

OUT NOW!

You are,
aren't you?

IF HE
TONED DOWN
THE POLITICS
AND BOUGHT
HIMSELF
A DECENT
PAIR OF
TROUSERS...



... HE
COULD BE
A NICE
JEWISH
BOY!

poems by
MICHAEL ROSEN

Price £5.75 (inc p&p) from *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX
or Mushroom Bookshop, 10-12
Heathcote Street, Nottingham NG1 3AA

Benefit for **Jewish Socialist** magazine

all star comedy line up

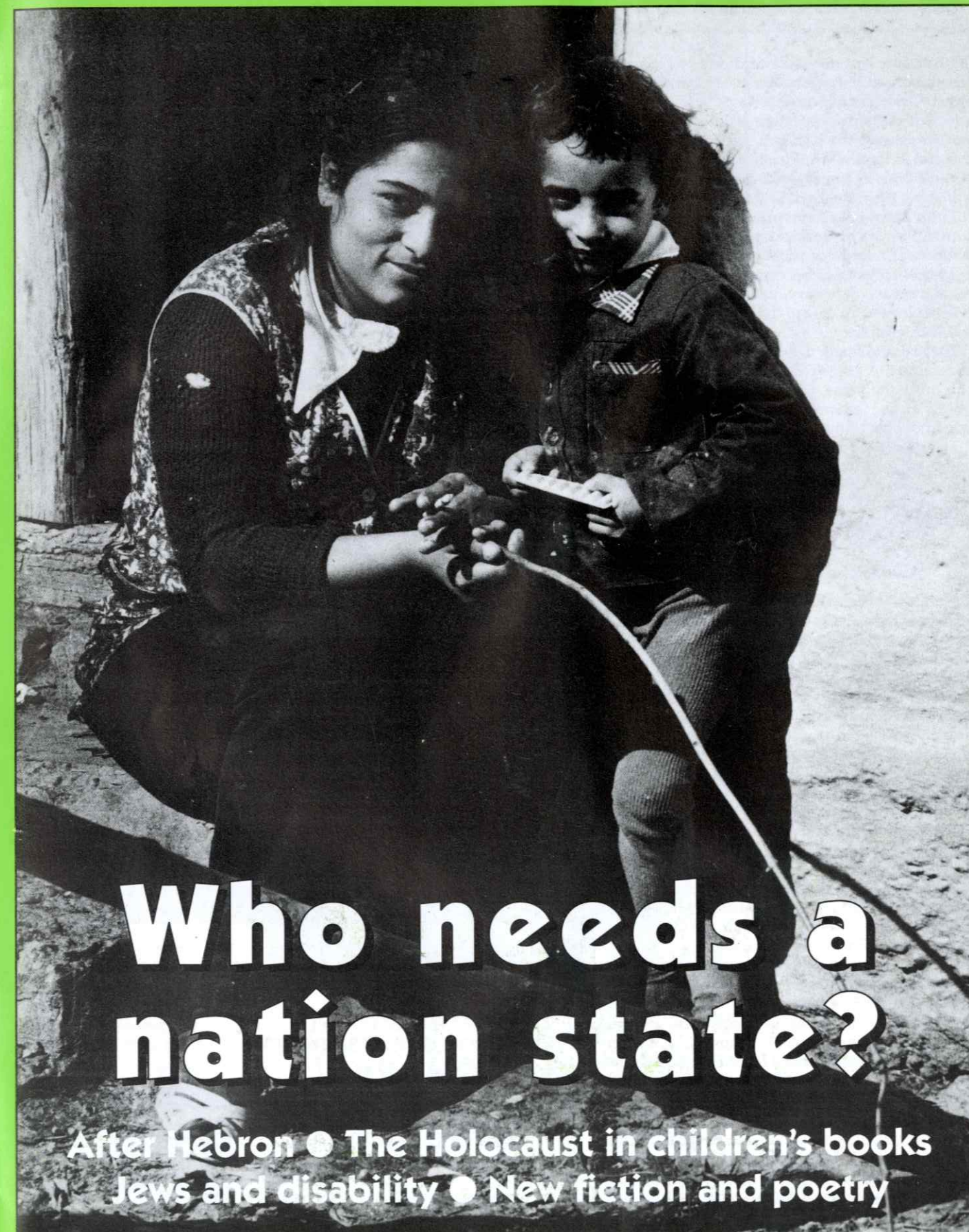
Jo Brand
Arnold Brown
Linda Smith
Mark Steel
Ivor Dembina (compere)
With music from
Royte Klezmores

Sun 12 June, 8pm
Cochrane Theatre, Southampton
Row, London WC1.
Tel 071-242 7040.
Holborn tube. £8/£6 (concs)
Tickets are available from the box office.
Wheelchair access

Jewish Socialist

Magazine of the Jewish Socialists' Group

No 31 • Spring 1994 • £1.50



Who needs a nation state?

