

JEWISH SOCIALIST

The magazine of the Jewish Socialists' Group

50 years
after the
Warsaw
Ghetto
uprising

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Where we stand

- We stand for the rights of Jews, as Jews, in a socialist future.
- We fight for a socialist movement, embracing the cultural autonomy of minorities, as essential to the achievement of socialism.
- We draw on our immigrant experience and anti-racist history in order to challenge antisemitism, racism, sexism, heterosexism and fascism today. We support the rights of, and mobilise solidarity with, all oppressed groups.
- We recognise the equal validity and integrity of all Jewish communities, and reject the ideology of Zionism,

currently dominating world Jewry, which subordinates the needs and interests of Diaspora Jews to those of the Israeli state.

- We support a socialist solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict based on an end to the occupation and recognition of national rights and self-determination, including statehood, of the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples.

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WHEN we mark the 50th anniversary of a historic struggle such as the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, we ought to be able to look back in awe at the bravery and courage of the ghetto fighters and their indestructible spirit of resistance. We ought to be able to express our relief at how well the lessons of their struggle have been learned. We ought to be able to rejoice at how great has been the progress of humanity from a period when people in power idly looked on or even averted their eyes as a minority people was systematically slaughtered. And finally, today, we ought to be able to express our satisfaction at how successfully we have dispensed with the threat from fascism.

The reality in Europe today, East and West, compels us to mark this anniversary in a spirit of confrontation rather than celebration. The desire for ethnic harmony that grew out of the defeat of malignant nationalism is now in retreat against the revived demands for 'ethnic cleansing'.

Many would contest the widely stated comparison of the situation facing besieged Bosnian Muslims with that of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters. Some would point to the fact that the world's eyes, not least through the mass media, are firmly fixed on their plight, in stark contrast to the wilful blindness with which the world ignored the ghetto fighters. But until something is done to turn concern into practical support, the human misery and hopelessness continues. It is no coincidence that when the sole surviving member of the ghetto fighters' leadership, Marek Edelman, a Bundist, was recently asked about the significance of the uprising he focused on the events today, saying: 'What is going on in Yugoslavia now is Hitler's victory from beyond the grave. And the western countries, beyond their wordy declarations, are doing the same thing as they did before.'

If the Nazis who used their massive armed might to destroy the isolated, desperate and pitifully armed ghetto fighters are long gone, the heirs to their ideology and methods are very much with us. For some commentators this would be seen as a statement about the revival of neo-Nazism in Germany. Socialists know, however, that fascist forces are born out of social and economic, not biological, circumstances and the new Hitlerites prepared to carry out murderous attacks on vulnerable minorities in German towns are merely the tip of an iceberg of fascist organisations, some tiny but all menacing, that are poisoning the landscape of many regions of Europe. Members of our organisation, the Jewish Socialists' Group, have

personally suffered the attentions of a localised fascist force, Combat 18, which has recently been exposed as being part of an international neo-Nazi terror network. Their actions, though, merely reinforce our determination to play our part in extending the Jewish anti-fascist tradition, in alliance with all who have an interest in combating racism and fascism.

On the anniversary of the ghetto uprising, it should also be recalled that the Nazis of yesteryear were aided and abetted by the determination of the allied powers to keep the doors shut as tightly as possible on refugees fleeing fascist persecution and terror. We can also be true to the spirit of resistance if we are in the forefront of demands to let refugees into Britain *and* to ensure their equality on entry. We are not fighting for the right of people to be freed from physical terror in order that they should be homeless and unemployed, and victims of capitalist economic justice elsewhere.

After the Nazi genocide, Jewish communities across the world expressed the sentiment: 'Never forgive, never forget'. Those who survived Nazi terror but still live with its nightmares can never forgive, but we *do* look forward to the day when the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto can be truly considered a part of history, a heroic struggle of the old world on the way to creating the new. At the moment, though, for minorities and refugees in Europe, for the surrounded Bosnian Muslims, for people struggling for their liberation in South Africa, the ghetto fighters' battle is still raging.

* * *

This is the last *Jewish Socialist* you will be receiving until the autumn. No, we're not going on a long holiday, although sometimes we think we deserve one. We are taking an extended break to prepare a new-look, relaunched, redesigned *Jewish Socialist*. And if our opponents think they can relax for the summer, we can assure you that when we return it will be just as controversial and hard-hitting, but at the same time more attractive, more accessible and able to reach more readers. And you, our regular readers, can play a part in this. You may think this is a cue for asking you to donate money. It is not, though we would never refuse such assistance. What we are asking you to do is to complete and return the *readership survey* enclosed with this magazine and you can tell us what kind of *Jewish Socialist* magazine you would like to see. Have a good summer. See you in the autumn. □

Contents

NEWS

Religion and politics: JSG conference report	3
Ghetto solidarity: Warsaw Ghetto commemoration meeting	4
Remembering for tomorrow: Zygielbojm memorial ...	5
Joint protest: Jews and Muslims unite against antisemitism	5
Trouble and strife: Jewish women's refuge	5
The price of Zionism: the Association of Jewish Sixth Formers	6
Some of our best friends: more farce from the CSO	6
Matzo meal: a socialist seder night	7
It could only be Israel: news from Israel/Palestine	8

REGULARS

Don't ask the Rabbi	10
Fifth Column: listings	10
Dybbuk's Diary	11

OPINION

Sick as a Jewish parrot: Syd Jeffers explains why racism is gone but antisemitism remains on the Highbury terraces	12
--	----

SPECIAL FEATURE: WARSAW GHETTO

I watched the Ghetto burn: by Wlodka Blit-Robertson	14
---	----

No freedom on May Day: by Marek Edelman	15
The Street Singer of the Warsaw Ghetto: song by Reuven Lifshutz	16
Never Say: song of the partisans by Hirsh Glik	17

REVIEWS

Uncle Ben's lies: Charlie Pottins reviews <i>Ben Gurion's Scandals</i>	18
Reign of terror: Sarah Lerner on <i>Making Women Talk</i>	19
New York's Theatre of War: Julia Bard saw <i>Fires in the Mirror</i>	20
Spike marks the X: Clifford Singer reviews Spike Lee's <i>Malcolm X</i>	22
Teach your children well: Julia Bard reviews <i>The Nazi Holocaust</i>	23
The power and the gory: David Rosenberg on <i>Romper Stomper</i>	24
Where have all the people gone? Michael Lazarus assesses Geoffrey Alderman's <i>Modern British Jewry</i>	26
Auf wiedersehen scum: Mike Gerber on a new anti-fascist video	27
In the red corner: Mike Gerber tells Len Johnson's story in <i>Never counted out</i>	28
Porkies and less: Ruth Lukom reviews <i>Leon the Pig Farmer</i>	30
On the Shelf	31

Cover photo: British National Party demonstrators, Andrew Testa

Religion and politics

'Religion and secularism' formed one of the major areas of debate at the annual policy conference of the Jewish Socialists' Group, held in Hackney on 17-18 April. Against a background of increasing efforts by ultra-orthodox Jews to extend their influence in the community with encouragement from the Chief Rabbi, and in the light of disputes arising out of the proposed Eruv and separate services for women, conference debated how to defend and enhance the position of secular Jews. A detailed motion developing the group's commitment to a secular perspective, which affirmed the right to question and reject aspects of Judaism while defending the

rights of religious Jews and their freedom from attack and discrimination, was unanimously adopted.

The conference also held a major debate on anti-racist and anti-fascist work, which included a discussion about responding to the threats from Combat 18. The conference agreed a statement condemning C18's activities and urging people threatened by them to go public. It urged all anti-racists and anti-fascists to be conscious of security needs and pledged to step up the fight against racist and fascist forces.

For a copy of the resolution adopted on religion and secularism, please send an sae to JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

Statement on Combat 18

This conference expresses its anger at and condemnation of the activities of all fascist organisations and in particular the death threats against individuals made by Combat 18. We express our support and solidarity with all targets of this intimidation both within and outside the JSG. We encourage anyone being threatened to make it public. We urge all anti-racists and anti-fascists to recognise the need for greater security but also to make clear that we are not intimidated and such threats make us more determined to resist racism, fascism and antisemitism.

STOP PRESS:

Regular readers of *Searchlight*, the magazine which at its best is an important resource for anti-fascists, may have noticed that their April issue exposing C18 was marred by a gratuitous attack on the Jewish Socialists' Group in its editorial which implied that the JSG and others had been unwilling to speak out publicly about C18 or co-operate in the *World in Action* exposé of them. The editorial compared our efforts unfavourable with the 'bravery and ingenuity' of the Board of Deputies' defence department. This is complete nonsense, not least because

the JSG as an organisation was not approached by the programme's researchers.

Last October we issued a press release describing the intimidation suffered by our members (reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* but not in *Searchlight*). We provided considerable information for *World in Action*. However, the targeted JSG members would not agree to put themselves more at risk by unnecessarily providing more personal information to the fascists than they already possessed. Instead, they suggested alternative ways in which the material could be used.

In its editorial *Searchlight* 'understands' that 'people

with families' would want to avoid further risk, but alleges a lack of courage among 'left wing' organisations. *Searchlight's* editor, Gerry Gable, knows the JSG well enough to be aware that this distinction does not apply to our organisation (nor to many others). Gable is proud of his close current association with the Board of Deputies Defence Department – a body that has been extremely hostile to *Searchlight* in the past, both publicly and privately, and will no doubt drop them again if their interests conflict. Still, Gable seems to be working very hard to ingratiate himself with them and seems perfectly willing to ignore

their 'information gathering', harassment and targeting of left wing Jews in the interests of 'community security'. Last autumn was not the first time our members had received threatening phone calls in the middle of the night but all the evidence on previous occasions suggested they emanated from the very same security organisation that Gable lavishes such praise on. *Searchlight* readers who feel that there might be more appropriate uses for its editorial columns than being a public relations officer for the Board of Deputies can write to *Searchlight* at 37 New Cavendish Street, London W1M 8JR.

Ghetto solidarity

The Jewish Socialists' Group held a unique commemorative event for the 50th anniversary of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto by inviting a representative of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) to share a platform with Bundist and JSG member Majer Bogdanski. Maria Palmer spoke movingly of the efforts of Polish socialists individually and collectively to stop the Nazi slaughter, and she recalled memories of her childhood in Warsaw during the Polish uprising in 1944. She also spoke of the efforts made by PPS members on the Polish National Council in Exile such as Adam Ciolkosz who worked closely with the Bundist Szmul Zygielbojm.

After both speakers, a number of songs written in the ghetto were sung, finishing with the Hymn of Youth written in the Vilna ghetto and *Zog Nit Keynmol*, the hymn of the partisans, which we reprint on page 17.

Here is an extract from Majer Bogdanski's speech at the JSG's commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

'And then came the well-meaning people who, although they condemned the atrocities that the Germans perpetrated, asked if it wasn't already time to forgive and forget. It should be said: forgiveness is a noble thing. One often forgives a wrongdoer. But what is the purpose of it? It is not in order to allow the wrongdoer to carry on with his evil acts. It is to enable him to become a useful member of human society. But he must earn the forgiveness and ask for it. And before he must ask for it he must fulfil one most important condition. He must express his regret for his wrongdoing. Scores of thousands of those Nazis who have committed those atrocities are still alive. They all are at an advanced age now. Has anyone heard of at least one of them who has ever expressed sorrow for what he has done? Every year they hold their rallies in the beer-halls where they sing their Nazi songs and reminisce about those days when they had the time of their lives. They have nothing to regret and would do it all over again if they could live their lives again. So much about forgiving.

And what about forgetting? How could one forget that one had a wife, a husband, children, a father, a mother, sisters, brothers and all kinds of other relatives? Those kind people who ask us to forget don't realise that unwittingly they are asking us to provide proof to the Nazis' claim that the Jews are not a human race, that they do not feel any moral pain at all.

And even if it had been possible to forget, the neo-Nazis in

Germany and in this country, as well as in all other countries, don't allow us to forget. They not only promise us the same atrocities as soon as they obtain power; they are showing us already that they mean business. They don't need concentration camps. They set on fire buildings with people who live in them, exactly like their forefathers did to the Jews in Poland 50 years ago.

And now we are witness to a new phenomenon which does not allow us to forget. Some 'learned' people, our own English 'moderate Nazi' as he describes himself, David Irving, among them, try to convince us that they have scientific proof that there were no gas chambers, that no Jews or others were killed in them; in short, there was no Holocaust. The poor Germans are being slandered by the powerful international Jewish lobby! Then how did the six million Jews and another six million non-Jews disappear?

