived not only from diverse interests expressed in a wider collective framework, but also from strongly held analyses that represented some degree of incompati-

Only the *Daily Worker* celebrated the alliances that grew up in the struggle against Fascism, saying: "The rout of the Mosley gang is due entirely to the splendid way in which the whole of East London's working class rallied as one man (and one woman) to bar the way to the Blackshirts, Jew and Gentile, docker and garment worker, railwayman and cabinet maker, turned out in their thousands to show that they have no use for Fascism.

The same picture in the *Daily Worker* carried the caption: "Clearing the way for Mosley; repeated police charges in Royal Mint Street attempted to clear the street for the Fascist parade." Two views from different sides of the barricades!

According to the *Daily Mail* the "Reds" were driven back. There was no indication until half way through their article that the Fascists had been prevented from marching.

Fifty years ago Jews in the East End were threatened by the growth of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. They could not wait or depend on the response of their communal leaders. David Rosenberg describes how they developed their own independent organisation and action.

bility between different approaches. The *Jewish Chronicle* voiced its concern: "Such a multiplicity of bodies does not make for strength unless there is a clear understanding of the functions of each and harmonious co-operation". It therefore called for unity in order to avoid a squandering and misdirection of energies. Alignments and co-operative working arrangements were made, but they did not result in one unified defence body. Instead the defence of British Jewry between 1936 and 1939 was led by two representative Jewish organisations: the Co-ordinating Committee of the Board of Deputies, and the Jewish People's Council, subscribing to different analyses and developing different strategies.

The Board of Deputies was concerned solely with countering anti-Jewish defamation and would not embroil itself with the issue of fascism. This was for two reasons; firstly because it did not believe that there was any special relationship of fascism to antisemitism, and secondly because a position on fascism would involve the Board of Deputies in partisan politics. In this they were wholly supported by the *Jewish Chronicle* which argued that it was dangerous for Jews to take a single collective attitude towards a legal political party since "no other religious section takes up such a position towards a political party". Furthermore, it argued, some Jewish leaders (such as Waley-Cohen) were not convinced that, apart from antisemitism, fascism was a deadly political error. The Board of Deputies method of countering antisemitic calumny was through leaflets, pamphlets and public meetings. Its leaflets and pamphlets, such as *The Jews in Britain*, *Bolshevism is not Jewish*, and *What the Jews of Britain did in the Great War*, concentrated on facts and figures and extracts were periodically featured in display form in the *Jewish Chronicle*. One such extract asked, "Do the Jews control British Finance?" It then stated that there was not a single Jewish director of the bank of England, that only three out of 150 directors of the "Big Five" banks were Jewish, and there were no Jews among the 70 to 80 directors of the other

major clearing banks. This exemplified the exact weakness of the anti-defamation campaign: whilst its utility lay in its refutation of distorted or invented "truths", by accepting that the argument may be reduced to numbers it conceded the underlying argument, and itself delegitimised the role of Jews in Britain as equal citizens. Facts in themselves were not the basis of antipathy. This depended upon the attribution of relevance to these facts. Anti-defamation work blunted the antisemitic attack but did not challenge its real basis.

More than 1,500 people attended the Board of Deputies' inaugural open air meeting at Hyde Park. Following its success, meetings were regularly held in recognised "street corner" venues. These were organised in close co-operation with the Ex-Servicemen's Movement Against Fascism and the Association of Friendly Societies, the latter of whom, before embarking on its campaign of open air meetings discussed principles with the Board of Deputies and submitted itself to the Board of Deputies' authority. Eventually the Board of Deputies' campaign and that of the Friendly Societies were further co-ordinated under the auspices of the London Area Council which set up an office in east London. The Friendly Societies, whose platform was non-political, were crucial to the Board of Deputies' campaign because they were drawn from the wider elements of the community, but shared the Board of Deputies' position on the nature of and response to antisemitism, as illustrated by their main speaker Frank Renton:

Jew baiting is a contradiction of everything which Christianity has stood for. Jews are trustworthy... they have rendered illustrious service to Britain and the Empire. The overwhelming majority of Jews in Britain are sober, hardworking and with a social and moral standard as high as that of any other denomination.

Whilst the public actions of the Board of Deputies brought it closer to the reality of those Jews most exposed to attack, it did not alter its advice. It maintained that Jewry should abstain from Blackshirt meetings and demonstrations and that its

behaviour should be impeccable, blameless and devoid of vulgarity and ostentation. "If volatile Jewish youth stayed away," argued Laski, the President of the Board, "the charge that Jews are communists would soon be proved baseless."

The Jewish People's Council concentrated its efforts more selectively, combining general anti-defamation work with meetings for particular audiences such as trades' councils, trade union branches, political organisations, and small traders. On the basis of its alternative

analysis its message was in considerable contrast with that of the Board of Deputies. Its exposure of antisemitic calumny was placed within a framework directed towards unmasking the methods and motives of its propagators. Whilst the Board of Deputies reproached Jews with the antisemites' accusations of sweating employers, bad landlords, and price cutters, the Jewish People's Council rejected the notion that these were particularly Jewish characteristics. Its advice to Jewry similarly contrasted with

that of the Board of Deputies; it printed and distributed thousands of leaflets urging Jews to join public demonstrations against fascism and participated fully in the events of Cable Street. In the days immediately preceding that demonstration the Jewish People's Council collected 100,000 signatures for a petition urging the Home Secretary to ban the march.

This is an excerpt from David Rosenberg's *Facing Up To Antisemitism: How Jews in Britain Countered the Threats of the 1930s* JCARP Publications, 1985. □

The 1930s saw the peak of Jewish radicalism in Britain. The struggles for a living wage and against antisemitism and fascism, here and abroad, propelled working class Jews in to the forefront of political activity. Mick Mindel, a lifelong trade union activist, grew up in the East End heartland of the Jewish working class. He recalls the experiences of his generation of Jewish socialists.

SOCIALIST EASTENDERS

Politics was part of my upbringing. My father was a member of the Jewish Bund and very active in the Workers' Circle. My earliest recollections are of him teaching Yiddish to the members' children. I can recall as a child the impact of the Russian revolution and my father taking me to the trade union premises. Our education was in the streets. It was part of our everyday life, particularly living in the Rothschild Buildings where you saw every possible aspect of the problems confronted by the Jewish working class. The overriding memory I have is of Monday mornings — everyone having to pay the rent. Evictions took place. The whole atmosphere was of such a close community. You had to be pretty dull if you weren't interested in what was going on. Within such a close community everyone knew each other's problems and everybody else's problems were your problems.

It was a very lovely way to be brought up. It was an education being concerned with other people's difficulties. To me being Jewish and being a socialist was a natural thing. As soon as I left school I was watching the events of the General Strike. After hearing all the 'isms' in the discussions between families, politics was a natural thing. And then the question of antisemitism was always lying there at the basis. I went to the Jews' Free School (JFS). When going for a job afterwards, a reference with JFS on the head was enough to stop me getting a job in various places.

Our language was Yiddish — the language of the Jewish working class. The mothers wanted us to learn English. When they said, "learn English", they

were saying, "get out of the ghetto, be a *mentsh*, get out of the East End". And they had no intention of going back to Russia. When I think of Fashion Street, Flower and Dean Street, Thrawl Street, Wentworth Street, there must have been 1500 families in those blocks. I remember the struggle to make a living as the trade was always seasonal.

When I left school my first big political involvement was in 1929 when Harry Pollitt was a (communist) candidate. The excitement — you would think we had won the election — I think he got about 2,000 votes. In the context of my Jewish life, many of my friends were political. Politics became much more part of our lives when we began to understand the implications of fascism.

Many families in our block were religious. My parents weren't, but the traditional things were there. I was expected to fast on *Yom Kippur* but my parents didn't insist. It was a continuing life. There weren't the divisions we see today. The whole East End was a kind of continuity in terms of the Jewish community.

As I finished school my mother insisted I have a trade. My uncle was a tailor and had his own workshop. "As long as you have a trade you won't go hungry", my mother would say. I was offered some jobs soon after school but they didn't suit my temperament. I worked as a cutter on men's clothing. You went from job to job — that was how you accumulated your experience. I went to work then for a mantle and costume company and I made an application to join the union at Great Garden Street. It was 1932.

I was involved in sports and athletics. I went to Germany in 1933 to play football and I had a taste of what the Nazis were doing. I saw the stormtroopers and I really knew what a pogrom meant. I came to Berlin the day after Hitler got to power. It was a long political lesson for me in a very short time. I had discussions with German communists, socialists and trade unionists. It puzzled me that there were communist unions, socialist unions and so on. When Hitler got to power in spite of the tremendous strength of the German socialists and communists, it was a terrifying experience. I found the bitterness between the communists and socialists so entrenched that the prospect of working class unity was never on.

I met a young Jewish man who worked on one of the illustrated papers there. He asked me if I was a member of a union. I said I was having difficulty joining because they thought I was a communist. He urged me — whatever else you do make sure you are a member of the union. I came back to London, followed up my application, and a few months later they gave me my membership. I worked in the United Ladies' Tailors section of the trade.

In 1935, London was the largest clothing centre in the country. London began to absorb into its production the dressmakers, men's clothing, the bulk of the handicraft section: the Saville Row tailors — a very comprehensive industry. The early 1930s were difficult. In 1935 the average working time in our industry was 36 weeks in a year — a very high proportion of unemployment. The Great Garden Street Union looked to the Master Ladies' Tailors Federation as an alternative to amalgamation with the National Union of Tailors. They advocated

a policy of a federation with the subcontractors against the main enemy — the manufacturers. Those of us who were politically conscious found that completely unacceptable. How could you talk about an organisation with the master Tailors? But it was also understandable from the point of view of many Jewish workers who could identify with the Master Tailors. My section of the industry was dominated by Jewish workers. The active membership of the Labour Party and the union leaders were opposed to amalgamation. Those of us on the communist side thought it wrong to be federated with the employers. It became a clear ideological battle.

Meanwhile the industry was changing fast. Modern machinery was developing which was eliminating the labour content in the garment. Jewish manufacturers began opening up their own factories — the Steinbergs, Ellis and Goldstein, and so on. With the influx of German designers and cutters, they introduced garments cut to perfection. The mass production of women's clothing was now a practical possibility and this was translated into the industry. Clothing was made for working class women at a price they could afford.

The changes in the industry enabled us to recruit women and one of the first things we did was to appoint Sarah Wesker as women's organiser. The Great Garden Street union had emerged as a craft union with that ideology. It reflected the uncertainty of the time that they were looking for strength through small craft organisation. When I was elected Vice-Chair of the union in 1937 we decided to divert attention away from small craft union shops.

As well as the union, we had the Workers' Circle which provided a forum in which Jews from different occupations could come together. The Circle had been formed by Jewish working people who didn't want to be dependent on the patronage of the Jewish wealthy, didn't want hand-outs and didn't want to be treated as second-class Jews. They had enough of that. Don't forget that at the turn of the century the Jewish establishment didn't want Jews to come here.

The 1930s saw many highly political events. Hitler came to power in Germany and you had the Blackshirts here. The dominant political discussion was about fascism and antisemitism. Pogroms were happening in Poland. When I became Chair of the union I was involved in raising money to bring children and orphans from pogroms in Poland. Apart from antisemitism and fascism there was the

destruction of working class organisations, the impact of the hunger marchers, the struggle for wages. In the midst of all this you had the Popular Front in France and the Spanish Civil War. I remember standing on a street corner, shouting my lungs out: "Madrid today, London tomorrow!" I didn't realise then how correct the slogan was.

I saw the importance of fascism very early on. I think it was the motivating thing in my life — the physical horror of seeing them in their uniforms in Germany and what was happening to the Jews. In East London anyone who was active in the union knew about the issue. I had argued for many years that fascism wasn't just a Jewish problem but that it was a threat to society as a whole.

Fascism was a living issue with the Blackshirts on the streets in their uniforms and jackboots. I was close to Jimmy Mallon, the warden of Teynbee Hall, and I remember him saying to me, "Take them out of their blackshirts and they would be nonentities". He was in the forefront of the pressure to the Home Secretary to ban their uniforms. It made a tremendous difference, although I think that the day that fascism was defeated was at Olympia (1934) when fascism showed itself for what it was.

And then there was Cable Street. I got to know about Cable Street before the Communist Party did, from Jack Pearce of the Workers' Circle. It was a marvellous day. There was such a feeling of achievement, of working class unity — They Shall Not Pass! It wasn't any of the Blackshirts we fought, mind you, it was the police. I was so elated, running all over the place — the sheer excitement of it all. These were days that were worth living through. I saw it through the eyes of a trade unionist — appealing to workers to come out. I can't tell you how many of our members were there but the following day everybody was talking about it and you would think everyone organised it! We also fought antisemitism and fascism abroad. In 1937-38 we had a committee to protest against Polish pogroms. The committee included Rabbis, the Workers' Circle and many different organisations. The Federation of Synagogues wouldn't join but they sent £25 to help the work of the committee which was a lot of money in those days.