After Hebron • The Holocaust in children's books
Jews and disability • New fiction and poetry

Subscribe now!

➤ *Jewish Socialist* is published four times a year. Don't be left without your copy. Subscribe today by sending the form below to:
Jewish Socialist, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

✓ Please send me
Jewish Socialist for a
year starting with issue.....

I enclose £7.50 (inc p&p). I also
enclose a donation of £.....

Name.....

Address.....

(Overseas subscriptions: £15 Sterling)

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 anti-semitism, 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.

.....
Join the Jewish Socialists' Group. Write to: Membership Secretary, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX

© *Jewish Socialist*. The opinions expressed in *Jewish Socialist* are those of individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editorial committee or of the Jewish Socialists' Group. *Jewish Socialist* is published quarterly by Jewish Socialist Ltd, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX. Additional typesetting by Nancy White. Printed by Aldgate Press, London E1, tel 071 247 3015. Names and addresses of *Jewish Socialist* subscribers are held on a computer to facilitate efficient distribution. This information is used for no other purpose. The Data Protection Act 1984 requires us to inform subscribers that they may object to information being held in this form.

Jewish Socialist

The cold-blooded massacre of dozens of Muslim Palestinians in Hebron by American-Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein has evoked shock, grief and outrage. But perhaps even more sickening than the deed itself were the televised scenes, shown both here and in Israel, of Goldstein's supporters openly rejoicing in his feat of mass murder and expressing their thanks to God.

Their thanks are misplaced. Instead, they should thank successive Israeli governments, Labour and Likud, for encouraging the settlers to build their fortresses on conquered land and to use any means necessary, whether in military or civilian clothes, to 'defend themselves' and intimidate their enemies.

They should thank the compliant and cowardly leaderships of Jewish communities in the West who, over the years, barely raised a murmur in protest at the settlers' activities as if this would have undermined their loyalty to Israel.

They should thank the fanatical ideologues on the far-right of the American Jewish community who continue to instil in their followers a lethal concoction of fascistic Jewish nationalism and religious fundamentalism that finds its natural expression when they uproot themselves and claim the land and resources of the West Bank as their own.

Mainstream Israeli politicians have expressed their shame and declared that the settlers who celebrated this deed have placed themselves outside the Israeli nation. So far though, these are mainly words not deeds. While some settlers are now enduring closer police surveillance, the majority are free to continue as an armed civilian force lording it over an unarmed, occupied people, while thousands of young Palestinians remain detained indefinitely for the 'crime' of resisting the occupation of their land. Their immediate release would be a true gesture of intent for peace.

The Hebron massacre threatens to destabilise the already faltering Israeli-Palestinian 'peace-process', and herald a new cycle of revenge attacks claiming more innocent lives – Arabs and Jews. If this happens then Baruch Goldstein will indeed have achieved all of his aims and his fellow settlers will be rejoicing for years to come.

Those who can exert influence, however minimal, on the Israeli government and the Palestinian resistance need to work quickly and effectively to accelerate and give practical meaning to the 'peace-process' and help to channel the anger, despair and militancy on the Palestinian street into collective actions that will make the occupation too costly to maintain, both economically and politically.

This issue was produced by an editorial committee consisting of Julia Bard, Paul Collins, Ruth Lukom, Simon Lynn, Karen Merkel, David Rosenberg and Clifford Singer. Cover picture of gypsies in Hungary by Robin Kiashek.



PLO representative Aff Safieh joins a Palestine Solidarity Campaign vigil to remember the victims of the Hebron massacre (see page 5). Picture: Simon Lynn

contents

NEWS

Christianity in education • Anti-fascist unity	3
Bookshop attacked by nazis	4
Palestinian education • Statement on Hebron	5
Jews against apartheid • Don't ask the rabbi	6

FEATURES

Beyond Zionism: An alternative Jewish identity	8
Questioning 'Jewish values'	13
Jews and disability	14
Gypsies in Hungary	17
Half-truths at the Holocaust Museum	20
Books for children on the Nazis	22
Avrum's overcoat – a short story	25

REVIEWS

Expulsion of the Palestinians	29
Manny Shinwell's twists and turns	30
Between family lines	31
Runnymede on antisemitism	32
Harold Rosen's stories	33
A refugee's struggle	33
The peopling of London	34
On the shelf: book round-up	35

Plus: Dybbuk's diary 7 • Letters 16 • Mike Rosen 24

CHRIST ALMIGHTY!

State schools throughout England are being coerced toward increased Christianisation.

The recently published Draft Religious Education Curriculum insists that RE should cover all the 'main' religions in Britain but 50 per cent of the curriculum should be devoted to Christianity.

This would be buttressed by daily acts of collective worship 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' according 'special status to the person of Jesus Christ'.

John Patten's Education Department itself recognises that these orders cannot be universally acceptable and it has built in clauses for exemption and withdrawal,

but it ignores the social stigma that will be attached to withdrawal.