Unfortunately the neo-Nazis of today have a following. Onlookers were passively watching the Nazi skinheads who set fire to dwellings with their residents in them, and made no effort whatever to stop them. At the parliamentary elections in France just a few weeks ago, the fascist party of Le Pen polled 12½% of all the votes cast. So if we forget the Nazi atrocities of those days it may well be at our own peril.

For us, the directly bereaved by the Holocaust, there is no forgetting. Our nearest and dearest perished there and their images are before our eyes all the time. They have no graves to which we would be able to come to pay homage to their memories and shed a tear, so we assemble whenever we can and we pay our respects to the fighters in the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, and in the uprisings in all other ghettos. We pay homage to the fighters in the uprisings in the concentration camps, Treblinka, Auschwitz and in all other concentration camps. We pay respects to our fathers and mothers, our wives, our husbands, our children; to our sisters, our brothers and all our aunts, uncles, cousins and all other relatives and our friends and neighbours. Here we pay homage to the six million men, women, old people and children – one and a half million children – all of whom perished as a result of the terrible atrocities inflicted on them by the Nazis only because they were Jews. We pay homage to the countless thousands of Gypsies who they exterminated in the same way as they exterminated the Jews and, like the Jews, only because they were Gypsies...

Remembering for tomorrow

Historians, trade unionists, rabbis, MPs and survivors of Nazism are supporting an initiative to provide a permanent memorial in London for Szmul Zygielbojm who committed suicide at his Paddington home in May 1943.

Zygielbojm was an internationally respected trade union figure and socialist who represented the Jewish Labour Bund on Lodz City Council. After the Nazi invasion he was smuggled out of Poland and arrived in London in 1942. From London he maintained an underground network which gathered detailed information about the fate of Poland's Jews. For a year Zygielbojm lobbied ambassadors, government officials, the

press and trade unions urging exceptional action to save Poland's Jews from extermination. When the resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters was finally extinguished, Zygielbojm took his own life as a final protest against the passivity that was allowing the destruction of Poland's Jews.

The Zygielbojm Memorial Committee will be approaching Westminster Council for approval to mount a memorial plaque on the building where Zygielbojm lived. If you wish to add your support to this initiative or can assist in any other way please write to: Ad-Hoc Memorial Committee for Szmul Zygielbojm, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.



Trouble and strife

On 15 June, there will be a fundraising launch to support Jewish Women's Aid. Men and women are invited to give their support to this cause. The long-term aim is to raise money to build a women's refuge in north west London.

Recent research has shown a growth in the numbers of Jewish women experiencing domestic violence and being prepared to speak about it. Since last November, a group of Jewish social workers has met to develop a response to this issue and has now established this project. It held an inaugural meeting in the West London Synagogue, which was attended by many people from a wide variety of backgrounds, all expressing support.

Various applications for funding are currently being considered and some look quite positive. In the interim, Jewish Women's Aid is concerned to raise consciousness about the issue in the community. JWA aims to help women to be more assertive and find more effective ways for them to support each other.

Jewish Women's Aid is seeking women volunteers to be trained to staff a telephone helpline, to befriend women in need, to raise funds and speak about the issue to the community.

The contact address is: BM JWA1, London WC1N 3XX. The helpline is 0532 371127. Calls are charged at a local rate and confidentiality is assured.

Joint protest

Jewish and Muslim organisations and local anti-racists have joined forces to condemn the activities of a Muslim fundamentalist group that has been distributing anti-Jewish leaflets in Ilford, north-east London, an area with a large Jewish population and a significant Muslim population.

The leaflets urged Muslims to respond to Israel's oppression of Palestinians by fighting and killing Jews. They also hit out at the PLO, described in the leaflets as 'filth'.

An equally united response is needed against the book-stocking policy of Al Hoda Booksellers in Charing Cross Road, central London. Al Hoda enjoyed a good reputation as a source of books on Islam and the Middle East but among its titles on the Israel/Palestine conflict, it is stocking blatantly anti-Jewish material including *AntiZion* by William Grimstad (a longstanding entry on neo-Nazi booklists) and *Jewish Conspiracy in the Muslim World* by Mistubal

Islam Faruqi, a book proudly proclaiming on its cover that it includes the full text of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (the protocols were forged by the Tsarist police nearly 100 years ago and have become a classic text for Nazis and neo-Nazis since then).

The distributor's label inside *AntiZion* confirms that it has been supplied by Bloomfield Books in Suffolk, who frequently advertise their wares in the fascist press and specialist in 'Jewish conspiracy' literature. Elsewhere on Al Hoda's shelves are a series of small pamphlets entitled *On Target*, which also emanate from Bloomfield Books. They are edited by Don Martin of the 'British League of Rights'.

Jewish Socialist urges its readers, anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations, and individuals from all communities to persuade Al Hoda to dispose of its anti-Jewish literature and refuse to stock further items from far right distributors.

Some of our best friends...

With antisemitism enjoying a widespread resurgence, Jewish defence is an increasingly serious business. Our 'leaders' constantly reassure us though that their vigilance backed up by the thankless work of the Community Security Organisation (CSO) will help to keep us safe and sound.

In the past, though, we have found several reasons to question the policies and practices of the CSO, and we have suggested that they stop wasting time harassing leftists within the community but concentrate instead on the real enemies who threaten us all.

The very least that the Jewish public should expect

from those who claim authority in 'Jewish defence' is that they have an adequate understanding of what the threat is and where it is coming from.

In January this year the CSO gave another outstanding display of its muddleheaded approach to this work when its well-dressed members stood firm to 'defend' the *Jewish Quarterly's* annual symposium at Hillel House in central London.

Twenty minutes before the event started three *Jewish Socialist* sellers, who were attending the symposium, stood unobtrusively on the pavement outside. The CSO boys looked fidgety and

they started mumbling into their walkie-talkies. Probably shocked and frightened at the sight of fully grown members of the community freely buying copies of this dangerous rag, a young CSOnik came over to try and persuade us to stop selling. Presumably thinking only of our welfare, he suggested that we might attract an antisemitic attack. We assured him we were happy to take the risk. He warned us again of the dangers to life and limb and pointed ominously to a building about a hundred yards away. 'That building over there is Friends House. It's a BNP stronghold,' he said. We laughed and informed him that Friends House was not run by the BNP but by the Quakers who had

courageously defied the BNP whenever they had tried to use their premises! Naturally, the staff of Friends House were none too pleased about the CSO's behaviour when we informed them of the incident. We suggested that they may wish to write to Judge Feinstein, President of the Board of Deputies, to whom the CSO are, at least formally, responsible (the money behind them comes from elsewhere but that's another story). They wrote, concluding: '...if you think it's appropriate, CSO could be told that we have had

meetings of: Jewish Aged Needy Pension Society; Jewish Blind and Physically Handicapped Society; Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade; Jewish National Fund; Jews Against the Clause; League of Jewish Women; and current lettings include: West London Synagogue of British Jews; Jewish Socialists' Group; International Council of Jewish Women; Shabbat; Tsedek - Jewish Action for a Just World...'

At the time of going to press, Friends House have received no letter of explanation or apology from the Board.

* * *

Meanwhile, across the ocean, the tactics of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League (ADL) have come under police scrutiny. Known to critics as the 'Defamation League' or the 'Anti-Definition League' for its conflation of antisemitism and anti-Zionism, the ADL faces possible charges after allegations of illegal spying on a range of leftist and civil rights organisations as well as far right groupings. It is also claimed that their activities included contract work for the South African government for which they received \$10,000. Is this the organisation that the CSO looks to as a role model?

The price of Zionism

College campuses have been the site of bitter disputes around the Israel-Palestine conflict and Zionism. A few years ago the Jewish establishment was becoming increasingly worried that it was losing the intellectual arguments and that many Jewish students were beginning to question received wisdoms. It decided to attempt to strengthen the Zionist consciousness of prospective students before they arrived on campus and persuaded several communal funders to support an 'Association of Jewish Sixth Formers' (AJ6).

But capitalism works in mysterious ways and as the recession deepened the funders found there was little left in their pockets to meet all the different demands. As a result AJ6 recently announced its imminent demise unless it received £40,000 worth of guaranteed income. After well publicised appeals in the *Jewish Chronicle*, enough

promises from funders have come in to keep the organisation alive, at least in the short term. But is it money well spent?

AJ6 produce a magazine called *6th Sense*. A recent issue contained a 'survival guide to your first few weeks on campus'. It warned the prospective student that s/he 'may face antisemitism or anti-Zionism not only at the Union but also amongst people you would consider your friends. The most important thing is to be prepared; arm yourself with the knowledge to justify the policies of the Israeli government...' (our emphasis). It doesn't quite spell out that this means encouraging young Jews to justify deportations, collective punishments, torture of detainees and so on.

It's nice to think that communal funders want to help young people. Perhaps our readers can think of some better uses for this £40,000. Write to *Jewish Socialist* with your ideas.

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MATZO MEAL

The annual third Passover Seder, held by London branch of the Jewish Socialists' Group, was a great success, attended by more than 40 people with an age range from six weeks to 80 years. Readings from an egalitarian haggadah were complemented by music and cultural contributions around the Passover theme. One contribution speculated about whether those who led the exodus from Egypt had to overcome sectarian divisions within their ranks. It claimed to be drawn from a contemporary source – the Egyptian Jew Statesman and Society. It read:

As the situation facing Jewish slaves in Egypt becomes more desperate there are hopeful signs that they are organising themselves to resist Pharaoh's punishing regime. But instead of uniting in one organisation, three competing campaigns have been formed, each of which claims to be leading the struggle against slavery.

'Anti-Pharaoh Action' (APA) claims it has already been active for several years and has a record of inflicting serious damage on individual slave drivers. APA members are recognisable by their distinctive style – short cropped hair and steel capped desert boots. They are strong among pyramid slaves and other building workers. APA stress the need to spread anti-slavery propaganda not just among the slaves who know they are being oppressed but among Egyptian working class youth. An APA spokesperson confirmed that they would waste no time seeking the endorsement of Egyptian writers, artists and scholars, whom they dismiss as 'middle class wankers'. Individual APA members have shown that they are prepared to use plagues against Pharaoh's slave drivers. They are

mistrustful of the populist leader, Moses, whose dress style and long hair, comments the APA, 'makes him look like a fucking student'.

However, another group has emerged based among slaves and especially among students – the self-styled Anti-Pharaoh League. They have covered pyramids with imaginatively produced posters and leaflets, some in hieroglyphics aimed at winning support among Egyptian writers and poets. The posters carry a clear message: 'We can topple Pharaoh's might, Egyptians and Jews unite and fight!' The APL are organising a major carnival against slavery next month featuring 'Moyshe Rabeynu and the Ten Plagues' and 'Keep Your Aaron'. APL spokespersons deny that they are a front for the Socialist Slave Party, although many APL members sell *Socialist Slave* and collect shekels for the

Socialist Slave Fighting Fund.

These charges against the APL are frequently made by yet another grouping – the Anti-Slavery Alliance, which claims it is the only campaign led by the slaves themselves. An alliance spokesperson stressed this week the urgency of the situation and the need for a quick response: 'All of our branches are reporting an intolerable upsurge in violence from the slave drivers. Something must be done now. We can't wait for the politicians to act or an intervention from God. Something must be done immediately. We are calling a conference in nine months time to plan our response.' The ASA also announced this week that it had held a series of 'useful' and 'informative' meetings with slave drivers' representatives to negotiate slightly less brutal treatment of slaves. The ASA believes in the long run the Jews will have to leave Egypt and head

for the promised land but they are concerned about the order of marching as they leave Egypt. The ASA insists that the families of the most direct victims of slavemaster brutality should head the march, followed by ASA branches, then other ordinary slaves and finally, at the back, or even left behind, members of the APL.

The Egyptian Jewish Board of Deputies has reacted frostily to all three campaigns. Their president, Judge Israel Finewine, claims that these groups are unrepresentative, are causing a problem where none exists, and are unnecessarily antagonising Pharaoh. He added: 'We believe that reports of brutality to slaves and slaughter of Jewish babies are greatly exaggerated. We are far more concerned by reports that at least one young Jew has been seen talking to a burning bush.'



It could only be Israel

The regional council of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza has called on anyone who has stones thrown at them to open fire at the stonethrowers. Just hours before publication of this announcement, on 2 March, Jum'a Abed al-'Aziz Misk, a 75-year-old resident of Ras al-'Amud, near Jerusalem, was killed, after a driver of a lorry which had been pelted with stones got out of his cab and opened fire in all directions.