We were as much anti-fascist as we were convinced of communism. The big change for me came in 1939 with the Hitler-Stalin pact. That was a very traumatic experience. My father could read Russian and was getting the Russian papers. He used to say that the Russian

peasants were always antisemitic. At the time I was too loyal. I was friendly with some very fine people of the Communist Party. I was asked to attend a special meeting and it was pretty obvious what the party line was going to be. At the lunch break I said to Harry Pollitt: "As a Jew, how the hell do you think I'm going to stomach this?" When Harry Pollitt was suspended from General Secretary for a year I lost a bit of *kheyshek* (enthusiasm). It sowed the seeds of doubt, that we, the great Marxists, the materialists, with a scientific analysis — we could be wrong? It was impossible. We didn't think we could be wrong. It was like the bloody Catholic Church! I stayed in the Communist Party though up till Krushev.

After the war there were many changes for the Jewish working class. There was a dramatic decline in the two basic industries that employed Jews — clothing and furniture. When I did the monthly check on membership figures I saw the transfers I was making to the postal and the transport unions. Our members were becoming taxi drivers and postal workers. Quite a number became insurance agents. I kept in contact with many of them. The whole situation was changing. Factories went out of London with government encouragement. The industry began to be scattered. If you were living in London it was difficult to move. People came back from the Forces to an industry they didn't relish. The Jewish workers were being shifted away from their traditional base. It was one big upheaval and it did mark a change in political outlook. But also after 1948 the State of Israel began to be an alternative to Marxism. Whereas we had naturally turned to Marxism instead of Zionism — in those days it was an ideology of the Jewish middle class; Zionism was not relevant to the Jewish trade union world — many young people now identified with Zionism politically and emotionally.

Those of us in the Jewish community who still have a socialist philosophy need to rethink. There must be other links. We need to pay more attention to other ethnic minorities. In Bill Fishman's book (*East End Jewish Radicals*), he talks about the dockers' strike and Jews taking in the children of dockers. I don't recall any Jews taking in a miner's child in the miners' strike.

Although Jewish trade unionists and Jews in the Labour Party were involved in the miners' strike, as a community we weren't. And when I talk to many Jews today about trade unionism you immediately sense which side most of them are on. □

THE JEWISH MENTAL STATE

Black people have increasingly identified and attacked racism in mental health services. This is an important issue for Jews as well, argues Naomi Dale.

Don't try looking for Jews in any recent conference or textbook on ethnicity and mental health. You won't find many. Maybe that's good news — we've become as sane (or insane) as the rest of the British majority population. Only the occasional Hassidic Jew is mentioned, for their cultural bizarreness stretches even the most tolerant measure of sanity versus insanity. Usually at these forums, the main liberal psychiatric/medical stance taken is that Black people using the health services in Britain face various difficulties. These include the misguided ignorance of the white practitioner in understanding the strange culture of the new immigrant and the diagnostic confusions that can result from this. Also, the cultural conflict and psychological problems facing the immigrant in adapting to a new host culture. Since most of these difficulties clear up, apparently, once the immigrant has assimilated, there can't be much to say about "well-adapted" groups like the Jews, especially those of second and third or more generations.

THERAPY AND CONTROL

Radical conferences on the subject led by Black people go much further. They often deplore the inequality they face in using medical and mental health services — like the language difficulties and lack of interpreters which hinder their access

to services. They may face blatant racism from white practitioners. Far from therapeutic, mental health services have been used to control and marginalise Black people, such as through the virulent use of involuntary "sectioning" of Afro-Caribbean male youths by the police under the Mental Health Act. Psychological problems stemming from social, economic and political inequalities are individualized into personal "pathologies", and inappropriately treated with drugs, hospitalization, therapy or just neglect.

Do we have anything to add to this anti-racist struggle as Jews in the midst of the mental health field? In the past, there was considerable interest in Jews and their mental health. The earliest systematic studies of Jews in central Europe date back to the late 19th century and were then followed by later studies in the USA and in pre-war Britain. With our history of persecution, poverty and migration, there was considerable interest in whether Jews as a group were basically more mad than the rest of the population, and whether Ashkenazi Jews differed in mental health from Sephardi Jews, given their very different historical experiences. Various studies in the 1950s did find that Jews had a much higher incidence of neuroses (anxiety, hysteria and psychosomatic disorders) — what were often seen to be stress reactions linked to the

difficult Jewish experience — but were lower on psychotic conditions like schizophrenia. Manic depression was the exception to this rule and has often been seen to be the state *sui generis* of "Jewish madness".

American research in the 1950s also showed that less Jews than non-Jews were treated in mental hospitals, indicating a lower incidence of psychosis among Jews. But the relative number of Jews treated in out-patient psychiatric clinics for neurotic behaviour and moderate psychological difficulties could be up to four times as high as that of non-Jews.

FEARS SUBMERGED

What of ourselves today in Britain? We know remarkably little about either our identity as Jews or our psychological state. One reason for this is that our Jewish communal leadership has been busy trying to convince us, as have many other Jews done so similarly, that everything is going well for us — which must include our psychological wellbeing. Anxieties, fears, identity confusion and loss, cultural loss, hostilities and distress are kept submerged and silenced.

Yet the picture may not be as rosy as we are led to believe. In a study by Ruth Cooklyn and her colleagues, looking at in-patients in a psychiatric unit at Northwick Park Hospital in 1978, Jews, although not unusually high in rate of admission, were over-represented with the classic Jewish distress pattern of manic depression (and again low on schizophrenia). It does seem that when Jews are having mental health problems, they present them as gloom and despair, interspersed with manic restlessness and excitability. Curiously, manic depression is also over-represented in the mental health problems of women. Many of us seem to recognise, even if in a much milder form, this predisposition in ourselves. There seems undoubtedly to be a communally transmitted reaction to problems in living that has been maintained through a number of generations in Britain — and continues today.

In another study by Suman Fernando in 1975, looking at depression in Jews and Protestants in the East End of London, he found that they did not differ in their rate of admissions to a psychiatric out-patient department. But among Jews depression was actually linked to a loosening of ethnic or communal ties and also a reduction in religious affiliation. This may mean that we are heading for an increase in individual depression as Jews move towards further assimilation and away from communal identification with other Jews. He also

found that, whereas depression in the Protestants was inner-directed hostility and around self-reproach and guilt, in Jews it brought out outer-directed hostility aimed at non-Jews. Fernando suggests that Jews may be carrying considerable repressed anger as a result of our experiences of persecution and antisemitism, which surfaces when we get depressed.

We also do not know how many mild mental health problems are covered up within our midst. The strongly cohesive Jewish family is clearly a valuable mechanism for transmitting minority ethnic identity — but may also be the hidden forum within which many of the psychic conflicts and pains of Jewish existence rage destructively between its members. Our own history of self-help communal welfare organisations and self-sufficiency may mean too that we often look after our more fragile, disturbed and unhappy members without their condition being publicly recognised.

Apart from the pervasive antisemitism in pre-war Britain, antisemitism continues today. Most of us live closely to the past, actual or potential experience and threat of antisemitism — although psychological denial is also apparent. We are also living within the psychic trauma of being actual or symbolic survivors of the Holocaust — and in many ways, the whole of Jewish consciousness remains numbed by the genocide. It would be unthinkable for these experiences not to affect negatively our psychological well-being, yet we remain ignorant and silent on this matter.

MADNESS AND NORMALITY

Just looking at our recent historical and present experiences in Europe and Britain immediately throws up stark challenges to Western European mental health theory and practice. To begin with, "normality" in Britain may not be good news for the vibrant continuation of Jewish communal existence. Our culture has been wittled away by the immense pressures to assimilate culturally in Britain from the majority population and by internal pressures from the Jewish establishment to turn us all into good British citizens. The so-called adjusted Jew, in mental health terms and social acceptability, may in fact be psychologically unhealthy for the continuation of Jewish existence. They may be far from a sense of Jewish identity, an expression of vibrant Jewish culture, or an understanding of Jewish history. The *mad* Jew may instead be the true Jew — in touch with the real distresses and pains of Jewish existence, its potential threats, its insecurity. Being more in touch may be more disturbing psychologically, but may also permit him or her to draw lessons from

our stormy past and use them to take political, cultural and psychological steps to affirm and improve Jewish existence.

Secondly, we have learned, to our own terrible demise, that in a racist society the racist is the "normal" individual. In Nazi Germany, Nazis dictated what was normality — and it left out communists, Jews, gays, Gypsies, and others. Normality, as defined by the ruling hegemony, is not something that we as Jews, as part of small vulnerable minority groups, need recognise as necessarily good for Jews — or other ethnic minority groups.

Apart from issues about "normality", we also have reason to question the appropriateness of certain mental health practice. It is quite possible that the cumulatively transmitted experience of antisemitism is a factor in the development of mental distress, but this is ignored in conventional Western therapy — as is all racism. Other experiences specifically linked to being a Jew may also be associated with mental health problems. What kind of therapy, if any, can meet some of these difficulties? The recognition that political, social and cultural factors may be deeply part of the individual Jew's psychological make-up and difficulties draws on responses where therapy is closely linked to political and social strategies. This is not something that we have discussed as Jews in post-war British life.

And if the assessment and therapy of a Jewish person's mental difficulties can only be adequately achieved by someone who has a real understanding of the Jew's wider cultural, social and political, as well as personal, experiences — who can do this? Is it best performed by another Jew? At present, we know that sizeable numbers of Jews are therapeutically assisted within Jewish welfare and counselling and social work agencies. But in my own experience, the actual Jewish content of the work carried out by these agencies is far from explicit. Working therapeutically with another Jew throws up the fact that Jews themselves have varying degrees of interpretation and bitter conflict about how best to address ourselves to Jewish well-being — whether it is through further assimilation, religious teaching and practice, going on *aliya* to Israel, or political responses including socialism. How do we work with a client who adopts a "solution" or therapeutic route that is quite distinct from our own?

CULTURE AND CONFORMITY

Drawing upon our own experiences as Jews raises specific issues for those of us working as Jewish practitioners in the "caring" professions. Jews in the professional classes are faced with the enor-

mous social/political pressures of adopting the dominant culture's ways of conceptualizing mental health and distress. With it goes an associated reduction in our own sense of ethnic identity. There is an apparent link between rise in occupational class position and loss of Jewish identity, which has been recorded in an interview study of London Jews by Julius Gould in 1970.

Our vulnerability in group position may make us even more conformist in how we work professionally. A large proportion of junior psychiatrists in Britain are first-generation immigrants, particularly from the New Commonwealth, but foreign-born doctors have never been welcomed by the medical establishment and remain unevenly distributed in the medical hierarchy. In the 1930s the British Medical Association opposed the admission of any more than a tiny number of Jewish doctors who were refugees from the Nazis. It has been documented a number of times that immigrant psychiatrists are generally particularly conservative and conformist in their orientation, leaning towards biological interpretations of mental illness. The more we conform to the dominant culture the more distanced we may feel from our own ethnic/cultural existence and historical past — and our own empathy and understanding of other ethnic group members who are grappling with high levels of racism in British society diminishes. Yet all this apparent veneer of security collapses rapidly when coming face to face with an antisemitic or racist client.

If as Jewish practitioners, we are in touch with our own experiences of Jewish ethnicity and antisemitism, then we must become actively drawn towards adopting an anti-racist position on current mental health practices which adversely affect other ethnic minority groups — and Jews. The *Radical Jewish Health Group* is a response to the urgent need felt by some Jewish practitioners to start opening up this discussion, and to offer a radical Jewish perspective linking the psychological, clinical, cultural and political dimensions together. It is time that we took our own mental state, conflicts and distresses more seriously. As has been seen in oppressed groups like women and working class people, mental distress and unease remains among the most hidden, but potent expressions of personal and communal oppression and vulnerability. □

This article was first presented as a talk at the inaugural meeting of the Radical Jewish Health Group in May 1986. For further information write to Jewish Socialist.

WHAT'S HAPPENING on campus

Jewish students have been facing a difficult time on campus as the problems of the Middle East have become intertwined with the issue of antisemitism. Martin Lachs, past chair of Leeds University Jewish Society, presents a personal view of the "campus war", and Manchester University student, Tim Gutteridge, takes a critical look at the Union of Jewish Students and the role of "Socialist Zionists".

In this article I don't want to give a running factual account of the Middle East debate on campus or of related issues, but to present a personal view of how the tragedies and real consequences emanating from that part of the world have had an impact upon students.

It is sad that such an important issue as the fate of the Palestinian people and also that of antisemitism (which unfortunately on campus are not mutually exclusive) are done little justice through the ignorance and political opportunism exhibited by so many students. Realities have been blurred and even ignored by those who have little experience of the issues involved.

Maybe placing participants of the so-called "Campus War" into distinct categories is a crude method of analysis but by doing so I hope to highlight the reasons behind an apparent loggerhead situation existing in the "War".