National Union of Teachers general secretary, Doug McAvoy, has commented that Patten wants to 'preach a religion not teach religious education'. He says that schools will be unable to 'reflect the religious needs of their communities'.

Jewish communal leaders have criticised the over-emphasis on Christianity, with the Chief Rabbi's office being more outspoken than the Board of Deputies, but both are concentrating their energies on defending the rights of minority religions within a

system that they recognise has a built-in privilege for Christianity.

Current efforts among minority communities to reform the system need to be supported insofar as they challenge Christian domination of 'religious education' but they cannot achieve real equality.

In the long term their efforts need to be superseded by a campaign among parents, teachers and children for the broadest education about different cultural traditions and experiences and complete opposition to the imposition of religious education and acts of worship in state schools.

'BOLSHEVIK' HATE LEAFLET

Try this one for size:

'It was over 25 years ago since homos (homosexuals) were legalised by MP Leo Abse (a Jew). Now we have MP Edwina Currie real (Cohen) [sic] who wants to give 16 year olds the OK to get mixed up with this middle-class muck.'

It all looks and sound suspiciously like a fascist leaflet. But then comes praise for the former Soviet Union where homosexual 'offenders would end up in a labour camp. Long live the Bolshevik Party.'

This garbage comes from an outfit called Communist Resistance UK who advertise books and posters of Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung. Are they for real?

Benefit night for Jewish Socialist

SEE BACK PAGE



Since the election of British National Party councillor Derek Beakon in Tower Hamlets the number of racist attacks in the borough has multiplied. And a local primary school where 98 per cent of the pupils are Bengali, and which stands close to the park where Muktar Ahmed was savagely beaten by 25 racists recently, has received a viciously antisemitic pamphlet – *The Longest Hatred* – written by Lady Jane Birdwood. The pamphlet is the subject of a criminal prosecution and a Crown court trial is expected. Staff at the school are informing the police about the pamphlet and all members of staff signed a petition demanding the closure of the BNP's headquarters. Birdwood is pictured at a previous court appearance, with BNP councillor Derek Beakon on her right. Picture: Simon Lynn

WOMEN CHALLENGE RACISM

Women Unite Against Racism (WUAR) was formed in September 1993. Their first event, a conference in Tower Hamlets College, attracted more than 150 women.

They expressed anger at the election of a BNP candidate in the nearby Millwall ward, debated ideas for fighting back against



such organised racism and described ways in which they had been excluded from the anti-racist movement.

One of the organisers said: 'The group arose out of the frustrations women had about anti-racist groups; we wanted to be involved in anti-racist protests, but found they were dominated by men and boys.'

The group aims to involve more women in the anti-racist movement and to raise the issue of racism as it affects women. It does this by holding regular women-only meetings, attending demonstrations as a group of women and speaking out wherever possible.

WUAR is currently carrying out a campaign to encourage women to get on the electoral register before the 19 March deadline for the local elections. The next campaign will be to get women to vote on 5 May.

● WUAR can be contacted at PO Box 3608, London E1 5ET.

SPERM DEBATE

The debate in *Jewish Socialist* about whether we should accept adverts requesting sperm specifically from Jewish donors found its way into the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Guardian*. The *Independent on Sunday* reprinted as a 'Quote of the Week' Julia Bard's statement: 'There is no such thing as Jewish sperm.'

While the JC article was very thoughtful, the *Guardian* managed to get almost everything wrong and missed the point entirely about the distinction between requests for a Jewish donor where the child would have access to information about their father and requests for anonymous sperm from a Jewish donor.

The Jewish Socialists' Group annual conference passed a resolution rejecting 'an essential racial, biological definition of Jewish identity' and noting that *Jewish Socialist* had turned down an agency request for anonymous Jewish donors, but stated adverts from individuals – including those who request Jewish donors – would be welcome.

ARA LORRA LAUGHS

As the AGM of the Anti-Racist Alliance came to a close a *Jewish Socialist* seller took up a prominent position by the exit. He was quickly drawn into discussion by one of ARA's 'security' personnel who insisted it was the Jews who printed all the money and owned all the businesses in the United States.

It makes you wonder who or what the security officer was keeping the conference secure from.

While the discussion was raging, another punter came forward and said: 'Can I have copy of your magazine? I want to read it because your people are so clever...'

NOTTINGHAM UNITED



Nottingham marchers protest against racist and fascist attacks. Picture: Mark Salmond

Mushroom Bookshop – Nottingham's long-standing radical and independent bookshop – was attacked on 15 January by a more than 30 nazis.

Two shop staff and two customers were slightly injured, and more than £11,000 of damage was

caused. Thirty-two people were arrested in the city following the attack and are awaiting charges.

Following the attack, 1,000 people marched through Nottingham on 26 February to protest at racist and fascist activity. The march was organised by several local

anti-racist organisations including Mushroom.

Since the bookshop attack, the Red Lion pub in Heanor, a fascist meeting point, has been closed, and nazi group Blood and Honour have lost the use of the Alexandra Social Club in Sandiacre.