A group of legal experts sympathetic to the settlers has written a leaflet entitled *Know your rights and obligations regarding stone throwers*, instructing civilians who open fire on Palestinians about what to do both during the incident itself and during interrogation by the police. It calls upon them to invoke Article 22 of the Penal Code. According to this, whoever tries to prevent 'serious sabotage or terrorism, other bodily injury or damage to property' is free of criminal responsibility providing that the action was 'reasonable and not more than necessary to achieve the object of preventing the damage'.

Gid'on Levi commented in *Ha'aretz* (7 March), 'The alarming nature of this announcement lies not only in its content but first and foremost in the official authority they have taken upon themselves... The way to change the open-fire regulations has [been] shortened; from now on a decision by the settlers' council will suffice.'

The issue of the safety of the nuclear reactor at Dimona has been the subject of concern in Israel. According to Louis Dan, a senior American adviser, 'Our scientists say your nuclear reactor is obsolete and dangerous...' In an article in Ha'aretz (18 February), Dani Rabinowitz described

the storage of radioactive materials as 'a time bomb'. Dan Margalit, however, contended in Ha'aretz (18 February), 'There is a great deal of overlap between those who express concern regarding the level of safety at the reactor and those who recommend that we rush into conducting negotiations about Israel's dismantling of its nuclear option.'

Ran Edlist, writing in Hadashot, posed the problem in this way: "Everything is in good order at the reactor," stated an announcement by the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Committee this week in response to published statements and concerns which have arisen over the past week... There is just one problem: the responsible persons have never made it clear to the public what dangers are inherent in the presence of a nuclear reactor, and no report has ever been published on the radiation situation in Dimona and its surroundings.'

Data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics show that the number of unemployed at the end of 1992 was 211,000, an increase of 6% over the previous year's figures. Eleven per cent of the Israeli workforce is now unemployed.

In spite of Israeli political statements, Housing and Construction Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer has ordered the speeding up of construction projects at Katzin in the Golan Heights. This decision follows a meeting between the minister and Katzin mayor Sammy Bar Lev, who described the great housing shortage there.

One of the most important

Haredi (ultra-orthodox) rabbis appears to blame Shulamit Aloni and Yael Dayan for the deterioration in the security situation in Israel. Aloni recently speculated about King David's homosexuality and Dayan asserted that what is said to be Joseph's grave is actually that of an Arab sheikh.

Commenting on this at the funeral of a victim of terrorism, Rabbi Silberstein stated, 'One must be alert to the fact that judgment is visited upon the righteous, in light of the things that were said against King David and Joseph the Righteous.'

...

The Association of Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights (AIPPHR), founded in 1988, is seeking wider support. The Association brings together physicians working on a voluntary basis against violations of human and medical rights in Israel and the Occupied Territories. It includes health professionals from both Israel and the Occupied Territories. AIPPHR examine prisoners and detainees free of charge, carry out surgeries in Palestinian villages which do not have any other medical facilities and provide medical opinions and trials.

AIPPHR also responds to allegations of harassment against doctors, reports on the health situation within the Occupied Territories, and works to create awareness of human rights as a vital part of democratic government. They also operate a Child's Medical Care Fund ensuring swift medical treatment for dangerously ill children whose families are otherwise unable to obtain treatment.

Donations may be made to AIPPHR, Account 279755, Bank Hapoalim, Branch 602, Dizengoff 205, Tel Aviv, Israel.

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Don't ask the Rabbi

THE RABBI'S NOMINATIONS FOR MR MAJOR'S 'CLASSLESS' HONOURS

The Rabbi would like to nominate the following worthy citizens to the Prime Minister: Arnold Nuchschlepper. Arnold is the owner of the Schlock chain of stores which supply cut-price household electrical appliances. A loyal and generous contributor to Conservative Central Office, he is modestly discreet about his charitable and educational contributions to the Jewish community. Arnold, with the grateful help of the Board of Deputies, has set up an educational trust which produces publications and sends out advice workers to all parts of the community to speak on 'Secularism and Drug Addiction in the Jewish Community'.

Sidney Backaxel. This well-loved cabbie from Gants Hill is also a member of the Board of Deputies Community Security Organisation. Many of us have tales to tell of Sid's gruff charm as he unilaterally bars entrance to discussion meetings or concerts. Those of us lucky enough to end up in Sid's taxi can listen to his articulate and well-informed ideas about 'loony lefty-Arab sympathisers, foreigners and perverts'. The Board of Deputies, always conscious of its image to the outside world, must be relieved to know that Sid, for many people, is the public face of the Jewish community.

FIFTH COLUMN

Be part of the Fifth Column. Deadline for listings in the next issue of *Jewish Socialist* is 25 JULY. Please keep listings as brief as possible (50 words max) and send them to *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

London branch of the Jewish Socialists' Group meets regularly. Details from Dept LON, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

Nottingham Jewish Socialists' Group meets regularly. Details from Dept NOT, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

Norwich JSG meets regularly. Details from Dept NOR, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

Bristol JSG meets regularly. Details from Box 21, Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB.

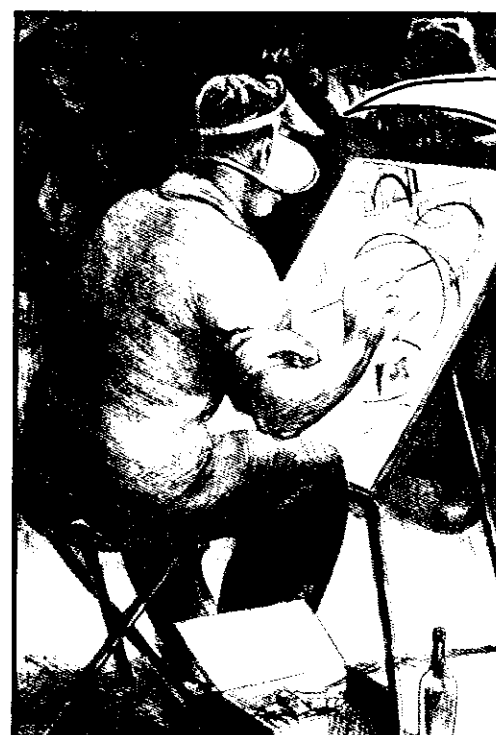
Manchester Jewish Socialists meet regularly. Details from Dept MAN, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

The Jewish Lesbian & Gay Helpline has been operating for 5 years and has taken over 1,000 calls. They are looking for more volunteers, particularly women, to staff the line. Full training given. The Helpline operates Monday to Thursday 7-10pm on 071-706 3123.

Beit Klal Yisrael alternative Jewish community. Regular services held in West London. Further details and newsletter from PO Box 1828, London W10 5RT.

17 January 1993
'Every morn and every night
Some are born to sweet delight'
Mazeltov Martha
Love Simon and Quita

Two lesbians, one Jewish, one black/mixed race, hoping to co-parent, seek donor, London based. Degree of involvement negotiable. Box N, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX



All right, all right, I'm working on it

We're redesigning
Jewish Socialist
Next issue out in the autumn

DYBBUK'S DIARY

INTIFADA IN BELGRAVIA

There were no stones thrown, and nobody injured. The only demonstrators were on the trade stands. But the Palestinian national cause strode proudly into London's posh Belgrave Square in February, with the first Palestine Exports Fair.

With eggplants and oranges from Gaza, electronics from Nablus, Hebron glassware, and embroidery from Kalandia Camp, exhibitors won some big orders as well as their arguments for fair trade.

What about publicity? Well, the reporters came, they saw, and reported. But outside the Arabic press, the *Morning Star* (which also used a picture) and the *International Herald Tribune*, not a word was printed. 'Too political,' said business editors. 'Too commercial,' opined political editors. Seems Palestinians have to kill people or carry on getting killed to satisfy the stereotype requirements of the British press. Besides, after decades of monetarism, sackings, 'set-aside' and slump, people demanding their freedom to grow food and make things are subversive, as well as in bad taste.

THE MAN WHO WENT TO DINNER

No sooner has the Director of Public Prosecutions announced there'll be no charges against Alan Clark over his evidence in the Iraq arms affair, than, like Lazarus from the dead, or Ernest Saunders from the Guinness affair, the former defence procurement minister decides he wants a Tory seat again. He can't be doing it for the dosh. Clark lives in a castle, and has never been short of the stuff.

With inherited wealth like his, you don't have to be nice to anyone. Clark made his name when he told senior civil servants black people might fear being 'sent back to Bongo-Bongo land'. Pulled for driving at over 100 mph, he said he'd assumed traffic police were his ministerial escort.

British National Party fuhrer John Tyndall used to boast about his contacts in high places. Pressed for names, he could only say that Alan Clark once had dinner with him. Clark was the only government minister to grace revisionist historian David

Irving's party launching the publication of his *Hitler's War*. The cocktail sticks had tasteful little swastikas. Reviewing a book on Churchill in *The Times* in January, Clark said Britain ought to have made peace with Hitler to save the British Empire. He says a lot of people have urged him to get back into politics. I wonder what sort of people?

ORDRE, TRAVAIL, PATRIE

It used to be said of South American generals that when they started talking about God, the Family and Fatherland, you knew they were up to no good. No such suspicion can attach to British Conservatives who, amid disarray over Maastricht (pronounced Ma Strict), decide that what we all need is more discipline. One can only admire the altruism of a Carlton Club audience applauding the idea of work (a pleasure they've denied themselves) for the unemployed. Work without wages as well!

It was presumptuous of me to wonder in my diary what had happened to Lord Jakobovitz's promised campaign against the international arms trade. Britain needs more of the business, not less. Former Chief Rabbi Jakobovitz is showing his continued commitment to major (no pun intended) moral issues by supporting the campaign for workfare. Better to accept the most menial tasks than receive money for idleness, he counsels. Really? This may seem to contradict biblical injunctions against the 'willing slave', but it follows the tradition of Jakobovitz's forerunners who told mine they should give thanks for the sweatshops. They went and listened to socialist agitators instead.

Spurning our ex-Chief's advice some ingrate writes into the *Jewish Chronicle* saying many of today's unemployed have contributed for years for their benefits, and some will have paid to the Chief Rabbi's fund too, to help Jakobovitz enjoy his retirement. People seem to forget he has his worries. They may have provided him with a nice home, but who will pay his property tax?

'Bible John' Patten has summoned the bishops to help him bring order to

the nation's classrooms (starting with the teachers). Moslem clerics complain they weren't asked. But our Chief Rabbi Sacks, like Jakobovitz before him, endorses the drive for Christian education! However, the Association of Jewish Teachers has told off the Association of Christian Teachers about an article recommending Helen Shapiro as 'a great asset' for imparting the gospel to Jewish children. Well, she was hardly an asset to the music scene, was she?

DAYAN v THE DIN

In these days of anxiety about the sins of the young, how reassuring that the Beth Din found time between checking the chipolatas and kosher Chinese takeaways to try and protect our Jewish young people from wicked influences. They admonished the youth movements against inviting Yael Dayan to address them.

It's not her trip to Tunis to meet Chairman Arafat which concerns them, but the more serious misconduct of being photographed in a bathing suit on the beach at Rosh Hashanah. Not that they'd have been happier if she'd been without a costume, but ... we can't have the daughters of Israel get the idea that there are alternatives to *yomtov* to showing off your new clothes in *shul*.

I don't suppose the picture of Yael in her swimsuit appeared in the Orthodox *Jewish Tribune*. It seems we have the extreme right-wing Herut and Betar movements to thank for drawing this matter to the attention of the Beth Din. Say what you like about the Irgun, or Deir Yassin (but be careful what you say in their presence), these boys know a moral issue when they see one.

They were right, too: Ms Dayan is a wicked influence. Discussing homosexuality in the Israeli armed forces (that phrase itself could be enough to cause heart attacks in some quarters), the general's daughter has dared to suggest that 'the love surpassing that of women' between David and Jonathan might have been ... well, the kind that would bar them under modern Israel's Law of Return. It would also keep them out of our Chief Rabbi's parade. □

Sick as a Jewish parrot



Arsenal: progressive fanzines, few fascists, fans from many cultures. So why do they shout 'yids' whenever they meet Tottenham, asks Syd Jeffers

Last year, I was asked to write about racism at Arsenal for a book about football supporters' experiences.* My response was that being black and going to Highbury wasn't a problem. Given the number of black people on the pitch and on the terraces (which we still have, just) it was in fact a far more integrated environment than the university where I work.