Palestinian students have first hand experience of the Middle East. Their emotions run the highest of all the participants. Whatever they see as a solution to their plight, they are not remote from reality. They are the bitterest participants of the campus debate and justifiably perhaps, the most intransigent. Despite this, in the last academic year they have been woefully disorganised. I can compare this year to last, for I remember vividly a University Union General Meeting where a Middle East motion was to be debated. Palestinian and other Arab students, and some I would suspect not to be students, were herded into the meeting hall in great numbers. It would not be fair to talk of debate when a similar tactic, as often happens, was also used by Jewish students. Both opposing "battalions" were just following the orders of their Generals. There has been nothing of such stuff this

year.

Instead the "Bandwagonists" have taken to the stage. For the most part "Bandwagonists" are certain members of some organised political groups who, under the guise of being socialists, ultimately discriminate against women, Blacks, gays and Jews in their Messianic type crusade for "Class Revolution". Much like Elijah, they wait upon this revolution to solve everything. To quote Isaac Bebel, theirs is the "Socialism of Fools". I believe their interest in Palestinian rights to be incidental and it is promoted and demoted in importance at the whim of their guru leaders depending upon what they perceive to be the issue of the day. Their understanding of the situation in the Middle East is mirrored in these attitudes and they do not appreciate the complexities of real life. Actually I believe them to be an obnoxious bunch of political opportunists with little moral standing and very often for them Jew equals Zionist equals racist, unless the Jew eats pork.

I am aware that the idea was first taken on in the 70s, but it was only recently that a new lease of life was given to the "Zionism equals racism" idea. Whichever participants of the debate started it, the "Bandwagonists" took it up in the 80s with the most venom and relish. This fact I see as very sad. I am not suggesting that there is no point in discussing it, but in real terms it completely clouds the issue of Palestinian rights. Far more time is spent hurling abuse and insults about racists from one side to another and little time is taken to understand burning issues. I am wholly against banning Jewish Societies on the "Zionism equals racism" issue. It is sweeping dust under the carpet and I think it is an insult to the intelligence of all politically active students to assume that this is a sensible

or correct way of running a debate.

It is also an insult for Jewish students to talk of "mutual recognition". This term is meaningless in practical terms and I am certain that it's a con seeing as any Zionist knows full well that according to his or her doctrine it cannot work, and if it could, Jewish Zionist students wouldn't be talking about it. They are simply being expected to accept a line which they don't understand. If they mean two state solution they should say so; if they mean secular binational solution they should say so. "Mutual recognition" is a fob off term.

If I continue with my analysis of participants I must mention those lost in space, an ever decreasing band of "Mueslis". These supporters of good causes refuse to affiliate their socialism to ideologically corrupt organisations and have a strong sense of right, particularly human rights. Their freelance nature affords them an objective view of the Middle East situation and unlike the previous categories they do not muddle up Jewish student rights with Palestinian rights. They are in the "Not anti-Zionist" camp. "Mueslis" have a difficult time communicating their ideas... which is a pity.

Pro-Zionist Jewish students, I am afraid to say, often excel at harbouring ignorance. This, of course, is not exclusively so, but many Jewish students simply follow what the Jewish student organisations, the community and Cheder (Hebrew classes) have pumped them up with, without questioning (Palestinians often suffer in the same way). The establishment organisations, as is well known, have no time or money for Jewish students who think differently to them. Unfortunately the most powerful student body of all within the NUS, the student section of a well known political party, is

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all too often guilty of duplicity. Too willing to make tokenistic gestures to both anti-Zionists and Zionists, and with little interest in campaigns which don't score many political points, such as anti-semitism, I personally have abhorred their stand of recent. It is unforgivable that an organisation which claims to represent so many students should gloss over Jewish issues and that certain members of this organisation who are very active in the Scottish branch of the NUS, should be implicitly antisemitic in the media as well as being completely vague on Palestinian rights.

There are two victims of this scenario. Firstly the Palestinian students, for though they receive a great deal of support and attention in the student world, I cannot help but feel that yet again their problem is being snatched from them and being used in an unforgivable political game which saps the situation of its seriousness.

The second set of losers are those Jewish students who are both strongly aware and proud of their culture and religion but see "mutual recognition" for the insult to Palestinian rights that it is. These students fall between two stools for they are ostracised by establishment Jewish bodies and if they do not care for duplicity or "Bandwagonism", like many "Mueslis" they can easily be lost in the student world of politics.

At the end of it all I wonder if there is a genuine Middle East debate on campuses. Maybe it is simply the hammering out of the same insincere arguments year after year ingratitude having set in and the whole issue thwarted by political opportunism, confusion with other issues e.g. antisemitism and so on. Perhaps at next NUS Christmas conference the debate will be won — if at all — by the participants who can buy the most rounds of booze at the bars of the Winter Gardens.

Over the last year the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) has increasingly sought to present itself as a progressive partner in the "rainbow alliance" which is struggling to assert itself both within individual student unions, such as Manchester University, and within the National Union of Students (NUS) as a whole. UJS, we have been told, is an autonomous organisation of an oppressed group. Yet for socialists this progressive posturing is hard to swallow as long as UJS' political record provides little evidence of any fundamental commitment to progressive politics.

Within UJS, the largest identifiable source of support for progressive causes come from the Socialist Zionists. The opposition comes from both the contradictions within Socialist Zionism and from the needs and desires of much of UJS' leadership and members to provide uncritical propaganda for the Israeli state, while maintaining its standing with communal organisations such as the Board of Deputies. There is a further complication; the presence within UJS of supporters of Rabbi Kahane's *Kach* movement who have paradoxically used UJS' "progressive" aspirations as a lever to prevent any further drift to the left — at least over the issue of Israel/Palestine.

To deal first with the contradictions of Socialist Zionism then, there is the obvious problem that to demand an end to Israeli imperialism in the Middle East, to oppose the Law of Return, to advocate recognition of the PLO and to fight for Palestinian civil and national rights would be to make a fundamental break with Zionism. Yet these demands are the starting point for any socialist solution to the problem of Israel/Palestine. Traditionally, Socialist Zionists, in the face of these problems, have dropped their socialism, opting instead to seek left-credibility for the existing Zionist consensus. When this happens with such unfailing consistency,

non-Zionist Jews feel entitled to doubt the sincerity of many of those who claim at once to be socialist and Zionist.

The mainstream of UJS' leadership and members have been even worse, if less disingenuous about their political pretensions. It would obviously be unrealistic to expect anything worthwhile on the Middle East; what is far more depressing is that on an issue as basic as lesbian and gay rights, UJS nationally has refused to take up a vocal position in favour of the demands of lesbians and gay men. When approached by lesbians and gays within UJS for cash to support a support conditional on the omission of the words "lesbian" and "gay" from the poster. Moreover at a recent holocaust memorial service, a Jewish lesbian was refused the right to speak about lesbians who were victims of the holocaust. Perhaps UJS didn't think the image was quite right.

Most disturbing of all though, has been the development at Manchester recently of a tacit agreement. *Kach* supporters have threatened to take up a higher profile as Jewish Society members unless Socialist Zionist "dissidents" are kept in check. So far the arrangement has worked a treat; the Jewish Society has recently had three members elected to Executive as an independent centre ticket with "right-on" overtones, the fascists within the Jewish Society have dutifully kept their heads down.

Left wing Jewish students starting college this term should realise that UJS is not the only nor the most useful basis for political activity as Jews on campus. There is a need for socialist Jewish students to assert themselves more strongly and develop their own independent thought and action. For Socialist Zionists that means taking a much closer look at what their socialism consists of. □

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See article on page 33

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What encouraged members of the group to come together in the first place? Radi Suudi, who describes himself as an "exiled Palestinian" although born in Holland explained:

"I thought it important in the aftermath of the Lebanon war that Palestinians tried to find some kind of strategy to be able to reach those Jewish communities shocked by the war and to try and turn this feeling of shock into some kind of lasting solidarity and understanding for the Palestinian people and their cause."

He was conscious that the only mass force of opposition to the war had been provided by the peace movement in Israel. Although the impetus provided by this had now diminished, it was still worthwhile using it to create better understanding between Jews and Palestinians. Some of the Jewish members came from a Zionist background, others from a non or anti-Zionist standpoint. Much of the group's time has been taken up with hammering out an agreed political platform. One crucial plank in this platform is that the key to solving the Middle East problem lies in direct negotiations between the legitimate representatives of each party; the PLO and Israel. Some — "very radical Palestinians and Jews and Israelis who would not recognise the PLO" could not accept this, said Peter Demant. "But the group gained a political platform".

Activities were not just confined to politics, however. One "cultural" activity undertaken was to screen a film *Stranger at Home* by the Dutch Jewish film director Rudolf van der Berg, which concerns a Palestinian painter living in exile and his visit to his homeland. How did they deal with difficult subjects to talk about, such as the Holocaust? According to Beate Keizer, "We talked more on a personal level, working in sub-groups and talking about personal traumata."

Peter Demant elaborated: "Most of the Jewish participants are '2nd generation participants in the Holocaust'. It has given us the problem of communication. It is difficult to transfer to someone who has not been educated in the knowledge that the Holocaust happened, to communicate on an emotional level." He had been very touched when he heard a Palestinian talk of a visit to Bergen-Belsen, and how emotionally overwhelming he had found it.

Radi Suudi told how as a Palestinian educated in Holland he had been taught about the Holocaust. But, he continued: "It is very hard when the subject of the Holocaust is used as political manipulation to silence voices of opposition. This is very delicate and Palestinians have not always been good at identifying ways in which the Holocaust is 'living' among Jews". He felt that people like himself stood between Western and "Eastern" civilisation in a bridge function. They could communicate to less informed Arabs and Palestinians who "were not a

TALKING PEACE



The Lebanon war of 1982, culminating in the siege of Beirut and the massacres of Sabra and Chatilla had a profound impact on Jewish and Palestinian communities in Europe. In Holland, the Dutch Council of Churches took the initiative in bringing together a group of Jews and Palestinians living in Holland. They met at the *Moses and Aaron Church* in the middle of Amsterdam, by the great Sephardi synagogue. Four years on, they have continued to meet. Michael Heiser spoke with three members of the Dutch Jewish-Palestinian dialogue group at the conference in Amersfoort reported in *Jewish Socialist 5* and subsequently attended a seminar they organised themselves.

part of it and are not guilty, but still are confronted with the effects and results of the Holocaust."

Radi Suudi recognised that a comparison between the Holocaust and the Palestinian dispossession and exile frequently made by both Palestinians and Israelis, "but in almost all cases it is counterproductive". Peter Demant added "You can learn from history or you can ignore it but you cannot change it. Israel is now a fact of life. It had to make good to Palestinians what it did wrong to them. The first thing is global recognition of the wrong that had been done."

We went on to talk about Palestinian and Israeli culture. Palestinian culture was felt to be very distinct and homogenous wherever one went in the Palestinian diaspora. The group had had evenings of readings by Palestinian poets, for instance Anton Shammas. Israeli culture was seen as much more problematic. A lot of Israeli cultural history, thought Peter Demant, was a negation of diaspora history. But he felt there were signs of a countertrend, reintegrating the diaspora experience into Israeli culture. Beate Keizer thought that it was important not to forget the important role that could be played by Jews from Arab countries in

Israel. She also hoped that Israeli Arab culture would be afforded its rightful place. She had taken the initiative in publishing a Dutch translation of Fouzi al Asmar's *To be an Arab in Israel*.

The three-day seminar explored many of these themes further. The introductory statement pointed to creating conditions "in which Jews and Palestinians can meet and exchange views on a basis of equality without 'third parties', who though maybe with the best of intentions, try to canalise the dialogue in the way they see it and who try to neutralise emotional outbursts from either side. If Jews and Palestinians want to take each other seriously they will have to learn to listen to one another, even though they may disagree completely on the political level and the air is thick with emotional charges." The conference soon divided into subgroups each containing Jews and Palestinians, where we were encouraged to talk about how we saw ourselves as Jews or Palestinians and what our attitude was towards the "other".

It was interesting to contrast the differing attitudes which emerged among the Jews and the Palestinians. The latter, without exception saw themselves as an

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Jerusalem and Peace Service has been set up to provide "alternative tours of Israel" and I was asked to go on their pilot tour in July. I had certain reservations — was I just going to find one set of propaganda replaced by another? — but I agreed to go. What follows is a very personal, impressionistic account of this tour.

I'd been to Israel five times before, and had visited all the usual "tourist" places. This "alternative" trip also took in the tourist places but somehow they weren't the same — for instance, I had memories of Tiberias going back 12 years but being there with this group alienated the place. We were a mixed group — three members of the Jewish Socialists' Group, two members of the Church of England, four members of Palestinian solidarity groups, two journalists, a photographer, two publishers of pro-Palestinian books, and a potter who had made a previous tour of refugee camps. I spent much of the trip feeling alienated — I sensed a certain amount of latent antisemitism from one or two members although of course they would never admit this and like so many people, are probably not even aware of their feelings. But to declare yourself as "pro-Arab" or "pro-Palestinian" or "pro" anything immediately makes you anti something else. In this case presumably Israel and/or Jews. One of the publishers kept claiming it was his first time in Palestine.