Mushroom was raided on a Saturday afternoon, with about 20 customers in the shop. About half the nazi gang, many wearing swastika armbands, stormed the shop and smashed computers and the plate glass window. Metal card racks were thrown at customers, some of whom who escaped through a fire escape while others locked themselves in the shop office.

Injured worker Ross Bradshaw said: 'In the 30s nazis burned books and in the 90s nazis are again attacking bookshops.'

'We have been inundated with offers of help and support from customers, local traders and others in the booktrade. We will continue to support those groups who oppose the far right and continue selling the books we believe in.'

Mushroom recently co-published with the Jewish Socialists' Group a book of Michael Rosen's Jewish poetry.



Mushroom Bookshop following the attack. Picture: John Birdsall

LEARNING THE HARD WAY

As the prospect of an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho draws nearer Palestinian politicians and planners are beginning to realise the extent to which the education system has collapsed.

The World University Service (WUS), an educational charity, visited Gaza and the West Bank in 1993 to assess conditions in the education sector following the lifting of closure orders and return to classes.

Learning the Hard Way: Palestinian Education in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel is their report. It details the conditions and resources available to Palestinian children from the playground to campus.

The report is written against the backdrop of Israeli occupation where staff at the Palestinian Counselling Centre have seen a sharp increase in children suffering from intifada-related stress and depression. A UNICEF study

of 650 11-year-olds in Gaza indicates why:

- 97 per cent had had their homes raided
- 95 per cent had been exposed to tear gas
- 52 per cent had been beaten by Israeli military forces
- 50 per cent had a family member detained
- 37 per cent witnessed beating of family member
- 11.2 per cent were imprisoned.

The report ends with a number of recommendations for practical support in Britain:

- raising the issues in your union or organisation
- linking up with a Palestinian education project through WUS
- donating books and toys
- setting up scholarships and exchange programmes
- participating in the voluntary WUS summerwork camp at Birzeit University.
- Contact: WUS (UK), 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN. Tel: 071 226 6747.



Children in Nahalin, West Bank. Picture: Clifford Singer

Statement from the Hebron Solidarity Committee

The massacre was inevitable. Settlers have, for many months, been subjecting the residents of Hebron to a reign of terror, while soldiers stand by and the government gives its approval.

For the past two months the 'Hebron Solidarity Committee' and 'Peace Bloc' have been warning about the dangers of a massacre in Hebron, and demanding that the government take drastic measures against the settlers who have been threatening and causing destruction among the Palestinian population there.

The Government stubbornly refused to change its policies in the city with the hope that pressure from the settlers upon the Palestinian residents would serve the government's policies of trying to 'soften up' the Palestinians and contribute to actions intended to 'make them sweat' which have been adopted since the beginning of this year. This time it is not a matter of sweat but rather rivers of blood.

Just as in Sabra and Shatila the government cannot claim that 'its hands did not shed this

blood'. Dozens of soldiers are permanently stationed there, and in spite of this, the settler was able to carry out his evil plan.

Just as in Sabra and Shatila, the government cannot claim that it did not know that such a massacre was likely to happen. The government consciously let the situation deteriorate to this level. The Rabin government must bear full responsibility for the massacre in Hebron, which has proven that with its current policies it is unable to defend the lives of the Palestinian residents.

We appeal to the government to:

- immediately disarm the settlers!
- evacuate the settlers from Hebron!
- set up an inquiry to investigate the responsibility of the Israeli Defence Forces and the politicians for the massacre in Hebron!

We appeal to the international community for:

- international protection for the occupied territories!
- security for the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip until rule has been transferred into the hands of the PLO!

Replace the Israeli Defence Forces in the Occupied Territories with an international force! Disarm the settlers!

HEBRON APPEAL

The Hebron Solidarity Group has made an urgent appeal to local and international organisations and individuals to contribute to the Hebron Medical Relief Fund which will distribute supplies direct to Hebron hospitals.

Following the massacre

local hospitals have reported serious shortages of emergency medical supplies such as gauze, plaster and antibiotics. Foreign monies can be sent in US dollars to: Account No. 10-912-0737-35901/94 Bank Leumi, Rachavia Branch, Jerusalem, Israel (indicate Nathan Krystal/Solidarity).

INVESTING IN FUTURES

On 6 March the London-based group, Jews Against Apartheid (JAA), made a fitting final act when it handed over a cheque for £1,000 to former apartheid prisoner, Denis Goldberg, for the ANC's 'Votes for Freedom' campaign.

JAA was launched in 1986, the brainchild of Shalom Charikar, an Indian Jew who has been a member of the Jewish Socialists' Group for 10 years.

JAA was most active in the period from 1986-89 when the struggles to maintain sanctions and for the release of Nelson Mandela were at their most crucial point.