However, if racism wasn't an obvious problem antisemitism was. At Highbury you don't hear the monkey chants that you hear at the more atavistic grounds (and which TV commentators ignore or refer to somewhat euphemistically as those 'unfortunate noises'). But you do get the chants of 'Yiddoes' aimed at Tottenham, who are referred to as 'the Yids', or more affectionately as 'the scum'.

I wrote, as other contributors did, about how I became a supporter. Unlike most of the others, I wasn't initiated as a kid by a football-mad father, but was a self-made 'Gooner' and made the most of being a grown-up convert (always the worst kind). My conversion was due to a mature, almost professional curiosity (I work as a social researcher).

I talked about the secret lives of mainly male academics who could appeal to their terrace

credibility to play the role of post-modern 'new lads'. They were equally at home with wilfully obscure, highbrow theory and wilfully vulgar, lowbrow football – Foucault on Friday, Spurs in the FA Cup semi-final on Sunday.

What struck me about the ritualistic antisemitism at Arsenal was how normal and almost unremarkable it was. By ritualistic antisemitism I am referring to the way in which Tottenham, our 'other', are invoked in familial but negative terms, and identified as 'the Yids'. This is done collectively largely through songs and chants.

I have a mate I see regularly at Arsenal, Adrian Jones. He was taken to Highbury as a boy, and as a consequence has a much longer Arsenal memory. He told me about some of the older and thankfully less heard songs, like:

(to the tune of 'The Laughing Policeman')

They say that Adolf Hitler,
he was an Arsenal fan,

he went down,
to White Hart Lane,
and all the bastards ran,

he went into the Paxton,
lined 'em up against the wall,

he said, 'I want to talk to you',
and then he gassed them all

(chorus to the tune of, 'Bless 'em all')

Gas em' all,
gas em' all,
the Paxton,
the Park Lane,
an' all,

God bless old Adolf,
'cos he done his best,
he gassed 6 million,
now we'll gas the rest

and (to the tune of 'Feel like singing the blues'):

Never felt more like gassing the Jews,
when Arsenal win,
and Tottenham lose,
oh Arsenal,
you've got me gassing the Jews.

I've not heard these chants myself, but in the 10 years I've been going to matches, I've heard this often:

Hark! now hear,
the Arsenal sing,
the Tottenham,
run away,
they're yids!

and we will fight for evermore,
because of Boxing Day.

Yiddoes! Yiddoes! Yiddoes!

The Boxing Day reference is to the old annual derby game held on Boxing Day, which Adrian saw advertised on a train station wall in south London one year in the late 1970s as 'Belsen revisited, meet at Manor House'.

All of this is pretty horrific and conjures up the familiar images of sub-human, football thugs well beyond the realm of civilisation. However, football is 'a funny old game' and there are a number of curious ironies.

First, when Arsenal go to Chelsea at Stamford Bridge, the Shed call us 'the yids'. Chelsea, of course, have a notorious reputation for skinheads and fascists, but I guess from their point of view we are very close to Stamford Hill, which has such a large and visibly orthodox Jewish community.

Second, Tottenham have taken on the nickname 'the Yids' and sing:

Terry Venables
Yid army
Yiddoes! Yiddoes!

Fans wave Israeli flags at us.

Third, we probably have as many Jewish fans as Tottenham do.

So what's it all about?

I'd like to think as Adrian does that when our fellow supporters call Tottenham 'Yids', this is somehow disconnected from 'real' antisemitism and just another example of the way words become separated from initial meanings and assume a life of their own; 'Yid' just becomes another, not particularly antisemitic, name for Tottenham.

However, I am not entirely reassured by this fashionably 'post-structuralist' reading. Although it may mean that people who use the terms don't necessarily subscribe to the ideology, I can't help feeling that it is too close, too compatible with an antisemitic way of talking, thinking and acting.

It's perhaps 17 years since the Arsenal sang:

Zigger zagger,
zagger zigger,
Nottingham Forest
have got a nigger

when Viv Anderson ran out for the Forest at Highbury. He then joined us, to be followed by Arsenal icons like David 'Oh, Rocky, Rocky' Rocastle; Paul 'broke his jaw, good to be a Gooner' Davis; and Mikey 'who put the ball in Liverpool's net' Thomas. The Arsenal are well rootsy now, chanting (to the tune of Arrow's cross-over soca hit 'Hot, Hot, Hot'):

Ian Wright,
Wright!
Wright!
Wright!

I wonder how the crowd would react if we bought a Jewish player, and whether it would be like when Glasgow Rangers transgressed the ethnic cleansing bye-laws of football sectarianism by buying a Catholic from Celtic?

Arsenal made some statements condemning the chanting of racist and abusive songs when these were made criminal recently, but if enforced they'd have to nick most of the Clock End.

The fascists and NF seem to have left Arsenal alone as so many black and Turkish people go to matches, and all the fanzines seem pretty progressive on these issues, but the rituals remain.

Ronnie Rosenthal, the Israeli and Liverpool international, got a barracking the few times he made it off the bench at Highbury, but the real ire is still reserved for Tottenham or former Tottenham players

I guess it just goes to show you don't have to be Jewish to be a Yid in football, or be abused by verbal antisemites. But perhaps it helps.

* *We'll Support You Evermore*, edited by David Bull (Duckworth, £0.00). Proceeds to Child Poverty Action Group.

I watched the Ghetto burning

Wlodka Blit-Robertson was a child in the Warsaw Ghetto. Here she writes of her memories of life during the uprising and before it.

Fifty years ago, on 19 April 1943 at the beginning of Passover and Easter, the Warsaw Ghetto, which had been established by the Germans in November 1940 and which comprised more than a quarter of the Warsaw area, was finally surrounded by Germans, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians and the Polish blue-uniformed police. They entered through the gates of the Ghetto walls with tanks and machine guns and began to burn it systematically to the ground, pouring petrol into the buildings and setting them alight. The remains of the Ghetto population, children, women and men, were driven out of cellars, underground bunkers, lofts, spaces behind wardrobes and stoves and the other hiding places in which they had managed to survive all the previous shootings and deportations. Now these

terrified people were being shot on the spot or led in convoys with their hands up to the cattle wagons and the gas chambers of Treblinka and Majdanek.

The German troops, at the point in the war when they were best armed, most powerful and victorious, were amazed to come across open and effective organised resistance from groups of young Jews, men and women who had organised themselves into the Jewish fighting organisation, the ZOB. These fighters were mainly members of the many political organisations which were still functioning in the Ghetto.

They fought, armed with only a few home-made explosive bottles – so-called Molotov cocktails – and a few pistols smuggled into the Ghetto from the Aryan or non-Jewish part of Warsaw by their couriers. In the first few days of the uprising, they succeeded in forcing some of the tanks to withdraw and managed to keep up the resistance, moving from one burning house to another, for almost three weeks. As Marek

Edelman describes, on 8 May detachments of Germans and Ukrainians surrounded the bunker which was the ZOB headquarters. Fighting went on for two hours. At the end, ZOB commander Mordechai Anilewicz (a member of *Hashomer Hatzair*) and those who were still alive in the bunker committed suicide. On 10 May a group of 40 surviving Ghetto fighters escaped through the sewers, but only a few managed to survive the war.

I watched the Ghetto burning from a house on the Aryan side where I and my twin sister were being hidden by a Polish family. We had been smuggled over the Ghetto wall by members of the underground Jewish Bund organisation only two months before.

It is impossible to forget now, 50 years later, the terrible scenes I saw then: the screams of people running out of burning houses with their clothes on fire and then being shot at; the great billowing fire, lighting up the rest of Warsaw; the smoke and the pieces of burning paper flying in the air. Everybody and everything I knew was left behind in that inferno. It was the end of any semblance of normal life which in spite of everything had, up to then, still seemed bearable.

Indeed, until the beginning of the deportations in January 1942, many of my memories of life in the Ghetto inspire and astound me. People there managed not to become dehumanised despite the bestiality of the Germans and being completely isolated from the surrounding non-Jewish population, who were very hostile.

I remember the hunger, the haphazard beatings and executions, the children caught trying to smuggle some food through the Ghetto walls and the homeless Jews thrown into the Ghetto

from the surrounding towns and villages without any possessions or shelter and, later, the places in which we had to hide. But I also remember the soup kitchens and shelters for children organised by Jewish organisations and the secret schools, libraries and even music lessons and puppet theatre performances. There were also illegally printed bulletins circulating in the Ghetto, and secret synagogues.

Much of this clandestine life went on in the courtyards of the Warsaw tenement buildings where we could be warned of the approaching Germans.

Many of the able-bodied Jewish men had left Warsaw in 1939 to join the Polish army east of Warsaw and had found themselves caught by the approaching Russian army, so many women were left on their own with their children.

I want to pay tribute to the Jewish fighters and partisans who, almost unarmed and untrained, took on the mighty, murderous Germans, and also to the other people who tried so bravely to survive the unbelievable terror and murder. It is difficult to talk and write about these memories but it is important not to allow these events to be forgotten or pretend that they did not happen. □

Children in the Warsaw Ghetto



No freedom on May day

Marek Edelman, one of the leaders of the Ghetto Uprising, describes celebrating May Day during the Uprising.

The burning of the Ghetto came to an end. There simply weren't any more living quarters and, still worse, there was no water. The partisans themselves now descended to the underground shelters occupied by the civilian population to defend whatever could still be defended.

Battles and armed encounters were now fought mostly at night, while in the daytime the Ghetto was completely lifeless. The Germans and the ZOB patrols met only when the streets were completely dark, and whoever had time to fire first, won. Our patrols were spread over the entire Ghetto area. A great many died on both sides every night. The Germans and Ukrainians made it a practice to patrol the streets in larger groups, and lay in ambush for the partisans only.

On May Day the Command decided to carry out a 'holiday' action. Several battle groups were sent out to 'hunt down' the greatest number of Germans possible. In the evening, a May Day roll-call was held. The partisans were briefly addressed by a few people and the 'Internationale' was sung. The entire world, we knew, was celebrating May Day on that day and everywhere forceful, meaningful words were being spoken. But never yet had the 'Internationale' been sung in conditions so different, so tragic, in a place where an entire nation had been and was still perishing. The words and the song echoed from the charred ruins and were, at that particular time, an indication that Socialist

youth was still fighting in the Ghetto, and that even in the face of death they were not abandoning their ideals.

The partisans' situation was becoming more grave every hour. Not only were there shortages of food and water, but ammunition was also becoming scarce. We no longer had any communications with the 'Aryan side' and we were, therefore, unable to arrange for the transportation of additional weapons that we had received (on the 'Aryan side') from the People's Army while the fighting in the Ghetto was going on (twenty rifles and ammunition).

The Germans now tried to locate all inhabited shelters by means of sensitive sound-detecting devices and police dogs. On 3 May they located the shelter on 30 Franciszkanska Street, where the operation base of those of our groups who had formerly forced their way from the brushmakers' area was at the time located. Here one of the most brilliant battles was fought. The fighting lasted for two days and half of all our men were killed in its course. A hand grenade killed Berek Sznajdmil. But even in the most difficult moments, when there was almost nothing left, Abrasha Blum kept our spirits up. His presence among us meant more to us and gave us more strength than the possession of the best possible weapon. One can hardly speak of victories when Life itself is the reason for the fight and so many people are lost, but one thing can surely be stated about this particular battle: we did not let the Germans carry out their plans. They did not evacuate a single living person. □

(from Marek Edelman, *The Ghetto fights*, New York, 1946, reprinted by Bookmarks, London, 1990)



Marek Edelman

Der Hoyfzinger Fun Varshever Geto

A gut-morgn, libe mentshn!
Varft undz a shtikele broyt!
Derfar vet got aykh bentshn;
Nisht visn vet ir fun keyn noyt.

Gehat a tate-mame
Un sheyninke shvesterlekh dray;
Avek mitn roykh un flamen,
Geblihn bin ikh yetst aleyn.

Ikh drey di katerinke
Un shpil haynt far aykh mit kurazh,
Vaye morgn, kon zayn, in treblinke
Vet vern fun undz a barg ash.

Der hunger iz a tsore,
Mit toyte farzeyt is der bruk;
Oy, yidn, brney rakhmonim –
Es vilt zikh nokh lebn a tog.

Mayn kol di luft tsheshmetert,
Fun morgn biz shpet in der nakht;
Farsholtn zol zayn dos geto
Un di, vos hobn es oysgetrakht.