I went to listen and to learn. So, at least, did the clergyman from Newcastle who came with a completely open mind and was, I found, the most interesting and receptive of the participants. Others had fixed views and probably had their prejudices confirmed. I certainly learnt a lot — we met a vast number of articulate spokespeople for the Palestinian/Arab cause, as well as members of the Israeli Jewish progressive movement and an interesting Israeli/American Jew who was finally persuaded to emigrate to Israel when the progressive movement came into being and now works part time for the Society for Bedouin Rights. We travelled the length and breadth of the country, visiting Arab towns and villages on the West Bank and in Gaza, refugee camps, the sites of destroyed Arab villages somehow erased from the collective Israeli memory, and Israeli towns such as Safed, Tiberias, Nazareth and Jerusalem (although I realise to call the latter Israeli is a contentious issue). I listened and learnt but came away more confused than ever. I wanted to believe that everybody was right and everybody had a case. I don't want Jews to have a homeland at the expense of someone else's home — but on my one free day I sat at the Western Wall and cried. I've seen it so many times before but never felt this emotion before. It was Friday — the Moslems were at prayer in the Mosque behind and the ultra-orthodox women prayed and wept at the wall. These same women would probably deny the rights of Arabs to live

Impressions of Israel/Palestine

1986

Some Jewish Socialists' Group members took part in a recent alternative trip to Israel/Palestine. Adrienne Wallman describes her feelings about the trip and Charlie Pottins writes about the people they met.

on their land. I cried for the utter futility of it all. And on my last night I stood on the Mount of Olives and looked out over a beautiful and tragic city.

I became conscious of so much injustice and of a universal desire among the Palestinians we met for (a) their rights and (b) a land of their own. Whether this land should opt for a law of return seemed open to question. I sensed no hostility towards Jews — most emphasised their like of and respect for Jews. Even the State of Israel was accepted as a fact. What was wanted was some kind of peaceful co-existence. It seemed to them that this might come about if the Zionists abandoned their Zionism. But how will that happen? This question wasn't answered. I felt all the time a need to hear the other side but I kept being told I'd heard the other side already; this trip was to redress the balance.

We had wonderful hospitality — even the poorest homes opened their doors and provided drinks and food. We didn't have a lot of time to talk privately to people but in Deir-el-Assad we did split up into small groups and visited private houses. I had the strange experience of seeing a Granada TV programme pop up on a TV set in an Arab village — a picture of a post office sorting office in Manchester subtitled in Arabic. Everybody welcomed our visit and saw us as ambassadors — people who could take the message back. One of the organisers said he would like to run these tours for everyone — will the traditional Jewish visitors whose gaze never gets beyond the recognised Jewish sites want (or dare) to come on a trip like this? Will Christian pilgrims include in their stay in Nazareth a visit to the al-Sawt publishing house which started in 1978 to promote Palestinian culture?

The security procedure at Ben Gurion Airport revealed how the Israelis see their visitors. Most non-Jewish travellers seemed to get a pretty hard time; the clergyman from Newcastle was strip-searched. People were questioned at length, passports were checked and rechecked, baggage rigorously searched. I mentioned my Jewish cousins in Nahariya and said truthfully how much I loved the country and was passed through quickly with a

smile. If they'd asked me how I could reconcile love of Israel with visiting Arab villages, the West Bank, Gaza, refugee camps, and meeting numerous Palestinian representatives, I would have told them it's precisely because I want Israel to survive that I feel it's important to hear the points of view of everyone. It's a small area of land to which many people have claims — some legal, some moral, some religious — and when you travel through it it's easy to see why all these people feel so emotional about it and have been prepared to give up their lives for it. Bassam Shak'a (the deposed Mayor of Nablus who had both his legs blown off in an assassination attempt by Israeli terrorists) said to us "Zionism is like rabies — it kills itself". In a sense that's true. The Zionist dream created the state but it created a myth too — "a land without people for a people without a land". Of course it wasn't a land without people. These people were there then and they're there now — we met them and spoke to them. They won't go away; they won't be transported to Jordan where they never were in the first place. And they won't abandon their dream. If Jews waited 2,000 years to return to their homeland they can't deny the right of others to a homeland. I believe in a way Zionism helped create the Palestinian identity and that identity can't now be denied. And the Palestinians can't deny the reality of the Jewish presence or the rightness of the Jewish case.

I felt very strongly Jewish all the time I was there, perhaps more so than ever before, because I felt my Jewish identity being challenged, less by the Palestinians than by the attitude of some of my co-travellers. I felt there was a certain hostility when anything Jewish or Israeli was mentioned, for example the brief visit to a kibbutz. But at the same time I felt many of them were white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who'd adopted a cause, like a football team you choose to support. They had no emotional ties and no years of Jewish upbringing and conditioning, so they can choose to be pro or anti whatever they like; I personally find it very hard to choose and I don't think it should be necessary to do so.

I have criticisms of the tour, I think that's inevitable (one was the virtual absence of women's voices; nearly all the people we met were men and one proposed meeting with a women's group was dropped through lack of time). The organisers are not neutral and don't claim to be. But I hope they will get a cross-section of people to take their tours so that maybe more eyes will be opened, even if more heads come back more confused. But perhaps it's those who see things too obviously as right and wrong who are the biggest obstacles to peace.

Most of all, what made it worthwhile were the people. True, the mountains soaring behind Deir al Assad, in the western Galil, were breathtaking. The sea rolling in on Gaza's beach a beautiful blend of azure and turquoise no artist's palette could aspire to. The rockfaces leading down to the Dead Sea, with its floating salt, had even a travel-blasé news photographer leaping to the window to grab his snaps. And walking through Damascus Gate at night into the Old City, even such an irreligious person as myself felt a tinge of awe for the continuity with the past.

But what was it Canon Riah had said, welcoming us to his church in Nazareth, and referring to the kind of tourists they are more used to? "Once they get into a place, and start to talk to local people, the tourist guide says 'Time to get back in the bus everyone!'"

Wherefore, was this tour different? In Nazareth, we met the Canon not just as a churchman in a largely Christian town, but as a prominent figure in the Progressive List for Peace, only recently returned from talks with Arafat. We were able to discuss local government problems with left-wing councillors there and in Um el Fahm, and education over dinner with the headmaster in Kafr Cana.

Our bus pulled off a dusty road at Deir al Asad, and there were the local councillors waiting to meet us. After being shown around, and through the cluster of flat roofs and winding alleys of the older part, we were whisked off in threes to individual homes to enjoy a wash and brush-up, and tea with the family, before going down to the fine new cultural centre for a talk. Later, there was the garden-restaurant at Tamra.

That night, chatting over our meal and drinks, one of our friends from Deir al Asad was interested to hear that I worked in a hospital. He was a male nurse in Haifa. We compared notes on the NHS and health services in Israel — where the nurses were on strike. One of our party asked whether he worked in an Arab hospital. No, his patients were all Jewish, long-staying psychiatric patients, "a lot

of them from Germany". He seemed to understand the significance of this, in a way that the less-sensitive English visitor did not, and I'd guess this young Palestinian was a very caring and gentle nurse.

My attention was diverted at that point though, by the arrival of some other diners at a nearby table. Khaki-clad, and burdened by sub-machine guns, they glanced back at us with not just curiosity, but was it nervousness? I thought how uncomfortable I'd feel in their boots, so incongruous amid the rose-buses and people relaxing.

Were they not allowed out in "civvies", I wondered, were the guns really necessary? We were well within "green line" Israel, and not far from Haifa. Frank, who had lived in Israel for a while, thought it was a matter of ethos, of a macho attitude. Seman, our Palestinian guide, told me "They're Arabs, actually" — meaning Druze members of the Border Police. But whether the guns and uniforms were necessary or not, whether the insecurity here was real or psychological, the sight was a reminder of the price Israel pays for land taken from Arab villages, and recognition withheld from a people. "Peace in Galilee"? Not yet by a long shot.

You see, not all our meaningful encounters were organised. It was a tribute to our tour guides and leaders that we were able to go right to the hamlet near Um el Fahm to see where a family's home had been demolished days before, and a mix of good organisation and sheer luck that the young mother whose husband was in jail was there to talk to us. But we must thank the Israeli authorities for laying on little show of misused strength just in time for our visit.

In Daheisha, it was arranged that a student under village arrest should tell us about the place and show us around. But it was his Mum, coming out to insist we must stay for coffee, who was able to tell us how they'd fled their home village in 1948, and why. Such stories you don't get from bare statistics, nor do you get the real "feel" of what it means to be a refugee till you talk to one. Her eloquence was not that of the rehearsed politician.

There was more to come, that afternoon, and again it was accidental. Climbing the rock-strewn hill behind the camp for a better view, we ran into an army patrol who appeared upset by our presence. We said we were just tourists, but unfortunately the chap who writes for the *New Statesman*, thinking to impress, told them he was a journalist. "This is serious", said the NCO. "Not even our own Israeli newspaper people are allowed into this place!"

Eventually, after a radio consultation with base, they decided to let us go, with a warning not to come back. We made our way down to the road, watched by the army group on the opposite hill who have Daheisha under constant surveillance. To one of our party, whom he may have taken to be more "Jewish-looking" from his Orthodox-style beard, the Israeli NCO had confided: "These people are animals. But they have a big problem. We are here. And we are the best."

I suppose we could have had similar encounters in South Africa, or Northern Ireland, or Palestine under the Mandate. Occupation is occupation, oppression is oppression, they do things to both oppressor and oppressed.

We saw and heard things to make us angry, or near to tears, or — dare I say it — ashamed. Anything else? Well, I should mention the feeling of a common bond. It wasn't just that some things were just like home, though as a resident of Lambeth I found, as did our Liverpoolian traveller, some of what the local councillors had to tell us very familiar! Likewise, when I asked about jobs in Um el Fahm, and was told about clothing sub-contractors employing low-paid women workers in little sweatshops, producing for bigger, well-known companies — I got the picture straightaway, as did our friend from the North-East.

It was also in Um el Fahm that an unscheduled deep ideological argument between two local left-wingers, ostensibly about local tactics but really of wider import (complete with quotes from Engels) had some of our party restive, but myself confidently joining in. After all, as not only a leftie myself but a Jewish one, I felt quite at home! Even if it was the call of the muezzin that interrupted, rather than the cry of "Time, gentleman please!" I heard the two antagonists were last seen going off together to the cafe to continue their debate. Just like us.

Something else I should mention is religion. One thing that had been worrying many Palestinians was the arrival of the "fundamentalist" phenomena to divide their ranks. There had been nasty clashes in Gaza, with Muslim *frummers* trying to impose their way on others, at weddings for instance. With what had been happening within Israeli-Jewish society to overshadow it — Jerusalem's walls still bore plenty of pro- and anti-*haredi* posters: at least Israelis and Palestinians have something in common.

To judge from the availability of arak and beer, the more devout Muslims had not so much sway over the rest as our own Orthodox enjoy over Israeli society. But a more significant indication of

today's Palestinian culture is the women. More and more are working outside the home, or working the farm while husbands are away (whether away on building sites or in prison). Those still at home do have the television to widen their horizons. Education, literacy, child-care provisions, health, political participation (legal or underground) they are reaching to take. We met many in modern Western dress. We also saw a few in the head-to-foot buttoned-up strict attire favoured by the fundamentalists — though I've seen more of these in London than I did throughout our tour in Palestine. Most common, whether the wearers were herding flocks in the Galil, bearing baskets of vegetables to market in Jerusalem, or taking the kids for a paddle on the beach at Gaza, was the loose, comfortable-looking Palestinian dress, often brightly-coloured or with distinctive embroidery. Traditional here does not mean reactionary, any more than progressive means imitating the West. Palestinian women are not shy of expressing an opinion. And they are likely to take an increasing part in deciding what kind of future Palestinian state takes shape.

From Nazareth to Gaza, we heard the call for a Palestinian State alongside Israel. Not as an option, but as imperative. "I want a State that will be for me what Israel is to Jews in England", declared Yahya Dabbagh passionately, at Deir al Asad. At Nablus, in the home of deposed mayor Bassam Shaka, it was made clear he and his people would settle for nothing less.

In Gaza, women's leader Yusra Barbari thought the Palestinian State might confederate with Jordan, or with Israel. "It might be more practical for us to form a federation with Israel." Canon Riah had also envisaged confederation: "Maybe in twenty years, or twenty-five years. After the two nations have learnt to trust each other."

Only in Jerusalem did I meet anyone — anyone purporting to support the Palestinian cause that is — who was opposed to this "Two-State" perspective; and that was a left wing Israeli who was finding his way from 'Matzpen' — leftward secular-democratic-(socialist)-statism to — as he did not deny when pressed — "equal civil rights" a la liberal Zionist Meron Benvenisti!