It gave practical support to detainees and held a number of public meetings, seminars and lobbies at which Jewish members of the ANC, rejected by the South African Jewish establishment, found an

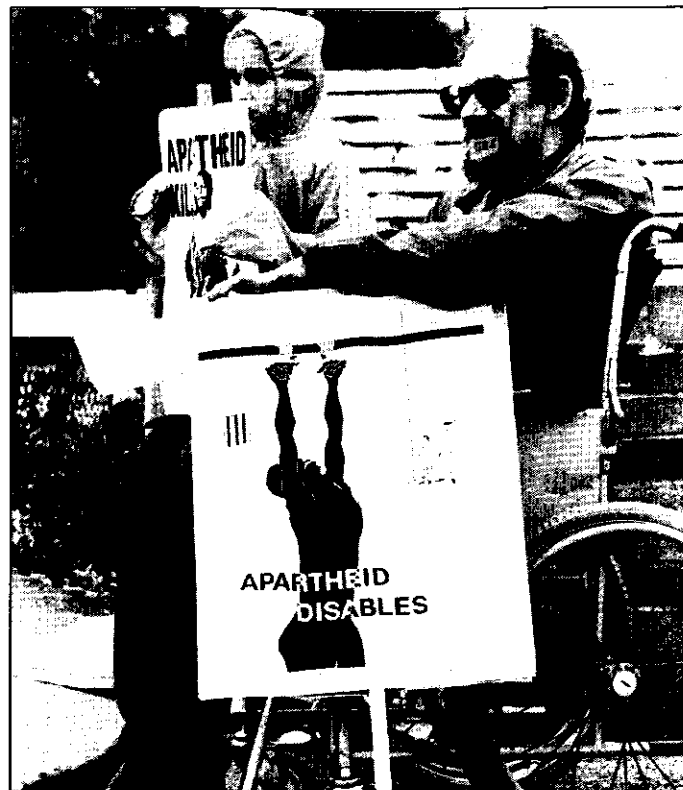
enthusiastic reception here alongside other anti-apartheid activists.

But JAA will probably be remembered most for its open-air 'Freedom Seder' held annually directly outside South Africa House, which attracted hundreds of people.

JAA won the support of many rabbis and public figures within Anglo-Jewry and the active involvement of several youth movements.

As well as heightening awareness about the crimes of apartheid and providing practical means of supporting the struggle against it, JAA also drew attention to the continuing co-operation between Israel and South Africa and made direct links between the struggles against racism here and in South Africa.

● *Donations to the "Votes for Freedom" Campaign should be sent to: PO Box 38, 28 Penton Street, London N1 9PR.*



JAA members joined a Disabled People Against Apartheid protest. Picture: Ilkay Mehmet

JEWISH SOCIALIST PUBLICATIONS

● **Beyond the Slogans: a collection of articles on Zionism published in *Jewish Socialist*, £2.95**

● **A Revolution in Jewish Life: the history of the Jewish Workers' Bund, by Clive Gilbert, with a foreword by Majer Bogdanski, £1.25**

● **Facing up to Antisemitism: How Jews in Britain countered the threats of the 1930s, by David Rosenberg, £1.50**

● **Also available: Songs Anthology (Yiddish) with music, by Majer Bogdanski, £7**

Please add 15 per cent for postage and packing.

Make cheques/POs to 'Jewish Socialist Publications', BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX



Dear Rabbi,

Israeli Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yosi Beilin has stated there is no longer any need for diaspora Jews to donate money to Israel. I have some alternative suggestions for our charitable donations:

- 1) Anger Management courses and victim support counselling for Jewish settlers in Hebron.
- 2) Manicures and fingernail awareness courses for Jewish settlers in Hebron.
- 3) Books for the homeless in London: *A Humble Public Servant - The Shirley Porter Story* by Jerry Manderling and Eve Ickshens.
- 4) Books for Tory MPs: *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*.
- 5) Medical Aid to Palestinians*. [Ask the Rabbi would like to disassociate itself from any suggestion that it endorses giving money to murderers]

* Medical Aid for Palestinians, 33A Islington Park Street, London N1 1QB

SECULAR SLUR

Non-religious Jews are used to being left out, but in *Five World Faiths* being left out could only have been an improvement. This new book describes secularists and assimilationists (as if they were the same!) as having '...little or no contact or interest in Judaism or the Jewish people. They may even change their name if it sounds too Jewish! They just happen to be born Jews and there the interest and loyalty end.'

The author of this slur is Douglas (what sort of Jewish name is that?) Charing, a Rabbi attached to the Jewish Education Bureau in Leeds. Unbelievably this is an Open University set book. Letters of protest please to Cassell Publishers, Villiers House, 41-47 Strand, London WC2N 5JE, and to the Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

GOING HOME

It was Jerusalem's biggest social event of the season - the Safieh daughters' confirmation. About 700 people were at the church, and as well as diplomats and local dignitaries, I was pleased to see Greville Janner MP among the visitors.