Men roydeft undz vi khayes,
Dos lebn iz vi a tehom.
Es vign zikh sharbns af tliet
Tsum tayvl, -es shaynt nokh di zun!

Fun hertser broyzt a fayer:
Genug undz gekoylet vi shof –
Oy, yidn, nemt di 'shpayers'
Um kumt, lomir makhn a sof!

Drey ikh di katerinke,
Farshpil undzere laydn un noyt,
Vayl eyder tsu geyn in treblinke –
Iz beser in kamf faln toyt.

The Street Singer of the Warsaw Ghetto

A good morning, people passing,
Throw us a crust of bread!
Then God will send his blessing;
And from want you will be shed.

I once had a father, mother,
Three pretty sisters so dear:
They're done with smoke and fire,
And I am left all alone here.

I play the barrel organ,
I play with courage and skill,
Tomorrow Treblinka may beckon,
Oh, there we'll become an ash hill.

Our hunger is our torment,
With the dead the roads are paved,
Oh, Jews – you children of mercy,
One still wants to live out the day.

My voice the air disperses
From morning till late at night,
May the ghetto drown in our curses,
And with it those builders of blight.

So I play the barrel organ,
Lessening our pain and distress,
For better than going to Treblinka
Is falling in battle and death.

by Reuven Lifshutz (Warsaw Ghetto)

Zog Nit Keyn Mol

Zog nit keyn mol az du geyst dem letstn veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho –
Es vet a poyk ton undzer trot-mir zaynen do!

Fun grinem palmenland biz vaysn land fun
shney,
Mir kumen on mit undzer payn, mit undzer
vey,
Un vu gefaln s'iz a shprits fun undzer blut,
Shprotsn vet dort undzer gvure, undzer mut.

Es vet di morgnzun bagildn undz dem haynt,
Un der nekhtn vet farshvindn mitn faynd,
Nor oyb farzamen vet di zun in dem kayor –
Vi a parol zol geyn dos lid fun dor tsu dor.

Dos lid geshribn iz mit blut un nit mit blay,
S'iz nit keyn lidl fun a foygl af der fray,
Dos hot a folk tsvishn falndike vent
Dos lid gezungen mit naganes in di hent!

To zog nit keyn mol az du geyst dem letstn
veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho –
Es vet a poyk ton undzer trot-mir zaynen do!

Never Say

Never say this is the final road for you,
Though leadened skies may cover over days
of blue.
As the hour that we longed for is so near,
Our step beats out the message – we are here!

From lands so green with palms to lands all
white with snow,
We shall be coming with our anguish and our
woe,
And where a spurt of our blood fell on the
earth,
There our courage and our spirit have rebirth.

The early morning sun will brighten our day,
And yesterday with our foe will fade away.
But if the sun delays and in the east remains –
This song as password generations must
maintain.

This song was written with our blood and not
with lead,
It's not a little tune that birds sing overhead,
This song a people sang amid collapsing
walls,
With grenades in hands they heeded to the
call.

Therefore never say the road now ends for
you,
Though leadened skies may cover over days
of blue.
As the hour that we longed for is so near –
Our step beats out the message – we are here!

by Hirsh Glik (Vilna Ghetto)



Uncle Ben's lies

Ben-Gurion's Scandals how the Haganah and the Mossad eliminated Jews by Naim Giladi (Glilit Publishing Inc, New York, \$19.50)

It was in a Baghdad prison cell under the pro-British monarchy that Naim Giladi, a young member of the Zionist underground, was befriended by a communist. It wasn't until much later, after his experiences as an Iraqi Jew in Israel had led him to join the militant Black Panthers, to fight the cause of the underprivileged in the Histadrut and to support Palestinian rights, that Naim began probing the hidden history which had put him and his cellmate in jail.

David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel's independence, led it through two wars, and shaped its politics for decades. *Ben-Gurion's Scandals* looks behind his public career to confront some of the darkest, and least-known, episodes in the history of Zionism. It is not pleasant reading. Here is the pre-war cooperation between the Haganah (the pre-state military organisation of the Jewish community in Palestine) and the Nazis, and the record of how the leadership of the Yishuv (the pre-state Jewish community) and the Jewish Agency (who, he claims, were anxious above all that Jews should not find refuge elsewhere) responded to the Nazi genocide. Here are the still controversial questions of what happened to the refugee ships *Patria* and *Struma*, and the *Egoz* from Morocco; as well as the ill-fated secret peace efforts of the 1950s, and the massacre carried out by Ariel Sharon's unit at Qibyah in 1953.

Understandably, however, this book is mainly about what happened to the Jews of Iraq. In 1950-51, there were a series of bombings of Jewish targets. Evidence indicates, he claims, that Israeli agents perpetrated them in order to panic Iraqi Jews

into flight. Naim Giladi's book is not the first to deal with this, and probably won't be the last. But for background and detail, for the painstaking amassing of evidence and pursuit of witnesses, Naim Giladi's book will stand out.

Filling in some of the rich history of Iraqi Jewry, and the rise of Arab nationalism in struggle against the British, Naim deals with the 1941 pogroms in Baghdad and Basra, the latter then under the occupation of British forces. To this day, Britain's Foreign Office has refused to release relevant files.

Naim also suggests Perfidious Albion's hidden hand might have been pulling strings in 1950-51, a connection that hadn't occurred to me before. Nuri es Said, their puppet Iraqi prime minister, wanted troublesome left-wing Jews out as well as his hands on Jewish people's jobs and property. Israel wanted Jewish immigrants to replace the Palestinians. Wanting to secure bases in Israel, and to bring Iraq into a defence pact, the British government might have considered a population exchange. 'Jews for Palestinians' (ethnic 'tidying-up'?) neatly suited its ideas of Middle East security.

Before anyone sneers 'conspiracy theory', let them honestly study the long history of imperialist intrigue and secret diplomacy in the Middle East. Naim Giladi does not theorise. He brings out the evidence pointing to real conspiracies, and to the authorities in Iraq, Britain and above all Israel, having something to hide; and recounts how, more than once, those who knew came tantalisingly close to telling, only to back off at the last moment.

These days, when more Jewish people are prepared to accept and frankly acknowledge that injustices were committed against Palestinians, it remains painfully difficult to broach Zionism's crimes against Jews. But from Herzl's readiness to deal with the devil, or the antisemite Von Plehve, to what an Israeli Labour Party member called 'cruel' or 'brutal' Zionism, there runs a theme which might well have taken expression in the bombs in Baghdad.

Naim Giladi's objectivity is not that of a detached academic, but nor is he anyone's hack propagandist. He was there. He lost friends in the 1941 pogroms, and his people were the targets in 1951, when he was helping to bring them to Israel. He has dedicated himself to digging out the truth, at whatever cost.

There are faults with *Ben-Gurion's Scandals*. It could have done with better editing and proof-reading, with less quirky transliterations, and without mistakes such as calling Labour MP Maurice Orbach 'Lord Orbach'! (What happened to Orbach's peace efforts and his political career might make an interesting appendix for British readers.) They are the faults that might have been avoided had Naim had more help, and a commercial publisher with the guts to publish his book.

That too is a testimony of sorts to its genuineness, and the author's integrity. When I met Naim some years ago at a conference of the International Jewish Peace Union, I begged him to write his life story. He has put that off till next, but I look forward. *Koyekh!* □

CHARLIE POTTINS

Reign of terror

'I saw a picture the size of a cigarette packet, of a man who had a very big ... He told me "That's me when I was young ... look how bit my ... was. Now it's ten times bigger and I'm going to ... you." He tore at my clothes and I started screaming and hitting my head against the wall... "Steve" took off his pants and underwear. I screamed and the policewoman covered her eyes and started laughing...' (Gazan woman describing her interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services)

This report on the interrogation of Palestinian women detainees by the Israeli authorities makes painful yet compelling reading. The book is based on 19 statements, 14 from Palestinian women from East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, three from Palestinian Israelis and two from Jewish Israeli women peace activists. The author explains the law fully without assuming the reader's knowledge. Two appendices by Daniel Machover give the relevant international law. The author provides background information on the women interviewed for the report and in two final appendices details cases where women have miscarried as a result of mistreatment in custody.

Two chapters illustrate how heavily the legal process is weighted against defendants. In the military courts Israeli defence force officers are prosecutors and judges. The language of the court is Hebrew. Very little evidence is presented to the court other than the confession of the accused. Most interrogation is carried out by anonymous members of the General Security Services, a body which has no publicly available code of practice. Defendants are held in total isolation during the detention period, and this may

last from a number of days to several months. It is very rare for a Palestinian detainee to be allowed to see a lawyer during her detention period. There is generally no access to medical care.

The right to a 'fair and regular trial', crucial in international law, is virtually non-existent in the Occupied Territories. Despite the brutal interrogation methods it is almost impossible to have confession evidence excluded. The notorious 'Tamir Amendment' provides that defendants who refuse to sign a confession can be prosecuted on the basis of a written statement of a third party without the evidence being given live in court. The 'right to silence' is severely eroded. A catch-all provision allows a military court to deviate from the rules of evidence for 'special reasons that shall be stated if it considers it necessary'.

The most harrowing pages of this book are those that describe interrogation methods. These include sleep and food deprivation, keeping the detainee in unhygienic conditions, beatings and the use of 'Shabah' and the 'Coffin'. In 'Shabah' the detainee is made to squat stand with legs bent or sit handcuffed to the wall of an outdoor yard with no protection from heat or cold. The 'Coffin' is about one metre square and two metres high, filthy and lacking in ventilation. There is no toilet and you cannot lie down. Inside, the detainee hears a slow knocking, a snake hissing, and the sound of deep crying.

The Israeli authorities have developed interrogation techniques specific to women. All the women interviewed described sexual harassment which might include verbal insults, touching the woman's face or breasts or threats of rape. They manipulate

the Arab notion of 'female honour'. One woman was subjected to the threat that she would be raped in front of her husband, mother and brothers. The woman's maternal feelings might also be abused. One woman was played a tape of children's voices crying and saying things like 'Oh mama, come back home, we need you'.

Jewish Israeli women prisoners were treated to sophisticated psychological techniques and relatively mild sexual harassment, compared to the physical abuse and more severe sexual harassment of the Palestinian women. One of the Jewish women was threatened with 15 days' observation in a mental hospital. Another was told she would be brought to the point where she would commit suicide.

The book's final chapter poses the question 'Does Israel sanction torture?' and considers the UN Convention Against Torture together with Israel's obligations not to torture in international law. It concludes that the interrogation methods described clearly amount to torture. Furthermore, the recommendations of the 'Landau Commission Report' of 1987, which the courts are encouraged to accept although they do not have the force of law, sanction 'moderate physical' pressure during the interrogation of those suspected of 'hostile terrorist activity'.

In 1992 the International Committee of the Red Cross stated: 'The Israeli position, which is that security considerations may justify the use of "moderate measures of physical pressure", constitutes in the ICRC's opinion a violation of the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law.'

Israel is, of course, not the only country responsible for human rights abuses, nor is it the only country where women suffer

Making Women Talk
Teresa Thornhill
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights £5.99

sexual violence in situations of political/military conflict. We are seeing the truth of this in former Yugoslavia. In her book *Against our will*, Susan Brownmiller points out how rape is considered an inevitable part of war. The testimony of the women quoted in Teresa Thornhill's book reminded me of the Drill Sergeant's Ditty quoted by Brownmiller:

'This is my weapon this is my gun
This is for business, this is for fun.'

By considering the specific experience of women this report takes a feminist as well as a 'human rights' approach. Geoffrey Bindman's foreword stresses the 'urgent need for the barbarous practices revealed in this book to be swiftly ended'. The author succeeds in exposing not only the anti-Arab racism but also the misogyny which informs these practices.

In demonstrating that, in certain situations anyway, the

maltreatment of all women, including Jewish women, is sanctioned, this book takes a step towards debunking the prevalent myth deeply cherished amongst many Jews that somehow Jewish men are 'different'. This myth helps to sustain patriarchy within Jewish society. Without it perhaps we could look more honestly at what actually happens to Jewish women and girls. There is domestic violence, there is sexual abuse, there is harmful material and ideological domination of women's lives by men.

I am aware that many Jews, including those of us on the Left, are still uncomfortable about public criticism of Israel. It makes us feel vulnerable and confused. We do not want to defend the indefensible, but we are frightened of antisemitism. This book is carefully written and scrupulously fair. Antisemites may use the material but they get no encouragement from the author's approach. The foreword alludes to the fact that many Jewish

Israelis would like to see social and political rights for all, irrespective of race, religion or sex. The very fact that the experience of the Israeli Jewish women is documented illustrates that criticism is to be directed not at Jews but at the Israeli state.