The Palestinians we met were neither fanatical nor pessimistic. They had thought out their way, and they were confident they could go forward, whatever the obstacles. It would do the left here good if they were to listen more carefully, instead of always being so ready with advice. And it goes without saying, that it would also do a lot of our own community good to meet these people, instead of knowing them only through headlines.

Because it wasn't just the talk of political leaders that made me hopeful. It was little things, like the way the Bedouin we met warmly *khapt a shmoos* with us when they found they could converse in Hebrew with Frank. Something I also found highly infectious was the Palestinian "secret weapon" — the resilient cheerfulness and self-confidence of the kids we met wherever we went.

To the organisers of our tour, Jerusalem and Peace Services, I am grateful for all their work and the vision behind it, and heartily wish them every success. For me, it was an unforgettable experience. And what made it, most of all, were the people.

Which way to socialism?

Michael Safier argues that the classical conception of socialist revolution is outmoded and that we must redirect our vision and practice towards "actually achievable socialism".

There is a struggle taking place today for the body of the socialist movement and the soul of the socialist project in all the most highly industrialised countries; especially Britain. The struggle is comprehensive — over socialist analysis, strategy, politics, aspirations and organisation. It is also about practice.

Because the socialist project is so fundamental to the future well being of an overwhelming majority of people, and because the struggle over the nature of the project is so basic and deeply felt, writing about it raises some basic problems. Brief assertions are liable to be crude caricatures, but lengthy exposition is often arid and incomprehensible. This article is intended to open a continuing debate with a particular interest: in the politics of organisations like the Jewish Socialists' Group seeking to bring to the socialist movement a genuine representation of the rights, needs and aspirations of people belonging to ethnic and national minorities.

To begin at the beginning, the argument and the struggle is about history, its interpretation, and the uses to which such interpretation is put in current politics. To summarise bluntly, we face two increasingly incompatible pos-

itions. One insists on an ultimate reliance on the continuing viability of a classical conception and implementation of socialist revolution, the product of late 19th and early 20th century experience. The other is based on a redirection of our vision, and revision of our practice, towards a contemporary socialist transformation created out of late 20th and early 21st century circumstances under advanced capitalism and its existing socialist counterparts. So far as the Jews as an ethnic and national minority, in many different countries are concerned, defining their circumstances, recognising of their rights, fulfilling their needs and celebrating their autonomy requires the replacement of existing capitalist society not by its mirror image in classical socialist revolutionary terms, but by a different and far more amenable version of "actually achievable socialism" in the current era.

The centrality of the struggle is reflected in the whole range of socialist thinking and political organisation in Britain today. The classical corner is very adequately represented by the thought of Ben Fine, Geoff Slaughter and, in more generous vein, Ralph Miliband; by the politics of Tariq Ali, Ted Knight, Derek Hatton, Arthur Scargill and, in more generous vein, Tony Benn; and by the

organisations of Militant, Socialist Organiser, the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Revolutionary Party. The contemporary camp is inspired by the writings of such as Eric Hobsbawm, Stuart Hall, Beatrix Campbell and Sheila Rowbotham; the politics of Michael Meacher, Ken Livingstone, Hilary Wainwright and David Blunkett; and by the organisations of the "realigned" left of the Labour Party, the Eurocommunists in the Communist Party, the socialist wing of the women's movement, and the socialist groups within the Black and other ethnic communities. The corresponding publications have become ever more sharply contrasted in substance and style. In one universe we encounter the *Socialist Worker*, the *Militant*, *Labour Herald* and *London Labour Briefing*. In another we find the *New Statesman*, the *New Socialist*, the equally "new" *Marxism Today*, *Chartist*, and *Women's Review*.

At bottom the classical conception is based on the primacy of class politics and State power. Class struggle is the primary driving force of all history. In capitalist society the material circumstances and basic interests of the working class provoke a defining struggle against the exploitation of labour and the alienation

of social life. The historical trend of capitalist economy and social relations results in an irresolvable crisis in which consciously proletarian political organisation ensures revolutionary action. The most highly conscious and well organised groups of workers and their allies will lead the way to the seizure of State power. The working class, whose conditions and interests are seen as universal and all inclusive, becomes the base of a classless society, the first prerequisite for the advancement of socialist transition.

This is a dramatic and splendid vision whose power to inform and inspire is undeniable. Born out of confrontation with the high capitalism of the last century, given shape and force above all by Marx and Engels, and embodied in an unbroken tradition of European socialist struggle whose achievements were at their height during the first three decades of this century, the revolutionary socialist movement has subsequently provided a continuing contribution to the struggle for economic and social progress in all the advanced capitalist countries. Despite these achievements, and notwithstanding the enormous sacrifices of revolutionary and militant struggle, the classical movement has so far failed to achieve its revolutionary ambitions in mature capitalist societies. Also following its principal contributions to existing socialist societies, such ambitions have failed to inspire much further support.

The most fundamental flaw in the classical movement in contemporary circumstances is its basic view of the working class; an impossibly uniform and restrictive definition of those who are both necessary and sufficient to bring about the wholesale transformation of society. At its most extreme, it sees the working class as white, male and manual. Even the most amenable analysis and strategy on offer makes second class workers out of all those in "unproductive" labour, that which does not contribute directly to (largely industrial) production and surplus value. From this arises a set of further concerns and perceptions which in practice have been found increasingly lacking in effectiveness and inspiration, starting with the unfounded automatic link between working class position and proletarian politics.

There is a quite unwarranted emphasis on the correctness of self-styled vanguard groups engaged on mobilising the mass of workers behind their increasingly sectarian versions of strategic struggle. There is an ultimately non-viable and repressive concentration on securing State power and using it to impose centralised administrative direction without much regard for the experience and needs of those in whose name such direction is justified. There is an increasingly unacceptable style of political organisation, dignified under the rhetoric of democratic centralism, which is both hierarchical and patriarchal. And beyond all this there is the refusal to

acknowledge — in any but a strictly subordinate and temporary form — representation in the socialist struggle of groups and movements other than the workers — blindness to the multiple components of human self-awareness in terms of gender, community, ethnicity or nationality.

We are now living in the midst of a new industrial revolution, a newly emerging pattern of economic forces and material life, a new division and exploitation of labour. We face a new global and national distribution of industries and services, of employment and incomes, of occupations and status, of work and leisure, of unemployment and self-employment. There is correspondingly a new social consciousness of class, community, environment and international relations, all affected by major shifts in the position and perceived interests of women, ethnic minorities and of national groups struggling against discrimination and oppression. In such conditions socialist transformation can no longer wait on the revolutionary seizure of State power by the vanguard of the workers. We cannot refer back once again to yet another "reading" of 19th and early 20th century sources.

The contemporary socialist movement is the product of these imperatives. It is very thoroughly reworking the older vision to produce an equally compelling analysis of the dynamics and contradictions of contemporary global capitalism. It includes in its concept and strategy a view of the relations — sometimes reinforcing, sometimes antagonistic — between the tendencies within "late" capitalism and the dynamics of states and nationalisms, of sexism and racism, and of centralised bureaucracies, welfare states and cross class social movements. This has given rise to a form of practical political struggle that attempts the necessary task of encompassing a broad and diverse class alliance of workers — in manual and mental labour, in private and public sectors, in formal and informal work, in factories and localities, in offices and communities. It recognises that the socialist transformation of society will proceed through the united efforts of an alliance of equal constituencies and associations, whose interests are denied by contemporary capitalism. It incorporates a struggle for the social control of technology, environment and economic potential so as to give priority to the satisfaction of basic needs; for social accountability of both private and public legal and institutional power; and for social justice founded on the rights and demands of those groups defined in their own terms as suffering specific forms of inequality, discrimination, alienation and domination. In particular it confronts the irreducible demands of the women's movement and of ethnic minorities to be partners in the creation of a socialist commonwealth that incorporates

concerns for feminist and ethnic priorities, not only in the socialist vision but even more crucially in the social and political organisation needed to bring it about. The vision of an actually achievable socialism now on the agenda is one where equality is combined with efficiency in production, distribution and consumption, and where economic and political democracy is combined with cultural diversity and gender aware individual autonomy. It is a vision whose practical implementation in current conditions is both capable of mobilising massive support and of outdistancing what late capitalism has to offer, especially in its peculiarly British version.

The importance of this contemporary movement for Jewish socialists is dramatically evident. The classical conception of the revolutionary socialist project defined Jews as a group as irrelevant to or incompatible with the struggle. As a "people class" in one classical phrase, as a religious group, or as a predominantly middle class minority, Jewish communities are seen as unpromising and obstinate material by definition. Over the last 50 years classical socialist analysis has been unable to convincingly interpret those tendencies of most concern to a majority of Jewish people, and nor have classical revolutionary movements been able to prevent their terrible consequences — fascism, nationalism, antisemitism. Continued adherence to classical socialist politics has produced unacceptable and objectionable reactions to Jews as a national and ethnic group with legitimate rights and aspirations for equality and solidarity with others.

Such fundamentalist orthodoxy has its exact parallel within modern day Jewish communities in which an equally backward looking and restrictive vision of our position and interests is taken by an equally self-righteous vanguard combining communal, religious and nationalist organisations. For Yigael Gluckstein (alias Tony Cliff) on the one hand, read Jacob Gewirtz on the other. The contemporary movement struggling towards an actually achievable socialism offers the Jewish community a quite different and positive perspective, in which alongside other ethnic minorities Jewish socialists take their proper place as an autonomous force within the socialist alliance. This is a basis for combining with many progressive groups within the Jewish community struggling to emancipate themselves from the conformity of our own "classical" mythology.

At the end of the 20th century the socialist project and the search for a universally accepted celebration of diversity and autonomy, holds out a unique opportunity for the Jewish people, recalling the previous creative period 90 years ago which produced the Bundist movement from which contemporary Jewish socialists derive their own historical consciousness. □

MY COUNTRY 'tis of thee

a short story by Sharon Rose

Esther was a good child. She had a slight tendency to daydream which sometimes irritated her teacher, and her mother was a bit worried about her spelling, but she had never given any cause for alarm. Not like her cousin, Sarah, who was so naughty that her father had been called in to see the headmaster of the Hebrew classes more than once. Esther's father felt sorry for his brother, such a headache Sarah was, and so unlike his own little sweetie. Mind you, it was his own fault; he never controlled Sarah enough, her being an only child. Not that he ever controlled Esther either. She never needed it, thank God.

He had watched her, many a *shabbos* afternoon, tucked in the armchair in the corner of the sitting room, watching, silently absorbing, as her big brothers sat around the old oak table with their friends, studying and cracking jokes, talking about school and how, when they left, they were going to *yeshiva* in Israel to complete their studies. Esther never tried to join in the conversation — maybe she felt overwhelmed; they were so much older than her. But she never seemed withdrawn or fearful in her armchair; she just watched. Her mother said she thought Esther was daydreaming about being a big boy and going off to *yeshiva*, but her father couldn't agree. After all, she did enjoy dressing her dolls, and hadn't they given her the pink furry animal she wanted for her last birthday, even though they secretly thought she was much too old for such things.

God bless her, she enjoyed learning, too. It was odd, her spelling being so bad when her nose was always poked in some book or another. And what books! Let nobody say he wasn't a tolerant father. He never stopped Esther borrowing whatever she liked from the library; he hadn't said a word when she came home with that *Tales From Many Lands* which was full of stories about little Arab boys. It was good that she knew what went on in the world. Perhaps that was where Joe had gone wrong; he wouldn't let Sarah belong to the library — weren't there enough books in his house, he enquired, that she needed to go looking at *goyishe* books full of fanciful ideas.

When his brother told him about it he sympathised with his plight, for don't we all desire to protect our children from harm, to teach them the ways of righteousness? He thanked God he had been spared such difficulties with his own children. Look at Moshe — doing so well with his A-levels, and looking forward to going to *yeshiva* next year before going to university. His parents' only worry was whether they would have enough money to keep him in Israel for a whole year. They had

never been there themselves, to make sure they saved enough to send the boys. It was such a worry, with Chaim being only two years younger. Thank God they had grants to go to university these days, otherwise they might end up working in a shop like their parents, even though they were so bright. And, of course, Esther wouldn't go to *yeshiva*, but maybe a year in Israel at a girls' seminary would be a good idea? There was plenty of time to worry about that, thank God; let's get Moshe and Chaim through their exams first.

Esther's latest volume from the library was *The Wonders of Iceland*, and Moshe, in particular, was ready to flush it down the toilet. He was trying to do his maths homework, when Esther came into the sitting room, clutching the book excitedly to her chest. She thrust it dramatically under his nose and said, "Look at these lovely pictures."

"I'm working," he said.

"But Moshe, have you ever seen a picture of a geyser before?"

"No I haven't, and I don't want to see one now."

"But Moshe, they're so mysterious. Can you imagine going down one of those holes? You could go right to the middle of the earth. In the old days they wrote stories about the people who lived down there. I think it would be so exciting, you could see all the different colour rocks, and the underground streams, and you could see where the hot water came from."

"No you couldn't; it would be pitch black," retorted Moshe. "Now will you go away and let me do my homework."