Returning to Jerusalem, his home city, after decades in exile, Afif Safieh, head of the PLO delegation in London, travelled from Haifa to Hebron, Acre to Gaza, facing a gruelling round of handshakes, photo-opportunities and media interviews.

The Safiehs were at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem when Israeli soldiers arrived to tear down the Palestinian flag from the town hall across the square. Seeing so many foreign camera crews nearby, the officer radioed base for instructions. The troops were soon back in their vehicles and away, leaving the flag proudly flying. Small victories.

On Israeli television, Afif was introduced as 'ambassador of Palestine to the United Kingdom' (Foreign Office please note!). Israeli newspapers described his charm as 'profoundly

dybbuk's diary

subversive'. They'd better brace themselves for more. If the Safiehs grace our Jewish Socialist seder again this *pesach*, we may be singing 'Hashana hazeh b'Yerushalayim' (this year in Jerusalem).

Aff wants to give up his London posting and return to Jerusalem. He'd like to start an English-language Palestinian paper. *The Jerusalem Post* has veered so far to the right under Conrad Black, he might find a wider market than he expected, since even Israeli embassies have cancelled their *Post* subscriptions.

DESTROYING HOMES

Off camera, less pleasant developments. While the Israeli army and settlers stay, electricity has been cut off to some neighbourhoods. Two infants needing operations died recently because Israeli hospitals wouldn't admit them.

Ahead of the army's 'redeployment' from Gaza and Jericho, Negev Bedouin are being evicted just as they were during the withdrawal from Sinai, their lands requisitioned 'for military use'. One can't help feeling it's from spite.

On the hills around Jerusalem, bulldozers clearing the ground for Jewish settlement pile boulders on to neighbouring Palestinian land. Ordered from their home by Border Police, the Khatib family, of Hizmeh village, sent their son, Mahmoud, to phone a lawyer. By the time he returned their home was rubble, and their olive trees were being uprooted.

What remained of the family's belongings and savings were confiscated to pay the cost of

demolition! A legal eviction order was eventually produced, dated the day after the demolition.

DIZZY'S INDISCRETION

Surprised to hear an old parliamentarian like Tony Benn on the radio refer mistakenly to 'Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield's pilgrimage from Judaism to Anglicism'.

It was Disraeli's father, Isaac D'Israeli, who had the boy baptised instead of *bar mitzvah*ed. This, together with more material assets, enabled young Benjamin to enter a parliamentary career and become Prime Minister.

But it didn't quite equip him with the usual Victorian values. Taking a mistress, even a married one, was not unusual for his class; but Dizzy took Lady Henrietta Sykes home to meet his folks!

'I can well remember the scandal in the county,' recalled Sir Philip Rose, his solicitor, many years later, 'and the indignation aroused in the neighbourhood at D having introduced his reputed mistress and her paramour to his home, and made them associates of his sister, as well as his father and mother. It did much harm at the time and ... I have had it thrown in my teeth by influential county people within very recent years, that this was an act which never would be forgotten, and which all D's subsequent career could never obliterate.'

What would Disraeli, oft-claimed ancestor of 'One-Nation Toryism', say about Major's 'back to basics'? He said it, 150 years ago, albeit mildly: 'A Conservative government is an organised hypocrisy.'

SMASHING HERITAGE

Despite the heritage industry, I hadn't realised Sarah Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield's sister, was buried in Willesden cemetery. Baron Dombovar (the title is Hungarian) went to visit his great aunt Sarah's once-impressive black granite grave last year, and got a shock.

'I really can't believe it. I have now found out that the grave, which was very handsome with a great Maltese cross above it, has been smashed to smithereens and the granite used for gravel.' It had been done in 1982 by the owners, none other than...

'Westminster council is behaving shamefully,' Baron Dombovar said. 'The council hasn't even apologised. I haven't got the money to replace it and I have no lasting memories of her.'

Still, Westminster has put a pamphlet through our doors, assuring us they're doing something about vandalism.

HACKNEY CARRIAGE

Hearing that Czechoslovakia intended to appoint a Minister for the Navy, Brezhnev asked for an explanation. 'I mean, it's not as if you even have a coastline...'

'So,' shrugged Dubcek, 'the Soviet Union has a Minister of Justice and Bulgaria has a Minister of Culture...' Always thought that a bit hard on the poor Bulgarians, with their opera, but what brought this to mind was the news that the London Borough of Hackney, reputedly poorest in the land, has appointed a £53,000-a-year officer for tourism.

OK, Clissold Park's pleasant; there's Clapton ponds; and Daniel Defoe once lived in Stoke Newington. Some people might come to look at the *frummers* in fur *shtrayms*, but I can't see the government coughing up grants like it did for Westminster. On the other hand, with fifty-three grand, Jewish socialists could lay on another festival. And visitors could see the exotic plants at Stoke Newington police station.