We need to maintain clearly within our own minds as well as publicly the distinction between a positive Jewish identity and support for the Israeli state. This is difficult because this distinction is ignored or rejected by many within the mainstream Jewish community. If we give way to the part of us which would like to draw a veil over Israeli human rights abuses, we are ourselves falling into the trap of confusing our identity as Jews with support for Israel. We need to find a way of embracing our Jewishness and withstanding antisemitism while at the same time acknowledging that painful truths, such as those contained in this report, must be told. □

SARAH LEWIS

New York's theatre of war

Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities written, conceived and performed by Anna Deavere Smith, at the Royal Court Theatre

In the summer of 1991, in an ominous prelude to the Los Angeles riots, a bitter conflict erupted between black people and Jews in Brooklyn's Crown Heights district. In the evening of 19 August, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, was travelling home when a car from his motorcade swerved on to the pavement and killed a seven-year-old black youth, Gavin Cato. A private Hasidic ambulance took away the driver of the car, but not the injured boy. By the next morning a Hasidic scholar visiting from Australia was dead and a 16-year-old black boy had been arrested in connection with his stabbing.

No one disputed the events, but everyone saw them from their own angle, grappling painfully with awful truths and struggling to fit them into their familiar frames of reference. Some of those with the power to do so used the deaths of Gavin Cato and Yankel Rosenbaum to reinforce old fears – blacks of Jews and Jews of blacks. Some of those without power moved beyond fear. Black kids on the street understood it their way; Jewish women in their homes saw it their way.

Anna Deavere Smith took her tape recorder to Crown Heights and listened to Jews and African

Americans, women and men, girls and boys, and from their words about what mattered to them she made a play. Editing only in the sense of choosing what, out of 30 hours of tape, to include in 90 minutes on stage, she acts each of the 26 people she interviewed, quoting them verbatim, with all their vision and insight, and with all their hesitations and inconsistencies.

Anna Deavere Smith's talent is extraordinary. With an iron, a pile of washing and an air of worry about all she has to get done, she becomes Gittel Lazerson, a Hasidic woman describing her dilemma when the baby turned the radio up

painfully loud on *Shabbos* and she was forbidden by Jewish law to turn it down.

With a raincoat, a Caribbean accent, depressed and apparently inarticulate, but with an almost biblical turn of phrase, she becomes Carmel Cato, the father of the boy who died, graphically describing his shock and disorientation but certain of his moral position and fearless about his right to state it.

Histories of persecution are used like weapons with which to beat the other side, particularly by

community leaders: the pain of slavery and the legacy of genocide are wielded to frighten the opposition into silence and retreat, but above all to bolster their status as leaders. Leonard Jeffries, thumping the table with anger, goes into minuscule detail about how Alex Haley's *ROOTS* slipped from his influence to become a tool of the whites and to finance Jewish interests: 'The tons of millions and hundreds of millions made on *ROOTS* went ... not to make more black series like *ROOTS*, but they went to produce a series, maybe a dozen mini series, on Jewish history.'

Behind a big desk, wearing a yarmulke, endlessly strutting, and speaking ten to the dozen with the curious slight Israeli inflection which has come to signify a generation of Jewish leaders born and bred in New York removed from the immi-



Photo: Alastair Muir

grant experience, she becomes Michael Miller, of the Jewish Community Relations Council. Logging and recording the behaviour of the official Jewish community, expressions of support become exhibits to be used in evidence. 'I can show you a letter that we sent to the Cato family expressing uh our sorrow over the loss, unnecessary loss of their son. I am not aware of ... a word that was spoken at that funeral ... and I was taking notes, of a word that was uttered of comfort to the family of Yankel Rosenbaum. Frankly this was a political rally rather than a funeral.'

Spreadeagled in a chair, head thrown back and a voice that overrides everything, she becomes Al Sharpton counterclaiming: 'To this minute the Rebbe has never even uttered a word of sympathy to the family. Not even sent them a card, a flower or nothing! So it's

treating us with absolute contempt and I don't care how controversial it makes us. I won't tolerate being insulted. If you piss in my face I'm gonna call it piss. I'm not gonna call it rain.'

Most stunning about Anna Deavere Smith's play is her validation of all the voices. It is provocative and subversive to give kids on the street equal weight to demagogues, to show that women hidden in their homes are making at least as much sense of American life as academics in their universities, and often

with greater clarity. By interweaving the powerful with the powerless, and by focusing on their style as much as their words, Deavere Smith leaves us with new questions and a new angle of approach. What would happen if we really could put Michael Miller, Al Sharpton, Leonard Jeffries, Carmel Cato, Gittel Lazerson, an unnamed 13-year-old black girl and a 17-year-old Hasidic youth in a room together? It's obvious: no voices would be heard above the posturing of the self-appointed leaders. Deavere Smith has made us listen to those voices we don't want to hear; to feel the pain and anger we usually sidestep; to piece together the jagged bits of this corner of American life and start to look across community boundaries for a future which must be faced together. □

JULIA BARD

Spike marks the X

Malcolm X
dir Spike
Lee, 1992

Everyone wants a piece of Malcolm X. For many Marxists, he's a fighter against racism who abandoned separatism for revolution. For right-wing Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas he's a black man who found pride in himself and promoted self-advancement.

And if the Jewish Socialists' Group has not yet staked its claim – that Malcolm loved gefilte fish and sang in Yiddish – then that would surely be no more absurd than the quick-buck marketing of Malcolm X burgers and boxer shorts.

Spike Lee's biographical film has added fuel to the fire. Even before the first frame had been shot, Lee's critics claimed Malcolm would be turned into a hero of 'black yuppyism' or simplistic separatism.

Yet you don't have to be a Spike Lee fan (I'm not) to see that *Malcolm X* is an impressive dramatisation of Malcolm's life. The acting – notably Denzil Washington's central performance – is excellent, the scripting is good, and the film manages to stay focused over 3½ hours. (This is no mean feat – Danny De Vito's less ambitious *Hoffa* disintegrates in a much shorter time.)

All of this, however, adds to the disappointment that *Malcolm X* fails to deliver politically. The problem isn't that Lee gives a distorted view; it is that he has steered such a steady course that he doesn't seem to give any view.

Perhaps *Malcolm X* is already too ambitious without trying to cover more ground. But I think this lack of political depth is a shame, particularly in light of the messages, sometimes lucid, sometimes confused, of Lee's earlier films. Instead, Lee's camera pans

tantalisingly over a variety of issues – attitudes towards women, the role of Islam – but fails to pursue them.

The film's first hour portrays Malcolm's childhood and days as a small-time crook. Some critics have argued that *Malcolm X* would have had more room for analysis if it skimmed on his early life. But many of the film's strongest scenes are here, and Malcolm's conversion to the Nation of Islam is put into context. A spoken narrative – lifted from Malcolm's autobiography – explains how these early events influenced his later thinking, including his insistence that white people could play no role in fighting racism.

The film intertwines the brutal oppression faced by black people generally in the United States with its specific effects on Malcolm's family, including the murder of his father by Klansmen. Poverty and discrimination drive Malcolm, like many others, to crime.

His time spent pimping and stealing is treated humorously – perhaps too humorously – although this light touch helps compensate for the film's determined seriousness later on. At one point, Betty Shabazz tells her future husband Malcolm that he is too serious. Spike Lee should have taken note.

Betty Shabazz comes over partly as a strong, assertive woman and partly as a wife who spends most of her time waiting at home. Elsewhere, the contradictions are more vivid. In one scene, Malcolm recruits for the Nation of Islam by telling black women forced into prostitution that they should be fulfilling their potential as teachers and doctors. Yet elsewhere, both he

and the Nation's leader, Elijah Muhammed, stress the need for women to act as passive housekeepers.

Spike Lee seems to drift past these issues as if unaware of the questions he is raising. Nor is there any mention of whether Malcolm's views towards women changed after he quit the Nation (there is evidence that they did). Malcolm's attitudes towards Jews are also absent from the film.

However, Lee does not give the Nation of Islam an easy ride. He includes Malcolm's realisation that Elijah Muhammed has had sex with young girls, the increasingly flamboyant lifestyles of Nation ministers, and the Nation's role in Malcolm's assassination. No wonder Louis Farrakhan has felt the need to produce a video showing his version of events.

Inevitably, the last 11 months of Malcolm's life, after he left the Nation, remain the most intriguing for socialists. The film shows how his separatist views were transformed after he visited Mecca and prayed alongside black and white Muslims. Ironically, religion rather than secularism prompted this transformation.

Other aspects of Malcolm's changing stance are neglected – his increasing desire to work in the political rather than religious sphere; his growing internationalism and attraction to socialism.

But this is as much the beginning of a new chapter – the rise of Black Power – as it is the end of a previous one. And despite the flaws, it is to Lee's credit that you leave the cinema wanting to know more. □

CLIFFORD SINGER

Teach your children well

They say that the beans that sell best are those with the least taste – that way at least nobody hates them. Writing doesn't work like that. If it doesn't have an angle the reader will see no reason to stay with it. The hardest aspect of writing – and the reason for doing it at all – is that you have to put yourself on the line without censoring your ideas to appease your audience.

A teacher's task is different: notwithstanding the efforts of the government, their task is to raise questions and provide the information students need to explore the issues. Ronnie Landau is a teacher with a marvellous ability to engage and inform; to harness antagonism to fuel much needed debate on some of the most painful aspects of modern Jewish history.

In *The Nazi Holocaust* he states his view strongly: that Hitler's extermination of the Jews does not 'belong' to the Jews; that while it is invidious to make simple comparisons with other examples of genocide, it is dangerous to isolate the Jewish experience from its context and from its connections with the persecution of other peoples. But having committed himself to that position, he then shies away from its political implications.

The book's strength is in the clarity of its information and in



the questions it raises. Ronnie Landau conveys the backdrop to the Holocaust with skill and sensitivity. He gives an all-too-comprehensible picture of how the Nazis isolated Jews socially and economically, leaving them bereft of support when isolation changed to exclusion and, ultimately, extermination. He also has the courage to question the investment in the use of the terms 'Shoah' and 'Holocaust'.

Its weakness, though, is in the author's temptation to revert to teacher mode when the issues are most painful and contentious. The section entitled 'The Victims' opens with a quote from the Jewish Combat Organisation: 'Let us bravely look the truth straight in the face.' But Ronnie Landau

avoids the truth in his reluctance to portray the Jewish community as anything other than a homogeneous group for whom resistance was the exception which proved the traditional rule of passivity. 'The Jewish historical experience had, to an extent, conditioned them to expect persecution, misery and degradation, but it had also taught them that, if they kept their heads down, they would always win through.' He doesn't examine the hegemony of this version of Jewish history which many would question. Nor does he explore the long-standing struggle between the low-profile of Jewish leaders whose position has traditionally depended on their compliance with the state, and the activism of the Jewish workers who often saw their safety as being compromised by the state.

Inevitably there is more to be written about this period, particularly about the connections between Nazism and other forms of fascism, and the Final Solution, and other examples of genocide. I'll keep this on the shelf as a reference point, as much as a reference book, but I hope teachers will have the courage to use it as a starting point for raising difficult, painful but increasingly necessary debates. □

JULIA BARD

The power and the gory



Photo: Andrew Testa

Romper Stomper
dir Geoffrey Wright

The first I knew about *Romper Stomper* was this was the movie the Anti-Nazi League had urged people to boycott. On the day I went to review the film, the Anti-Racist Alliance added its voice to the protest chorus. I was sceptical. While civil rights are being steadily eroded, the left should defend arenas of democratic debate. Demands for bans and boycotts must be made with extreme caution – and only in special circumstances. The tactic of ‘no platform for fascists’ had been carefully employed within a mass campaign against the National Front in the ‘70s. It became misused and abused through the ‘80s as a substitute for strategic and popular oppo-

sition to reactionaries. Leftists ended up providing easy and powerful ammunition for the New Right’s ideological attack on the ‘new totalitarians’.

Works of art, however ugly or vicious, usually contain enough contradictions and touch, however insensitively, on real enough human dilemmas, to withstand accusations of being single-track vehicles of fascist propaganda. Calls for bans and boycotts of plays, films and books invariably fall on sticky liberal ground.