"But Moshe..."

"If you don't go away, I'll tell Dad."

Esther could see it was pointless, so she took her book into the kitchen where her mother was making supper. "Mum, do you know about the Norse invaders?"

"No, darling."

"Well it says in this book that they came to Iceland in wooden boats in the 9th century, and they were very tall and blond and brave, and some of them went on to Greenland and America long before Columbus. I wish I was tall and blond and could build wooden boats to sail across the oceans."

"Perhaps you could do that after you've learnt to set the table properly."

"But Mum, I know how to set the table."

"Well why don't you do it and stop bothering me with your Norse invaders?"

"But Mum, Moshe's doing his homework and he'll complain if I turn him off to set the table."

"All right, darling, wait until Daddy gets home, but please don't get under my

feet while I'm trying to cook."

So Esther took *The Wonders of Iceland* back into the sitting room, and went and curled up with it in the armchair, ostentatiously taking the long route round the table so that Moshe would know she wasn't speaking to him.

When her father came in a little later, he smiled indulgently as he passed the door and saw his big boy and his little girl so engrossed in their books. He sighed contentedly as he passed into the kitchen and greeted his wife.

A few days later, Esther met Sarah in the playground at Hebrew classes. Sarah looked very sorry for herself.

"What's the matter?" asked Esther.

"Dad said that if he ever hears again that I told Mrs Schatzman I don't believe in God, he'll stop my pocket money for a month."

"What good would that do?"

"Don't ask me."

"Don't you believe in God?" Esther sounded slightly amazed.

"I don't know. I didn't even say I didn't; I just said I thought we should think about it. Don't you?"

"I suppose so," said Esther doubtfully, "but I don't think it's a good idea to tell Mrs Schatzman things like that. She's not very sympathetic. I'm glad I'm in Miss Klein's class. There's the bell. See you later."

Esther went inside and sat down, and while she was waiting for Miss Klein to arrive, she got out her book to have another look at that wonderful picture of molten lava, and the one of the people in their pretty costumes.

Miss Klein came briskly into the room and put her things down, and the pupils all sat up straight. Esther reluctantly put her book away. 'Now children, in a few weeks' time it will be *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, and after that it will be *Succos*. I'm sure you all know about *Succos*, don't you? Would you like to tell me about it, Rivka?"

"Yes, Miss. We build a *Succah* in the back garden and we make the walls out of blankets and the ceiling out of branches, and we hang up oranges and apples and

me and my brother draw pictures for the walls, and then we eat our meals out there."

"Very good, Rivka. Now does anybody know why we build a *succah*? Yes, Martin?"

"The *succah* commemorates the tents that the Children of Israel built to live in while they were wandering in the wilderness for 40 years."

Miss Klein beamed with pleasure. It was so nice to teach these children who came from observant homes, instead of those brats she had had to put up with before. "Quite right, Martin. Imagine, children, wandering in the desert for 40 years, trying to reach the Promised Land, suffering your punishment gladly because you know that one day you will be allowed to go home, back to your own country. Even though it's a land you've never seen, you feel an almost overpowering attachment to it. You long to go back, to be settled again. But, of course, you made the Golden Calf and worshipped it while Moses was on Mount Sinai, so you know you must be punished. Can you imagine what it's like, waiting to go back to the Promised Land, children?"

"Yes," chanted a chorus of nodding heads.

"So tell me, children, what is your country? Esther, you tell us."

"Iceland, Miss."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Iceland, Miss Klein."

"That's what I thought you said." Two or three children giggled nervously. Miss Klein was trying to stay calm. Esther was not normally the sort of girl who caused trouble, not like her dreadful cousin in poor Mrs Schatzman's class.

"Iceland, Esther? What makes you say Iceland is your country?"

"Well, Miss, it's so exciting and mysterious. All cold and hot at the same time; all that molten lava. It reminds me of milk and honey like you were saying. And those dwarves, living under the volcanoes. I'd love to go there."

"I see. And what about Israel, Esther? Would you like to go there?"

"Oh yes, I expect so. Moshe and Chaim are going there to *yeshiva* and I might go to the girls' sem when I'm old enough."

"But you don't think that Israel is your country, Esther?"

"I don't think so, Miss; I don't think they have geysers in Israel. Can you imagine all that water rushing out of the ground? I've got a picture in my book. Would you like to see it?"

"That will do, Esther," said Miss Klein, and dismissed the class, even though it was ten minutes early for break.

Nobody said anything, but Esther was certain she had been very naughty. When she got home her father called her into the sitting room. Moshe's homework was spread out on the table but there was no Moshe.

"Come and sit on my lap, Esthela," said her father in an affectionate voice. Esther obeyed. "Are you looking forward to *Succos*?" he asked. She nodded. "Would you like to help me and the boys build the *succah* this year?"

"Oh yes, please," she bounced on his knee in happy anticipation.

"You don't think perhaps it might be better if we could build it somewhere beside a geyser?" From exhilaration, Esther was plunged into terrible despair. Someone must have already told him what had happened at Hebrew classes. She was so embarrassed, she sat, staring blankly at the floor.

Her father looked at her for a moment, then burst out laughing. He gave her a big hug. "Don't look so worried, little one; it isn't the end of the world. Remember — everybody makes mistakes." □

Glossary

Shabbos — Sabbath, Saturday

yeshiva — religious seminary

goyishe — non-Jewish

Rosh Hashana — Jewish New Year

Yom Kippur — the Day of Atonement

Succos — the Harvest Festival

Succah — a roofless hut

A story by Joe Solomon

Benjie Rosenbloom, brewing his early morning tea, heard the volley of rattling and thudding as the postman manoeuvred what sounded like a mountain of mail through the high, narrow letterbox of the large house split up into bedsits. Grimacing, Benjie muttered to himself, "More birthday cards for Jesus' one thousand nine hundred and sixty-fifth. Well, he's not at *this* address, that's for sure!" He was a weedy, unkempt young man, in a seedy, neglected little room. Looking gloomily into his teacup, he went on, "I suppose that's why infinite space was created. To accommodate birthday cakes with candles running into very high numbers." After a few sips, he donned the grubby dressing-gown that was too large for him, and went to pick up the mail. He always rose early and arranged it in bundles on the hall table, ready for the other residents to collect. Why he did not know — he was unemployed and had nothing to rise for and no letters to expect unless OHMS or his occasional job applications turned down. This day, there was nothing official-looking. "Sod sorting out other people's Christmas cards while my tea gets cold!" He heaped everything on the table and went back to his room.

Today, Christmas Eve, the others would all be going away. To the bosoms of the families whence much of that bumf had emanated. He would have the stately home to himself. From his own strongly orthodox Jewish family, Christmas cards and reunions were not to be expected. But then neither were Jewish New Year cards, nor invitations to come home for Passover. Well, last thing he wanted, wasn't it? The big turning-point in his life had been breaking free from all that. "Turning point to what exactly?" he asked himself. He looked in the mirror and frowned at the sight. "Can I face a shave today? Can I shave a face today?" Why did he keep repeating jokes that were not even funny the first time? He would have another cup of tea and try to find the energy to shave.

Over his tea, he pondered, "Would I have been happier staying there?" No, the situation had become unbearable. There was not only the religion, there was the domination of his father in everything else besides. From his mother he had had tenderness and affection, and he still felt the pain of that uprooting, but her views merely reflected her husband's. He had everything mapped out for his children. Benjie was the one with no obvious talent, unlike Simon with his school prizes for science, and Becky, who had come fourth in a *Jewish Chronicle* story-writing competition and would clearly excel in journalism until a nice Jewish boy came along. Benjie had, however, become obsessed with pious observances at the age of fifteen, and rabbinical college was planned for him. At seventeen, he had doubts about God, and to go ahead would have been sheer dishonesty. He did not word it thus to his parents, but put the case for a wider education till he was bit older. He started an Arts course at the university in his home town, still living with his parents.

They structured his social life around meeting "nice Jewish girls". He always groaned to remember that phrase. A necessary device for Jewish survival, but sod all use it had been to him! He had never been physically attractive, never good at socialising, tongue-tied sometimes. Never got anywhere with girls. From his parents, on this problem, there had been nothing but vague, cosy platitudes. There was another problem he didn't dare mention to them. He wasn't sure if it was girls he wanted.

There had been, on his course, a nice, non-Jewish boy called Andrew. Well, not nice by conventional standards — he looked a prototype beatnik, with all the features that were then becoming something of a fashion, the long hair and beard, the scruffy clothes, the beads. One casual conversation showed that he was very like Benjie — unsure, restless, at odds with his upbringing. They came to feel they needed each other in every way, and Benjie moved in with Andrew. Mr and Mrs Rosenbloom made some uninvited visits and realised that much more than the food was non-kosher. "Heavy scenes" was Andrew's term for it. The rift soon became total.

But, before long, there was a rift with Andrew. He had lots of other friends, lively, interesting people. At Andrew's parties, Benjie was as much a wet blanket as he had been at Jewish events. When another man became a regular overnight guest Benjie found a flat of his own where he isolated himself, brooding, afraid to meet people, neglecting his appearance, and

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also his studies, which now held no interest for him.

When exams approached, he panicked for breathing-space to try to sort himself out, and went to the university doctor for a sick-note. The doctor's searching questions got very incoherent answers; Benjie was sent to a psychiatrist, and agreed to voluntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital.

The ward was not uncongenial, and it was nice to absorb himself in scrabble, table-tennis and chess. When his parents tried to visit, he refused to see them. They went, in distress, to Dr Grant, who told Benjie that this had been very immature of him. Yes, it was for Benjie to make his own decisions and it was time he did, but not on impulse. "A few sessions with one of our social workers may help you to clarify the options. Miss James is very experienced in family interaction. So you'll do me the favour of seeing *her*, will you?"

Miss James was about his own age, only recently out of college. He wondered where the experience had come from, unless it was her own family. She offered a feasibility study of Benjie's family environment. For the first time in ages, Benjie had a good laugh. "That wasn't meant to be funny," she said — but she did laugh with him. The idea was to sound out whether or not a more viable relationship with the family was possible. It would involve separate sessions with him and with his parents, followed by combined ones. He turned this down.

Despite this bad start, he warmed to Miss James. She was friendly, he could really talk to her. She had dark curly hair and her eyes lit up when she smiled. Home-truths from her were a lot more palatable than from Dr Grant. "You only started university to keep your father quiet for a while, didn't you?" she put it to him. "Not really a good reason, was it?" "No. No, it wasn't. So you think I should give it up?"

"It's what you think that matters."

"Well — I don't think I'm academically inclined, really."

"What way are you inclined?"

The only honest answer at that point would have been that he was inclined to get to know her a lot better. He shrugged helplessly.

Shortly after that, he decided he would drop university, and she arranged for him to stay at a half-way house hostel while he looked around for a job. The day he left hospital, he asked her, his heart pounding at his boldness, "Would it be possible to see you again? I was thinking . . ."

"Oh, certainly. I was coming on to that. I think the sessions should continue on an out-patient basis. Perhaps give yourself a week."

"No, that's not what I meant. I meant — meeting — well, socially — perhaps, say, films or,"

"I'm sorry, but no." She became, suddenly, defensive. "That's not something I'd be allowed to do — as a social worker in a professional relationship."

"But why not? Surely — that is — I mean if . . ."

"We can't let ourselves become emotionally involved. And, in any case, I have a very full life outside of my work."

He walked out of the interview-room, thinking, "Very nice for you!"

He received a letter proposing out-patient sessions from a man who signed himself "Senior Psychiatric Social Worker". "He'll be 57", Benjie thought wryly, "to avoid emotional involvement from my other side." He ignored it.

Perhaps he should have given the man a try, he now reflected. On his unguided own, he had drifted in and out of hostels and lodgings, never able to hold down a job. Lost them over the stupidest of things, like rebelling against being required to wear a dark suit and black shoes in that shoe store. Why had he treated such petty things as gigantic threats to his independence? Yes, he had made a kind of fetish of independence. Otherwise he wouldn't have got caught up in the culminating disaster of the Desmond Parker Trust.

He heard of it through being asked to sign a petition against it. His landlady was circulating the document around her boarders with the soup. This was a respectable neighbourhood, she said, and these people were trying to open a doss-house on their very doorstep. Desmond Parker, "a scheming old rascal", was the nephew of "that half-senile Miss Parker" who had lived alone in a large house in that street. Her house and money had now come to him under her will. He had gathered a bunch of hippies around him, and they planned to throw the house open to meth drinkers

and every kind of scum. What an outrage! Benjie alone refused to sign, and endured general disapproval.

On his evening walk, he went and looked at the house. A little group of young women and men were just breaking off from tidying up the large garden. Their appearance was unconventional, but not that of full-blown hippies. They were transforming that garden! It had been a derelict wilderness when he had last seen it. Now, lawns and flower-beds were taking shape. They were laughing and joking, and Benjie felt drawn to the warmth and friendliness. "Big improvement!" he shouted over. "Glad you think so," came a reply. "Not too bad, considering we're not gardeners."