You go your way and I'll go mine

Mark Levene looks beyond Zionism to explore the prospects for an alternative Jewish identity

Finding and then proclaiming one's Jewish identity has become quite the rage this last year. All sorts of unlikely people are 'coming out'. Author Howard Jacobson in book, on television, even in the *Jewish Chronicle*, is well ahead of the field. But not far behind has been erstwhile Marxist and academic, David Selbourne, intoning the importance of the Jewish intellectual in discerning 'the spirit of the age' and arresting its decline. Who knows, maybe Jonathan Miller will be next?

What's interesting, however, is that Jacobson and Selbourne have chosen not simply to find and assert their Jewishness, but have argued that it is specifically bound up with their role as intellectuals. Others may find this a little hard to take. Being born Jewish and being an intellectual do not constitute special credentials for pontificating on the world. But their identity crisis, their ambiguity about who and what they are, is surely one which many thinking and dissenting Jews would share.

The phenomenon has actually been going on for at least 200 years. Wherever the forces of modernisation have promoted the dissolution of the old Jewish corporate structure, the internal certainties of Jewish life have gone with it. Remove the emotional and social nutrients provided by that carefully-spun, halakhikly-ordained, community-determined cocoon and generations of secularly educated European Jews have found themselves painfully cast adrift. The superficially bountiful benefits of emancipation and acculturation often proved poor compensation. Escape from a closed narrow world carried penalties which the sensitive and perceptive could hardly ignore. Some of the best and the brightest – Heinrich Heine, Rahel Levin, Karl Marx among them – developed self-hating traits. They blamed their Jewishness for their own misfortunes and, in Marx's case, for the sins of the world.

The espousal of socialism for Marx, or later, Rosa Luxemburg, was not simply compensation for some internalised psychological dislocation. They were responding to objective social and political realities in the actual physical world. Their identification with the proletariat and their immersion in revolutionary struggles for social justice was entirely genuine and heartfelt. But the sheer number of Jewish intellectuals, often from comfortable backgrounds, who trod this hard path suggests that, however unconsciously, they were, at some level, attracted to the socialist creed specifically as Jews.

Social stigma continued throughout the 19th century to deny educated and thinking Jews full acceptance in wider society which liberalism had theoretically offered. However assimilated, they could never avoid a social tagging which carried all manner of negative connotations. Socialism, colour-blind, universalist, internationalist social-

ism, seemed to offer a complete and perfect transcendence.

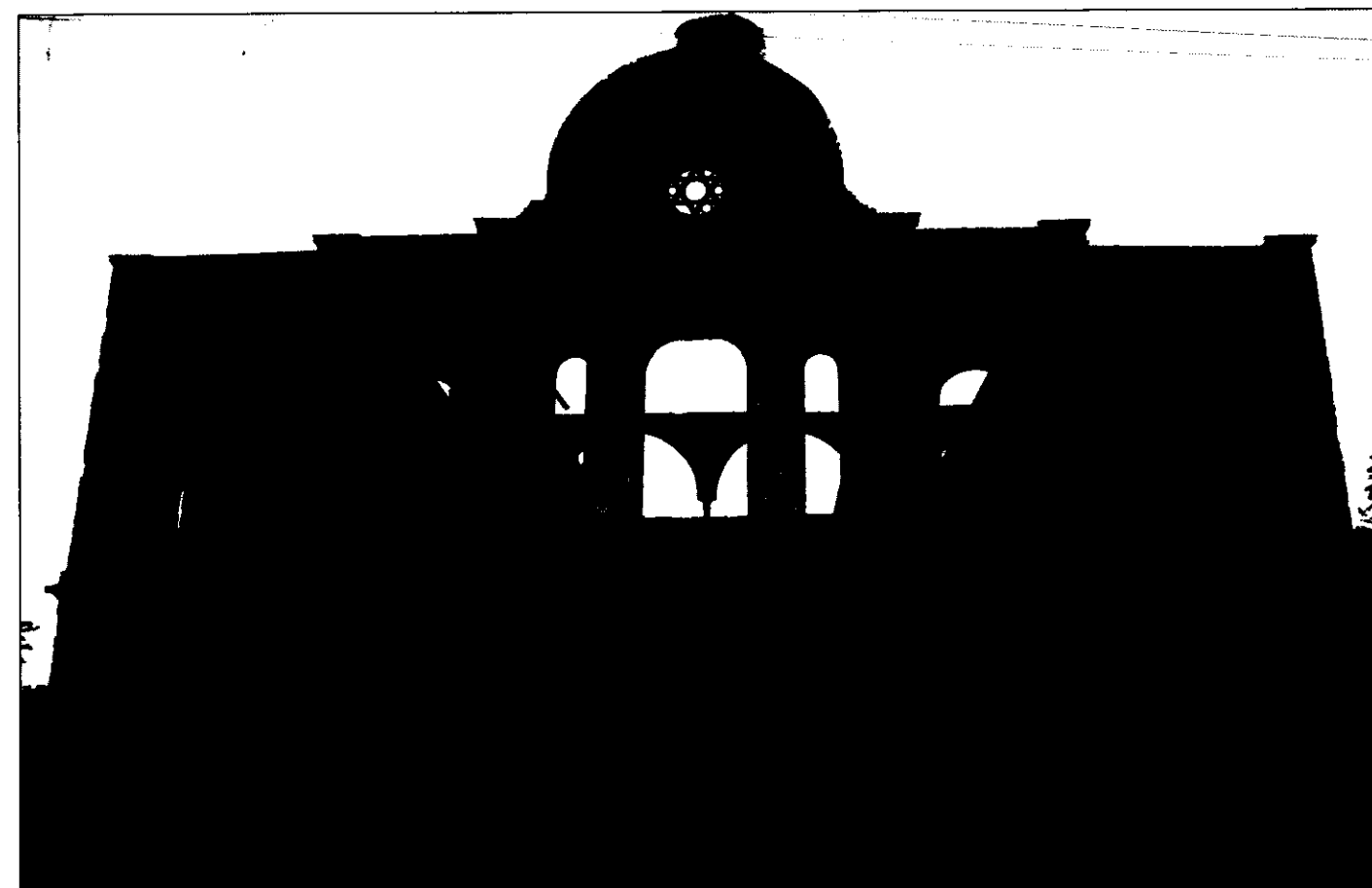
The phenomenon of the Jewish secular intellectual was also that of the archetypal socialist theoretician. Its straightforward universalist characteristics though remained essentially a western and central European story limited to those societies which, however antisemitic, nevertheless provided the political and legal space for Jews to become citizens, often go to university and, if they chose, to dissent from its workings.