Romper Stomper tells a fictionalised study of a neo-Nazi gang – unemployed skinheads on the margins of society in Melbourne, Australia. The plot is as thin as a fascist leaflet. The

gang live like wild animals. They squat in vast warehouses and go on forays of gratuitous violence against their main targets – Vietnamese immigrants. And they bop in cellars to the sounds of neo-Nazi bands and constantly relieve their boredom by picking fights with each other. Into this dismal and nihilistic world steps the lonely Gabrielle, sexually abused by her rich father. Gabrielle’s victim status is further enhanced by her epilepsy. She slums it in the local skinhead joint and falls for the gang’s leader, Hando. This more than unnerves Hando’s loyal (far) right-hand man, Davey, who claimed exclusive rights to a close physical and emotional relationship with his

fuhrer. Gabrielle enters Hando’s love nest – a bed surrounded by Nazi memorabilia and newspaper cuttings of neo-Nazi exploits. In soft tones, she is shown his city map, marked with the properties now occupied by Vietnamese immigrants, and he soothes her by gently reading extracts from *Mein Kampf*.

However, the serious side of being a neo-Nazi skin happens on the streets, not the sheets. The film moves swiftly on to a major confrontation between Hando’s gang and Vietnamese youths. There are casualties on both sides. But the latter more than hold their own. In the heat of battle, we see the gang’s myth of indestructibility stripped away. And we witness the wild animals displaying human emotions of fear and isolation. The skinheads, now beleaguered, dream up schemes to raise the stakes against their adversaries – especially the family poised to buy the Nazis’ favourite

youngest gang member, is killed.

The three main characters join forces again. They raid a shop, kill the immigrant owner, load a stolen car with supplies and head out of state. The tug-of-war of loyalties is eventually settled on a faraway beach. This leaves Davey and Gabrielle together, but alone in the world. There is a further sop to racism in the final scene. The pair sit, being gawped at by a coachload of foreign tourists. The destructive urges of the gang, originally harnessed to defend ‘their’ rights in ‘their’ country, had turned inwards with a bitter vengeance.

The film is peppered throughout with a level of violence likely to induce sickness and disgust among many viewers. Yet the director evidently tries far harder to construct sympathy for the skinheads, rather than the Vietnamese. Immigrants are repeatedly stereotyped as dehumanised victims. There is no attempt to

right inclinations, who see the film, are supposed to conclude their activities will all end in tears. They should draw back from the lifestyle now and avoid getting sucked into a quagmire. But those who live their lives on a literal knife-edge are unlikely to be shifted by such moralising. It is more predictable they will sit back and enjoy seeing their escapades realistically and faithfully portrayed, even glorified, on the screen. Will others watching seek to emulate their lifestyle? I doubt it. Will the film do anything to improve understanding of the daily struggles against racist violence by immigrants and minorities? Certainly not.

On the night I saw *Romper Stomper*, there was barely a skinhead in sight. I don’t think they were heeding the ANL or ARA boycott. The price of a West End cinema ticket was probably enough to dissuade them. There might be a different story at local

‘...neo-Nazism much closer to home than Melbourne’

pub and convert it into a Vietnamese restaurant. Rather than clubs, chains and knives, they start to talk guns.

But Gabrielle’s thoughts are increasingly dominated by her own plans for personal revenge. The gang is diverted into undertaking an orgy of destruction at her father’s palatial residence. She plans to humiliate him and to wreck his life and possessions. Hando’s mismanagement of the assault, though, leads to Gabrielle’s father being murdered. The rift between Hando and Davey widens, Davey and Gabrielle are drawn closer. Hando decides he can live without Gabrielle and sends her packing. Davey has had enough. He returns to the quiet suburban residence of his German grandmother. Gabrielle, on her own again, becomes obsessed with retaliation against Hando. She tells the police about the skinheads’ hideout. In a violent police raid, Hando escapes. But Bubs, the

unravel the complexities of their lives and struggles. Geoffrey Wright has sought to justify his approach as a bid to understand the Nazi skinhead phenomenon and its roots in modern urban life. But he offers precious little insight. Skinheads may be marginalised and treated as outcasts by mainstream society. Nonetheless, they interact with that society at several points, none of which was explored in the film. The Nazi ideological politics of the gang was a backdrop detail which remained largely unexcavated. The moral dilemmas posed by the film were crass and unpleasant. They first revolved around the viewer’s empathies in confrontations between the gang on the rampage against Gabrielle’s smug, rich and abusing father. And they centred later on the gang making a pathetic, last stand against the armed might and legalised brutality of the police.

Perhaps skinheads with far-

screenings. Nevertheless, among this more genteel audience, a fair sprinkling of onlookers were excited at the skinheads’ violence. This proved a useful reminder that commitment to reactionary values and far-right politics cannot be gauged by hair length. Do I think anti-fascists should call for a boycott? No. The only people likely to follow this lead are a minority of convinced anti-fascists. The more sceptical will want to make up their minds for themselves – not be told what to think. Nazi skinheads and other right-wingers will watch it in any case. Yes, anti-fascist leafleters should be outside the cinemas in strength. After watching the film, cinemagoers should be pressed to do something about neo-Nazism much closer to home than Melbourne. Campaigners should encourage them to get actively involved where they live and work to lift the fascist threat which hangs over us all. □

DAVID ROSENBERG

Where have all the people gone?

Modern British Jewry
by Geoffrey Alderman
(Oxford University Press, 1992)

On its dust cover, this book is described as 'an authoritative and comprehensive history of the Jews in Britain over the last century and a half'. Authoritative it may be, comprehensive it is not.

I came to this book with high expectations. I left it more than a little disappointed. Why? Because ultimately this book is not about people (at least, not those who made up the vast bulk of the community) but about institutions. Professor Alderman seems transfixed by the pathology of power and the institutions within which it is exercised. He evinces little or no interest in the people on whose behalf these institutions claimed to act and from whom they had, for the most part, received no mandate.

However, despite its narrowness of focus, this book does have its points. Above all, it gilds no lilies and seeks no favours in its illumination of the way in which power within the British Jewish community has been exercised since the middle of the nineteenth century. It is, in the main, a tale of men of money, seeking no endorsement, taking power and authority unto themselves and using it to protect their own privilege and position. Thus, in the early 1880s, they had no compunction whatsoever in working to frustrate the settlement in Britain of Jewish refugees from Russia. Indeed, they went further: through the auspices of the Board of Guardians they managed, between 1881 and 1914, to repatriate something like 50,000 individuals. Still others were persuaded to move on to the USA, Canada and South America. Readers will not need reminding that in the 1930s some, or similar ilk, were equally

willing to prevent the incoming of fellow Jews seeking refuge and asylum from the shadow of the jackboot. It is, to be sure, an unedifying tale, even if one does acknowledge that self-interest is the single most powerful force in human affairs. How we mediate this primal motive was, is and remains the great question mark over humanity's future.

But to return to Professor Alderman's text and its account of endless battles over rabbinical authority, *shechita* (ritual slaughter), institutional representation and the like; a story of the strong fighting over the carrion of power, whilst the weak struggled in their workplaces and in their overcrowded homes to establish the semblance of a dignified existence. What a pity it is that this book virtually ignores the latter's story, for surely it is also this narrative that we need to read if we are to truly understand the development of British Jewry since 1850.

To present the history of British Jewry through the prism of its (for the most part) self-elected leaders and institutions is to ignore the essence. Perhaps it is more difficult to research and write about the politics of the street and workplace, where the weak banded together informally to make themselves stronger. Perhaps it is more difficult to ferret out the story of those who worked all day and then went to evening classes at night so that they might improve themselves. Perhaps it is harder to seek to analyse the effects of Second World War evacuation upon a whole generation of Jewish children. (The subject of the evacuation of thousands of Jewish children to non-Jewish homes is not even mentioned in this book.

An extraordinary omission.) But difficult or not, it should have been done. As it is, we are presented only with a history of institutions, unwilling to change, led by men whose claim to representative legitimacy was their wealth. Such a history has its merits, but it is not the full story, not by a long chalk.

Of course, this book is also the story of unelected, unrepresentative office holders boldly speaking on behalf of the Jewish community. How well one remembers the former Chief Rabbi, Lord Jacobovits, declaiming on behalf of 'we Jews' that Mrs Thatcher was right and the Church of England wrong (*Faith in the City*, 1986). He, of course, received a knighthood, followed by elevation to the peerage. The present incumbent of our highest rabbinical office seems to be heading effortlessly in the same direction. As Professor Alderman puts it, he draws 'thinly veiled support from the Hebrew Bible for major elements of Conservative domestic legislation'.

Professor Alderman makes much of Mrs Thatcher's elevation of so many Jews to Cabinet positions and concludes that she chose them as a counter-weight to the influence of public school 'one-nation' Toryism. I wonder? Did she, perhaps, understand the psychology of our community (at least, a goodly part of it), with its willingness to pay any price for acceptance and recognition from those who really belong? After all, what could any Prime Minister (especially one with authoritarian instincts) want more than a wodge of Cabinet Ministers willing to obsequiously acquiesce in an increasingly flagrant abuse of power? Mrs Thatcher knew for sure that she could rely on their loyalty. How right she was!

The history of British Zionism is, not surprisingly, a central feature of the latter half of this book and, its opponents notwithstanding, it emerges as the only truly unifying factor British Jewry has known in the course of the last 150 years. That Zionism reached the height of its unifying potency in the aftermath of the Holocaust is self-evident. It is also crystal clear that without it British

Jewry would have found recovery from the post-Holocaust trauma significantly more difficult. And although Professor Alderman does not overtly make this point, it is an obvious sub-text of his narrative. However, this togetherness honeymoon is just about at an end and it is not easy to see where British Jewry goes from here.

Professor Alderman, an iconoclast when needs be and, to his

credit, a sometimes fearless critic of today's representative institutions, ends his book with a plea for the development of an institutional framework 'that will reflect diversity, and allow for its expression and articulation in an atmosphere that is at once as free from internal oppression as it ought to be from external threat'. And so say all of us. □

MICHAEL LAZARUS

Auf wiedersehen scum

There is a depressing irony about racial hatred. Victims are often so embittered they end up aping the bigotry of the perpetrators. I confess I am not immune.

I bear an antipathy to Germany born out of the near destruction of my people in the Holocaust.

Yet as a socialist I refuse to surrender to this impulse. It would be an insult to those hundreds of thousands of decent Germans and Austrians who faced up to the Nazis.

On 22 February I attended a video showing at the Colin Roach Centre, Hackney, that brought these thoughts into focus. The video, *And I Know Why I Stand Here*, follows the activities of a lovely, loony bunch of anti-racist soccer fans of the Hamburg Club, FC St Pauli.

The video captures the boisterous irreverent humour of these fans – collectively FC St Pauli Fan Landen – who somehow manage to party while engaged in a campaign of the most deadly seriousness.

Do their frolics undermine their purpose? Quite the opposite. Football should be fun, after all, and Fan Landen's refreshing attitude attracts people from both sexes and from across a broad age spectrum.

It is no accident that this anti-racist initiative took off in

St Pauli. It is a working-class district of Hamburg so there are plenty of people living on the edge, including more foreigners than the rest of the city. So it is an incubator of fascism but also, as guest speaker Antje Einers explained, of left-wing resistance.



Anti-fascists parade their colourful banners at every match. When Nazis holler 'Foreigners fuck off' Fan Landen respond 'We don't want Nazi pigs'. Two thousand turn up at one game to protest against the Nazis.

Not all soccer hooligans are Nazis. 'I fight other "hools", not Turks,' objects one hooligan. The video presenter acknowledges this but says the reality tends to be different: 'It is not appropriate to shout "Nazis fuck off" at every hool but better once too often than too little.'

Fan Landen can be proud of its achievements. It publishes a

fanzine which sells 3,600 copies per issue. It pressured St Pauli FC to play a symbolic match against a Turkish team, even though the club initially refused because it would be 'too political'. A club steward confirms that there is now little trouble at St Pauli stadium despite its location in a rough area.

And the example of Fan Landen's travelling masses has spawned imitators in other parts of the country. Indeed, their 'Smash the Nazis' arm-patch has been adopted by anti-racist Celtic supporters in Scotland.

But, as here, the authorities make little attempt to distinguish between peaceable fans and thugs. Away supporters complain that they are treated like animals. They chant with pride at the humourless men in uniform: 'We are fans, not hooligans.'