"I was asked to sign"

"Come on in. Save your vocal cords!"

He went through the gate. "Had a row about you tonight without even knowing you." He told them about the petition.

"We know," one of the women replied. "But we're going to fight it. We'll be at the public meeting. Desmond will know how to answer it. We're just going inside for some supper. Why don't you join us?"

He was shown into a newly painted living-room — a bit untidy, but clean and homely-looking. A small, wiry, bearded man in his fifties, wearing neat but non-matching tweeds, was bringing a tray of coffee and sandwiches from the adjoining kitchen. "Hey, Desmond!" said the woman who had invited Benjie in, "this man has just told them what they can do with their petition. He was the only one in his digs who refused to sign it. What's your name, by the way? I can't keep calling you 'this man'."

"Benjie. Benjie Rosenbloom"

"Hallo, Benjie, and welcome!" Desmond shook his hand — though he used both hands and made it more like an embrace. "Stood up for us, did you? You're the first person we've met in this neighbourhood who doesn't put the value of property above the value of human beings."

"Haven't got any property to value."

"You're none the worse for that. You were very courageous to take the stand you did."

"I don't know, really. I wasn't looking for an argument about it. It just wasn't something I could sign."

Desmond chuckled. "In my experience, courageous people never recognise themselves as such. So I won't argue the point, I'll just thank you."

Their eyes met. Desmond's were a warm dark brown, steady, gentle.

The face was rather lined and seemed to suggest a deep wisdom and sensitivity.

"Desmond," said one of the youths, "if you'd give Benjie some coffee instead of embarrassing him. . ."

"Of course. I'm sorry. I sometimes ramble on a bit, Benjie. Grab a seat, grab a sandwich, make yourself at home. How do you have your coffee?" They all settled round the fire. Someone poked it up, the flames glowed bright. A profound sensation swept over Benjie — that of a homecoming, a welcome by a family, by a father — oh most of all by a father!

"I expect you'd like to know about us," said Desmond. "We want to make this a community where there's no heavy distinction between the carers and the cared-for. We'll all live at the same level, eating together, sharing tasks, making decisions together. What we will not do is force people back into the very system that broke them in the first place. That's what social workers do. I was one myself. It didn't work."

The young people took up this point with much feeling — how could it work when the system itself was so rotten? Then they talked about their backgrounds, the oppressions in their lives, wrong turnings, rough times, breakthroughs. Benjie, realising that nothing would shock them, told his story. Someone said, "You belong with us, Benjie." And in that late evening glow of communion, he joined the Desmond Parker Trust.

He didn't mind that Trust workers got only board and pocket-money. The inner remuneration of belonging somewhere and having a purpose was immeasurable. The run-up to the public meeting was their immediate preoccupation. Desmond knew the right things to say to the local papers, councillors and officials. They were not the things he said to his young friends over supper. He described public relations as hateful but essential. One must talk to people at their level of understanding. It was not deception, but translating truth into an imperfect, primitive language. At the

meeting, he came over very effectively. The Trust got permission to operate for a trial period.

It looked like bringing out the best in Benjie. He became interested in people, he grew out of the old shyness. He undoubtedly helped some residents. But there were other types with whom he was never at ease.

Harry was in his fifties and powerfully built, but his drink problem had taken its toll and he looked much older and was far from fit. He had brushed aside many doctors' warnings. Advice from anyone met with loud-mouthed resentment; most of all when it came from young do-gooders who knew nothing of life. He very often spent his rent-money in the pub.

It fell one time to Benjie, once Harry had sobered up, to call him into the office and try to deal with the rent question. "Harry, you know we can't let this kind of thing go on. One of us will have to go with you when you collect your dole money—"

"Oh will they? What about the money this place owes me when I paid a full week and only stopped one night?"

"There's no record of that in the book."

"Then the bloody book's cooked!"

"Harry, this is getting you nowhere and you know it. Either there's a proper arrangement about rent which you keep to, or you'll have to go."

"Trust a Jew-boy to go off the deep end over his rent!"

"It's not my rent, it's the Trust's rent."

But the more Benjie reasoned, the more Harry piled it on about Jew-boys. Benjie had resolved not to be provoked, but it came at last to: "The one person who had the right idea was Hitler and it's a pity he didn't finish off the job." Benjie hit him hard in the face, only to be thrown against the wall, then flung to the floor. As Harry lumbered downwards for the kill, Benjie kicked out wildly into his stomach. An agonised groan came from Harry. The stomach, with its chronic ulcers, was a very vulnerable spot. He collapsed, still groaning, gasping, face pale as death.

In panic, Benjie rang for an ambulance and alerted his off-duty colleagues. The other panic — that of self-questioning — would have to wait. "What happened to him, for God's sake?" cried Desmond. "And what happened to you?" (As he took in Benjie's torn jersey and bleeding nose.) "Attack you, did he?"

Benjie had realised that there was a good chance of getting away with that explanation. But to lie to Desmond and the Trust was unthinkable. Incoherently, he tried to make them understand. Desmond, as soon as he caught the gist, cut him short. "It will have to be dealt with by a house meeting. Now. Or as soon as the ambulance has been. Olive, can you get everyone assembled?"

A house meeting was all workers and residents. The television was immediately turned off, the chairs set out into a wide circle. Desmond made a phone-call to the hospital and then it started.

He had, he announced to be kept immediately informed about Harry. He asked Benjie for his account of the incident. Benjie was trembling. Others comforted him as best they could, and only slowly did the sequence become clear. "That was awful for you, Benjie!" said Kath, the woman who had asked him in that first day. "But couldn't you have — when you felt it getting heavy, couldn't you have passed it to Desmond?" There was a mix of comments — confused, uncomprehending, but several sympathetic. Then the voices were hushed as Desmond declared that this was the saddest day in his and the Trust's life. Violence struck at the whole idea of community. So, it was true, did racial prejudice, and he was very sad for Benjie, a valuable and cherished worker. But Benjie, surely, must know that racial prejudice could not be beaten out of people. Once violence was started, there was no knowing how or where it would end. Harry might have looked strong, but now his life could be in danger. The future of their Trust was certainly in danger. They had won only a precarious acceptance in this area. He had had to let the hospital know how Harry had met his injuries. If, in the course of events, it spread further, the Trust would be at the mercy of the petition-mongers and the authorities. One of the residents broke in, "You mean it would be closed down? Everyone turned out on to the streets again?"

"Yes, if the worst came to the worst, closed down. The Council has the

power to do it, make no mistake. We would try to get people placed elsewhere, but. . ." His voice trailed off ominously.

"A right bloody mess you've made for us, then, haven't you?" the man said to Benjie. "If you can't take insults, you shouldn't be in that job." Desmond interposed, "Let's keep it off the level of personal abuse. We are a community. While we still exist we are. I only pray that the news we get from the hospital will not be the worst possible. The phone rang. Benjie found himself thinking, "When Desmond prays, God doesn't mess about."

Desmond returned from taking the call to say that Harry was pretty ill, but did not seem to be in danger. That didn't mean, however, that their troubles were over. There were various ways, official or unofficial, in which it could be spread around that a Trust workers had seriously injured a resident. "The agonising question for us is, could we hope to survive if it were known that the worker was being allowing to stay on?"

In the discussion that followed, there were still a few people who spoke up for Benjie, but, with one exception, they spoke as if they knew they were fighting a lost cause. The exception was a young man called Peter, the only black resident. Normally, he was very withdrawn, and had never before spoken at the house meetings. Benjie had once drawn him out a little while trying to sort out a muddle over dole payments. Peter said, "There's a lot being said about this being a community. Well, Benjie's one of the community, so why is the community putting him on trial? He was only doing his job, trying to help people, and he gets his race and his religion thrown in his face. He wasn't looking for a fight with Harry. He took a lot of shit from Harry, and then Harry says the worst thing you can say to a Jew. I know just how Benjie felt. I'm Black and I've had that kind of thing myself. He shouldn't have had to take all that, and he shouldn't have to take being put on trial. Why isn't that bastard being put on trial?"

Benjie suddenly felt close to tears. He meant to say "Thank you", but he knew he would break down if he did. He became aware that the atmosphere had changed for others too. People were looking uneasy, eyes cast down. Even Desmond seemed taken aback, but only momentarily. He rejoined, "Thank you, Peter, for putting some very important points of principle. Two things I must say right away. First, Benjie is not being put on trial. We — all of us, as a community, a caring community — are trying to resolve a deeply painful dilemma in as honest a way as possible. Second, I absolutely agree with you over racial prejudice. No one in this room abhors it more than I do. I have a great deal of respect for Benjie as a human being and as a member of this community. I, too, know how he felt — well, not at first-hand, it's true, but I'm not without imagination. I know the nightmare this is to Benjie. But I read the situation this way. If we are not very careful, the repercussions of this could destroy this community, destroy this place and the way of life we have tried to build up. There are times when the immediate problems and needs of an individual must give way to something wider and longer-term, even an individual who is very precious to me. I think, perhaps, that that is something which in his own heart Benjie knows." Towards the end of this speech, Peter had walked out. Usually, Desmond harangued anyone trying that, but not this time. He now looked straight at Benjie. There was a long pause. Benjie realised that he was invited to resign. He remained silent. Benjie's future was put to the vote. Even those in sympathy had been swayed by the way Desmond had put it.

So here he was, in a room that was not a home, belonging nowhere, going nowhere for Christmas. He had never thanked Peter, had shrunk from the pain of that encounter. That nagged at him. It could have given Peter a very wrong impression.

They would be preparing for festivities at the Trust. He had been looking forward to the feel that place would have at Christmas. Well, he would have to be solitary. What's more, he had better be solitary — had messed up every situation and every relationship had had ever known, he had even come pretty close to murder. His accursed Jewishness was the biggest mess of all. He was supposed to have completely rejected it — then why did he react that way to Harry? It boiled down to inhabiting a senseless no-man's land where he got hurt from all directions.

He heard footsteps on the stairs, people collecting their mail, exclaiming at its unwonted disarray. He must force himself to shave and go out for groceries before the great shutdown of the shops.

On his way out, he noticed that somebody had left one letter behind. Then he saw it was addressed to him. It was a Christmas card from Peter, with a letter enclosed. Benjie went back to his room to read it:

"Dear Benjie,
I hope you don't mind me writing. I persuaded Desmond to give me your forwarding address. I wanted to talk to you before you left, but didn't know what to say. I think it was a shame the way you were treated. I tried to stop it, but I didn't have a chance. Benjie, I hope you find a job where you'll be happy. You deserve it.

Remember you wrote to the dole office? Well, they paid up, all the back money and all. I reckon I owe you a drink or two for that! I usually go to the 'Ocean Wave' pub, from about 7 to 8, before it starts filling up. If you'd like to come along, I'd be very glad to see you. I hope you can. All drinks on me, no argument, man!

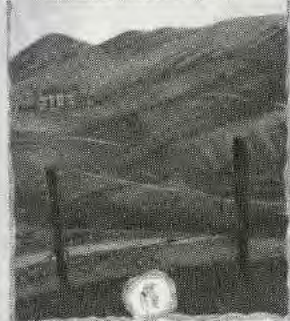
Well, I'll sign off now. I'll look out for you, please come if you can, thanks for all you did.
Your friend, Peter."

He put his one and only Christmas card on his mantelpiece and stood over it for a long time, holding the letter, looking from the one to the other. He did not try to stop the tears. He felt a deep sadness, but something else as well which he knew no words for, and all at an intensity never before experienced.

He bestirred himself at last to do the shopping. 'He could come round here after the pub,' he thought. 'I'll try and throw some kind of Christmas tea together. And get this room cleaned up, for heaven's sake! Come on, Benjie, you've got a busy day!'

JOE SOLOMON

The Road to Ein Harod



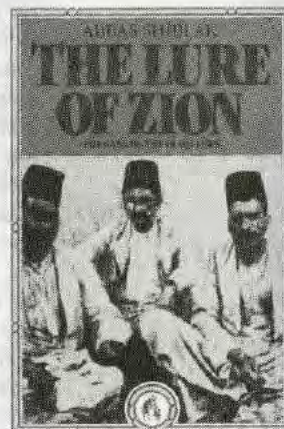
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SOUL BOY'S NIGHT OUT

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exiled nation, whose aim was to achieve a Palestinian state, to "return to normality". Amongst the Jews, however, there were three clear and countervailing points of view: Zionist, anti-Zionist and non-Zionist.

The Zionists, including some members of Mapam in Britain and Habonim in Holland displayed a strong emotional attachment to Israel, which they saw as the centre of Jewish life and as the national home of the Jewish people, irrespective of whether they live in Tel Aviv or Amsterdam. Several contemplated imminent immigration, and hoped that they could have similar contact with Palestinians there. Non-Zionists saw Israel as the home of the Israeli Jewish people, but as only one of a number of centres of Jewish life. They rejected an "Israelocentric" point of view. Finally anti-Zionists tended to reject what they saw as a particularistic Jewish orientation and to sympathise with the Palestinian fight "as a fight against injustice". However, for some this meant that they betrayed impatience with discussing "Jewish" attitudes and reasons for them. This attitude came most directly into conflict with the Zionist point of view when discussion got onto whether there could be a "democratic and non-discriminatory Jewish state". Members of the organising committee pointed to the advantages of this sort of exchange. Jews and Palestinians would be less afraid to talk frankly than they might be in Israel/Palestine. Also, importantly, both shared the condition in Holland (or England) of being an ethnic minority, and could derive a common feeling of solidarity from this fact.

Ironically, a Dutch newspaper published the "conclusions" of the seminar before its end. These were an agreement on direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO towards the setting up of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as full civil and human rights for both Arabs and Jews in Israel. Most participants in the seminar did feel they would agree with these principles. Some Palestinian participants, however were disappointed that not more had been achieved.

Some of the most interesting and involved discussion came outside the "formal sessions" when individuals or groups met and started discussions, which at times got quite heated. A further seminar is planned, as well as work to take the group forward in Holland and in other countries including Britain. As was emphasised during our original conversation "Getting over fears and paranoia can only be solved by contact between the two 'sides', so that they may melt away like snow in the sun".

The Foundation for Jewish-Palestinian dialogue can be contacted at Heemraadse, laan 33, 1181 TZ Amstelveen, the Netherlands.



Dybbuk

Almeida Theatre, Islington, London

The Dybbuk is a love story that is a cross between *Wuthering Heights* and *The Exorcist*. It was written around 1915 by Anski when a more tangible spectre was haunting Europe and about to take possession of part of it.

The play opens on a Friday night and a husband and wife are greeting the Sabbath together. Something in the ceremony jars their memory and they turn to the audience to tell a story. Khannon is a poor student of the *Kabbalah*. He has two ambitions. The first is to reach the Garden of Knowledge through a process of purification by yielding to the sins of his desires. His second ambition is to marry Leah - a name he plays a mystical hopscotch with and interprets as "not God's way". Leah's father, however, has found his daughter a rich suitor. Distracted, the student dies of a broken heart in the synagogue. Before her wedding the guilty Leah goes to the cemetery. She invites the unhappy soul of Khannon to her wedding to appease him. The wandering soul comes to the wedding but doesn't leave like everyone else.

The Dybbuk takes possession of his bride. He spits defiantly to the rabbi that has come to exorcise him that he has chosen his own path to the Garden of Knowledge. Besides which, dying before his time, put him at the bottom of the celestial housing list and he has nowhere else to go. Squatters rights you might say.

Khannon's unhappy soul is finally evicted from Leah and banished from the spirits of his forefathers. Leah, however, again senses the wandering soul pleading to her "come to me". She steps out of

a circle of salt that protects her and goes to join her lover. The play ends as a completed cycle. We return to the Sabbath table where the husband beckons his wife: "come to me".

Bruce Myers' production of *Dybbuk* was not for those in search of holograms of Laurence Olivier. Performed on the circular stage of the Almeida theatre in Islington, with its bare brick walls, it lasted two hours with no interval or change of set. The two performers Bruce Myers and Josianne Stoleru were onstage throughout and portrayed all ten characters in the story between them. Myers especially indulged himself in his characterisations almost to the point of ad-libbing. He alleviated the tension with comic relief - the grandmother plaintively *kvetching* as Leah drags her over the chairs that represent the hilly ground of the cemetery and also a guest at the wedding who tipsily dances a bawdy ballad in the manner of Charlie Chaplin's singing waiter in *Modern Times*. Josianne Stoleru had the less enviable role of a Leah contorted with the Dybbuk. The audience shifted uncomfortably as she repeatedly hurled herself down on the table in an epileptic frenzy.

In all it was the sort of play that left its audience as exhausted as its performers. The production's success worldwide was detailed in the programme. Its success in London was demonstrated by a full house on a Thursday night. We left with an appreciate audience. Polite voices around us asked their Jewish companions if "all that praying and stuff" was from the *Torah*. A fine play and a rattling good story. My companion agreed. "makes you want to read Dybbuk".

RUTH LUKOM

ON THE SAME ROAD?

The Road to Ein Harod by Amos Kenan
(al-Saqi Books, £3.95)

The Road to Ein Harod starts as a thriller, with a theme that to begin with, has not been uncommon in similar novels here in Britain over recent years — there has been a right-wing military coup, and our dissident hero is on the run. Only this coup happens in Israel. And when the book was first published there, it created a sensation. As Amos Kenan explained to a Jewish Socialists' Group meeting in London earlier this year: "People had the idea — it's not Science Fiction. It talks about the present. That's why it caused consternation."

Like Kenan himself, once a member of *Lehi* (the Stern group), the hero is an Israeli patriot, though not a chauvinist, who fought for Jewish independence. As he escapes a Tel Aviv under military terror, heading for kibbutz Ein Harod where resistance is centred, he passes ruined Arab villages. He recalls with irony how he'd driven out Arabs himself in 1948. He wonders about their fate now.

On his way, the Israeli meets a young Arab, heading for "a destination beyond Ein Harod". "They are not friendly", Kenan says. "But in the cause of survival, they realise they must collaborate if they are not to perish."

If this symbolism is obvious enough, there is more. Ein Harod, after all, is not just any kibbutz, or any old place in Israel. Known abroad for his honest and fearless journalism exposing modern Israel's oppression of Palestinians, Kenan is also a poet and writer with a strong feeling for the Land, and its two peoples' histories.

Ein Harod, he tells us, was a Biblical site, where the judge Gideon battled the Midianites. Ein Harod, he points out, was also the cradle of the "Greater Kibbutz", of the idea of the kibbutz as basis of a just society.

Ein Harod is also the Arabs' Ein Jaloud, Kenan adds — in Arabic folklore the place where David defeated Goliath. In Palestinian history, it has a special significance. In the 12th century, at the

battle of Ein Jaloud, the Arabs under the Mameluke caliph Baibar defeated the Mongols, thereby confirming Arab rule in Palestine up to the Ottoman Empire. "In the PLO today, there is an Ein Jaloud Brigade," Kenan points out. "I had all these in mind when I chose the title, 'Road to Ein Harod'."

Is there really a resistance holding out at Ein Harod? Has the kibbutz also fallen? Can the two heroes reach Ein Harod — or "further" — without going by the hill of Megiddo? That is, by Armageddon, the last great confrontation. Without in any way detracting from its grip as a thriller, the symbolism continues apace with the suspense.

There is a brutality to Kenan's picture too. From the tooth-and-claw politics of conquest and colonisation it has spread to personal relations, to the tie between man and woman. Life becomes a grab for basic needs, individuals struggle to survive, lives are casually ended.

The violence reaches a crescendo in the megalomaniac aim of the crazed right-wing general, confident he can destroy all enemies and wipe out history itself, with his technology. In a fraction of the time humanity took to evolve and develop culture, the world can be plunged back to the age of primitive life forms, Kenan seems finally to warn.

"The portrait of the Army is not a beautiful portrait," Kenan acknowledges. "I was called to take part in a symposium with ex-Army generals. I was asked, 'Could it happen?' I replied, this was a silly question. You can only ask: if it did, how would it happen; if it will happen."

Whether such a thing might happen in Israel is only a matter of circumstances, Kenan insists. "We Israelis are only human, we are not inferior, and not better. Anything that happens elsewhere can happen with us too."

He did not write *The Road to Ein Harod* just as speculation, but as a cry for action. "I'm saying, if you don't want it to happen, take care, see that it doesn't."

Kenan is sanguine, almost pessimistic, about his own ability as a writer to influence events. He remarks that in

Israel, though the book may have been a best-seller it will be read solely by the supposed victims of the situation, not by the right wing. "They don't read."

He says Israel is now "two nations, not just two opinions. There is a huge gap between two kinds of Israeli — one who believes peace is possible, one who doesn't believe it possible." In discussion, he talks of the 1948 war and the myths about it, of his hero Natan Yelin-Mor's pioneering optimism; of his inability to co-exist with the Right, or to feel any great enthusiasm for Labour. He recounts his discussions with Palestinian friends.

For the horror of which he warns not to come true, "the people of my belief have to become a majority," Kenan says simply. They also have to change the structure, he observes. The circumstances needed for peace "are not dealt with in my book," he says, "they concern daily political life in Israel, the relations between Moscow and Washington, the basis of the Israeli economy — what we do to earn our living."

As a writer, Kenan says he wanted to reflect, to examine the human condition. "Maybe Israel was my excuse. No writer knows any environment other than his own." By dealing with a man on the run, he could deal with people on the lowest level of existence, "so on this level, you put an Arab and an Israeli". He strips down human pretensions to deal with basic humanity, with the essentials of survival, and says we can move from this to what is essential for peace, for a better life.

The Road to Ein Harod then, behind its deceptive simplicity, can be read on several levels. It is no mere propaganda tract, but a piece of literature, and yet with a simple message. Amos Kenan, too, comes across when you meet him as a person of some depth, one who both reflects, and reflects on, his experiences and ideas, and yet with a tough, straightforward honesty. To write the truth as he feels it is enough to ask of a writer; but notwithstanding his modesty, he has done something more.

CHARLIE POTTINS

Keeping the Faith

In My Mother's House by Kim Chernin
(Virago, £4.95)

"Do you want to take down the story of my life?" Rose Chernin asks her daughter Kim.

Rose was born in 1903 in the Russian town of Chasnik in the Pale of Settlement. In 1914 the family moved to America where Rose worked in a factory at the same time as going to school. It was a time of vital radical activity and for Rose socialism and communism "just made sense". A few years after arriving in America she was taken to hear a conscientious objector, Kate Richards O'Hare, and her speech was a revelation; Rose wanted to emulate her and, in her own words, become "a woman who stands up to injustice".

At 17 Rose moved on her own to New York, an unusual step for a young Jewish girl of that period. She soon became active in the Russian club, taking part in discussions and debates, and was caught up in the vibrant world of the workers' struggle. Rose was a natural organiser and in the early 1930s she finally joined the Communist Party. In 1932 she and her husband, Paul Kusnitz, left to live and work in the Soviet Union which at that time represented an ideal world. Rose continued to work and to organise for the party. In 1934 she and Paul returned to the States for what was supposed to be a month's holiday but she again became caught up in the struggle — union organisers were being arrested and imprisoned and Rose was persuaded to stay on and

organise their defence. Her husband returned to Russia alone, but after a year he too came back to America.

Rose Chernin's whole life has been devoted to the fight against injustice and to the furtherance of Communist ideals and it was into this world that her daughter Kim was born in 1940. Being the daughter of a Communist in the 1950s, especially after her mother was imprisoned, wasn't easy. Kim was abused and ostracised at school, particularly by white children; her friends and allies were Black, Mexican and Asian. But her own life as a teenager was a mass of contradictions. She wanted to go out and enjoy herself like the other young people she knew and at the same time wanted to be a good Communist to please her mother. There were conflicting loyalties as she got older towards, on the one hand, the Black, Asian and Mexican teenagers who had supported and sided with her, and on the other the wealthy white teenagers who began to invite her to parties and dances and whose racist jokes she shared with shame.

At 17 she visited Russia and China as a member of the 7th World Youth Festival but her disillusion had set in. Kim had read the revelations about the Stalinist period and her own leanings were towards poetry. But Rose never wavered in her beliefs and this led to estrangement between mother and daughter; neither

could understand the other. Only when Kim agrees to write down the story of her mother's life does she start to understand what that life was really about and Rose finally learns to understand her daughter.

This is the story of women — 4 generations of women who have all kept the name Chernin. Rose had seen the difficult life her own mother Perle led and this was partly the spur that drove her in her own independent fight against injustice. And yet her mother too was strong, in spite of suffering violence at the hands of her husband. She could read and write (rare for a woman of her generation in a Russian *shtetl*) and would write letters for other women in her neighbourhood both in Russia and in America. She was unfortunate to live at a time and place where dependence on a man was the norm. Rose broke away from that — although married, she kept her independence and her own life. As well as Perle, Rose, Kim and Larissa, we also learn the story of Rose's sisters (her brother hardly features) and of Kim's older sister who died of cancer at 16.

The book interweaves the present and the past as Rose, Kim and Kim's daughter Larissa meet over a period of 7 years. Rose tells her life story in a series of short episodes and Kim takes over at the end to tell her own story as it was affected by her mother's life and commitment. It is a story of unbroken faith and belief that if we fight hard enough we can achieve a better world. At one point Rose asks Kim: "Do you want to know why I'm still living? Because there's still injustice in the world. And I am a fighter."

ADRIENNE WALLMAN

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

In Britain in 1986 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.

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- * We recognise the equal validity and integrity of all Jewish communities, and reject the ideology, currently dominating world Jewry, which subordinates the needs and interests of Diaspora Jews to those of the Israeli state.
- * We support a socialist solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict based on recognition of national rights and self determination, including statehood, of the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples.

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

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