Their struggle unfurls against the backcloth of the 1990-91 season in German's premier division, the Bundesliga. It is a tough season at St Pauli. The film concludes at the last match when the club is relegated. All over the emptying terraces fans are desolate, crying, banners at half-mast. Although the camera pans out on their dejection, what we remember of these fans is their irrepressible joy in doing the right thing. □

MIKE GERBER

And I Know Why I Stand Here
FC St Pauli

In the red corner

Never Counted Out
- The Story of Len Johnson,
Manchester's Black Boxing Hero and Communist
by Michael Herbert
(Dropped Aitches Press), £4.95

Is there any place for boxing in a civilised society? I asked myself that anew on the sickening night Chris Eubank felled Michael Watson and left him comatose and in grave danger of dying. All to gratify the bloodlust of screaming punters and the greed of promoters, media moguls and others with their snout in the trough. But why kid ourselves we live in a civilised society while there remain such gaping disparities of wealth? Boxing seems a reasonable enough occupation when you're otherwise condemned to a life against the ropes.

Former world heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson put this with graphic brevity recently. Success in boxing pulled him out of a life of juvenile thieving which could have ended in prison. Now 57, he said: 'I still love boxing which taught me never to smoke or drink or take drugs. I get my high from exercise ... I would have boxed for nothing if I had to. Fortunately, they paid me as well and that enabled me to bring my whole family out of poverty.'

Another fighter who, though he didn't enjoy the material rewards, still felt boxing enhanced his life, was Len Johnson. The story of this pre-war British boxer and post-war communist is celebrated in an illuminating new biography by Michael Herbert, *Never Counted Out*. Johnson's final days were spent in poverty, but in the book he is chiefly remembered for the dignified way he carried himself inside and

outside the ring. Reminiscing on his formative days in the boxing booths, Johnson said: 'Anything that I am I owe unconditionally to the booth, the booth with its work, its careful living, and above all its frame of mind...'

Never Counted Out is, in one respect, a misnomer because for all Johnson's prowess in the ring, the pre-war boxing establishment ensured he was never permitted to contest a major title. His 'problem' was that he was black and born too soon. It was only after the war that the British Boxing Board of Control lifted its embargo on black boxers participating in championship fights. The Board's attitude was rooted in the crudest racism. As Herbert notes: 'A contest between black and white in the boxing ring could too easily become a metaphor for the stability of the Empire should white boxers be regularly defeated.'

Even the *Manchester Sporting Chronicle*, which had followed Johnson's career sympathetically, betrayed its true colours after Jewish boxing manager Harry Levene dared to plead for the abolition of the racist rule. Columnist Norman Hurst responded: 'Frankly I thought such an astute manager as Mr Levene would have realised that it is not with the intention of restricting or handicapping one or two British subjects who happen to be coloured that this rule is enforced.'

'As I have pointed out many times ... it is not the Len

Johnsons, Larry Gaines, George Dixons, Sam Longfords or Al Browns that we have to deal with but the repercussions that are felt all over Africa, with its teeming millions of coloured people of quite a different mental makeup from any of the above athletes.'

Another Jewish boxer, Jack Bloomfield, exposed the hypocrisy of the British establishment when, in 1927, the government banned a contest between the new world light-heavyweight champion, Siki from Senegal, and British heavyweight champ Joe Beckett. Bloomfield said it was regrettable 'that a colour line should be introduced only when a black boxer attained real success and not before'.

Ill health forced Johnson to announce his retirement in 1932, but within three months he began an unsuccessful comeback, ostensibly because he needed the money. After his final retirement he told a journalist: 'The fact is I have practically nothing... If I had been a champion things would have been different.' After hanging up his gloves, one of the ways he supported himself was to write a series of boxing short stories for *Topical Times*. He must have penned them with a bitter sense of irony. The hero, world welterweight champ Jimmy Stanley, is, of course, white.

Perhaps the book is, after all, appropriately titled because, after the war and until virtually the end of his days, Johnson fought back against racism in the best way

possible, among comrades on the political front. An encounter with Paul Robeson pointed the way. In an article which appeared in *Topical Times*, Johnson recalled: 'I was at another of my fed up phases when I was introduced to him one day in Manchester... Paul Robeson put new life in me with a few words. He drew me a picture of his fight for recognition. He pointed out that my job was fighting, and that if I could fight in the ring I ought to be able to fight outside it.'

Initially Johnson struggled against the colour bar in boxing, but eventually signed up with the Communist Party like Robeson. The Soviet people's fight against Hitler won him over, along with the CP's identification as strongly anti-imperialist and pro-civil rights. Of course, the view that the USSR was 'free from racial prejudice' we now know to be extremely idealised. The CPSU indulged in antisemitism when it was politically expedient to do so. However, visitors such as Robeson were satisfied that the claim was substantially true.

Undeniably the Communist Party of Great Britain played an honourable part in stemming the fascist threat and Johnson thrust himself enthusiastically into the fray. He wrote campaign leaflets and stood six times as CP candidate for Manchester City Council - though the most he ever achieved was 160 votes. His last candidacy was in 1962 at a time when the fascist BUM had stepped up its campaign in Moss Side. The BUM won only 119 votes but Johnson fared even worse with 60.

The CP's efforts were not always appreciated by black people. That is clear from Johnson's involvement with the New International Society (NIS). The society was viewed with suspicion by groups such as the Pan African Federation and the Coloured Seamen's Industrial League. Faced by mounting hostility, the NIS was wound up in 1950.

Herbert suggests, with clear resonance for today's anti-racist struggle, that 'Perhaps by insisting at the outset on retaining control of the NIS (while at the same time promoting the organisation as an independent organisation) the CP actually stifled political development among the black community that it had hoped to nurture.'

After 1962, Johnson's active political involvement rapidly declined though he remained a party member to the end of his life. His final days were a poverty-induced misery, accentuated by ill-health. The Ex-Boxers' Association held a whip-round for him when they learned of his plight. As former boxer Vincent Ford explains: 'He was well thought of.'

One reason he was held in

such high esteem was his unflinching modesty. In his prime, he beat that legend of the Jewish East End, Ted 'Kid' Lewis. Johnson, in what was probably his final interview, was magnanimous. Lewis, he said, was the best man he ever met 'but I don't want to take too much credit because he was past his best at the time'.

Johnson died two years later in 1974. An obituary in the *Manchester Evening News* crowned him 'the boxer who beat the best'. His boxing career was appraised in considerable detail but his political involvement was passed off in a single sentence.

This book gives his most crucial struggle, the one against racial oppression, the prominence it deserves. □

MIKE GERBER

Never COUNTED OUT!

*The Story of Len Johnson,
Manchester's Black Boxing Hero
and Communist*



by
MICHAEL HERBERT

Foreword by BILL MORRIS
General Secretary, TGWU

A BATLINO KID'S
STORY

Porkies and less

Leon the Pig Farmer dir Vadim Jean and Gary Sinyor

'Your synagogue was flooded?' actually been shown round properties by someone exactly like Leon's friend, Elliott. Leon discovers his biological father is a pig farmer from Yorkshire. Leon got it on floppy disk.'



And that is the best joke in *Leon the Pig Farmer*. But go and see it anyway and tell me if my partner and I are the only people who don't think this film is funny.

Leon is an anxious and sexually frustrated 'nice Jewish boy'. Cliché number one. Leon's parents, relatives and parents' friends are endlessly cajoling him to be like his two older brothers, who are successful and have families. Cliché number two.

Leon is an estate agent. No, we'll let that one pass, because I've

made me cry in a production of *Three Sisters*. As Leon's mother, her voice pitched and plummeted like a cat learning to yodel.

The Yorkshire family try to make Leon feel at home. His half-brother cooks him chicken soup and they all start speaking in 'soon-already-my-life' voices. Pig Farmer's wife fulfils the ultimate stereotype and starts to nag her husband incessantly. The audience around us chuckled away. They change the furniture of their house with nice tablecloths, napkins and *Jewish Chiracles*. They take down their ordinary lampshade and hoist up a chandelier. The audience screamed with laughter. The story develops an allegorical twist when Leon accidentally cross-breeds a sheep with a pig. It lurches to a predictable end with a reconciliation between his Yorkshire and Edgware families and the Buddhist monk who lives in the flat above.

The film seems to make a pathetic attempt to ape Woody Allen. Leon has imaginary conversations with passers-by (Annie Hall or Manhattan?). There is much guilt and anguish, but no poignancy. How can you care about identikit people, conceived by writers regurgitating images with which, they believe, Jews and non-Jews alike are comfortable?

We have moved from Alec Guinness as Fagin to Leon the Pig Farmer. We've got a long way to go. □

RUTH LUKOM

For those of you *not* reading **Roots Schmootz** at the moment, there are plenty of other choices. First there are the ones to avoid.

Down the bargain shops is Chaim Bermant's biography of Lord Jack-in-the-Box, now a mere £2.99 compared to its original £18. How the mighty have fallen. Not yet in the bargain shops (just wait a *bisel*, it will be) is Helen Shapiro's autobiography unsurprisingly entitled **Walking Back to Happiness** (Hodder & Stoughton, £7.95). Personally I was never too fond of beehive hair-dos in the first place; now wee Helen is on the Christian evangelical circuit like them even less. Another book I will not be recommending is **The Unorthodox Book of Jewish Records and Lists** by Allan Gould and Danny Siegel (Robson, £8.99), largely because after the first 30 seconds books like these become terribly dull. Still, my formerly orthodox partner did like the record for 'the highest temperature in a synagogue where a woman wore a mink stole'. Robson have also published **Rabin of Israel** by Robert Slater. Well, I never knew that Yitzhak was 'shy and somewhat mysterious'. I rather had in mind suggesting him for a new edition of **Records and Lists** as 'the man who could destroy hopes of peace in the shortest possible time'.

Enough of that. Here are the recommendations. Firstly, **Body of Glass** by Marge Piercy is out in paperback at the end of May for £5.99. As a long time fan of Piercy I lean towards feeling she can do no wrong, even managing to overcome my aversion to the sci fi genre. In her latest, Piercy looks to the future, where a Jewish free city is defended by Yod, a cyberborg, which/who the main character falls in love with. The story is interwoven with one of the cyberborg's creators telling Yod the stories of the Golem of Prague. Not quite the best of

On the shelf

Piercy, but good holiday reading. My only qualm is that, having followed her writing for years, I am left wondering whether her trajectory will end with a novel about the arrival of a female messiah.

Grace Paley is another old favourite – Virago have in print two collections of her short stories from the '50s and '60s. She is not prolific. Paley comes from that North American socialist/pacifist tradition seldom seen in Britain. We now have a collection of her poetry written over many years, **Begin Again** (Virago, £6.99), which reflects her concerns – ageing, El Salvador, dissent. I particularly like her poem *Street Corner Dialogue* about giving leaflets to old women in the street, and *People in My Family*, about her relatives – those of 82 who talked to her as a child about the World War and those of 92 who talked about the 1905 revolution, that when 'once more the earth itself will turn and turn and cry out ... then you my little bud must flower and save it'.

Elementary Yiddish by Devra Kay describes itself as the 'first Yiddish-English teaching book for 60 years' and is published by London University's Queen Mary & Westfield College. Two more advanced textbooks are promised. Appro-

priately for a starter book there is a history of Yiddish which includes a description of how the Zionist movement and the state of Israel acted to damage the language in favour of Hebrew. The book is meant as a textbook to accompany a taught class and I doubt whether anyone unfamiliar with Hebrew script could manage on their own. A conversational Yiddish text using Roman script would be greatly valued, but this book is aiming to have the student reading and writing. It is attractive and lively.

Forty-something socialists, Jewish and otherwise, will no doubt have a worn copy of the cartoon book **Marx for Beginners** somewhere on their shelves. The *Beginners* series has been making something of a comeback recently, under the wing of two separate publishing houses. There is even a **Judaism for Beginners**. The latest to appear is **Fascism for Beginners** (Icon, £7.99) with the text by Stuart Hood of media fame. Perhaps the years have withered my capacity to cope with cartoon books, but largely I just had to ignore the illustrations by Litza Jansz. The text is interesting because, unusually for books about fascism, there is a lot of detail about the Japanese experience. Hood, however, lets himself down by allowing his 'unrepentant socialist' views to give too much credence to the support by the middle classes for fascism, and having too formulaic a definition of what fascism is.

Finally, on the magazine front, **Casablanca** is winning lots of compliments (but I wonder if they are getting lots of sales) for snappy topical covers. Heseline snorting coke, 'Buy any beans necessary' on the marketing of Malcolm X and so on. The current issue also includes a certain Charlie Pottins writing about his Cheetham Hill school days. We wish this new mag a long life. □

R BUCH SOICHER