In a Russian empire where a process of impending change was persistently postponed, the often self-taught Jewish intellectual found the process of coming into the modern world, possibly even 'leading' others into it and transcending tradition in the process, much more complex. The distinctly universalist intellectuals like Luxemburg, Martov and Trotsky saw the only valid future for the Russian Jews in complete assimilation – voluntary obliteration. But they had to compete with two other types of modernisers and transformers who concentrated their interests and efforts on the mass of unreformed Jewish society and who persisted in arguing that, instead of discarding the Jewish in that society, it should be revitalised as a transforming agent.

From a historical distance, these Bundist and Zionists competitors had traits in common. Poale Zion certainly stood as an interesting half-way house, at times veering more towards the socialist and Yiddishist, at others towards setting up a new socialist home in a Hebrew-speaking Palestine. The universalist Marxists, Bundists and Zionists each claimed a monopoly of truth, which made for angry, evenly matched competition in the 1890s. The almost complete victory of Zionism half a century later, presaged by the Holocaust and the birth of the state of Israel, created a new wisdom from which it was almost an anathema to dissent. The recent collapse of Soviet communism, stripped of its universalist credentials, simply seemed to reinforce the Zionist case.

Although Zionism has now run its course and has little to offer today's diaspora, we must acknowledge something of its wisdom, its achievement and its impact. It is a form of political nationalism with an amazing track record, an incredible capacity for mobilising people that has outlived the brickbats about its irrationality and its anti-modernism. Indeed, it is the modernising force par excellence.

Secondly, however, one feels about its utterly pessimistic view that Jewish society outside of Israel is doomed to assimilation or antisemitism, it is difficult in the light of the Holocaust to deny that Zionism might have had a case. If I was alive in 1942 I would have unequivocally agreed with the Hungarian Jewish leader, Otto Komoloy, who wrote 'nowadays there is no serious-minded Jew



who would not acknowledge the veracity of the Zionist rationale – that Jews would be unable to assimilate and would remain aliens wherever they lived as long as they were unable, unlike all other peoples, to have a country of their own'. Komoloy was wrong about 'all other peoples'. But in terms of a world without Israel, as a critic of the nation-state in general, I have to admit that it is almost impossible to imagine, let alone think about. Our lives in the diaspora would have been utterly different, though it is unclear whether they would have been better, safer, more secure.

Not only has Zionism created tangible, concrete realities, a viable home, a new language, a new identity for millions of Jews, its transcendence of old Jewry has created a new Jewish version on a global scale. Where Israel built a unique, vibrant and dynamic culture and society, it compelled other Jews to emulate and replicate.

So, if Zionism has been so compelling, the dominant mode for Jews for more than 40 years, why even attempt to seek an identity outside of it? Should it matter to us, as thinking Jews, that it has blocked out the discourse with the wider world, except on its own wholly national judeocentric terms? That it largely blocked out the European Jews who wanted to remain European Jews before

the Holocaust and the post-Holocaust remnant which refused to be swept along by Palestinocentric 'Hebrew' nationalism thereafter? Or, perhaps more contemptuously, that it dragged incoming North African and Middle Eastern Jews, whose Zionism, where it existed, was quite different, to assimilate and conform to its standards, its culture, its economic priorities? Or that it persisted in blocking out 'the other' in the Palestine which became Israel, the non-Jewish peoples who were driven out, swept aside and then, by order of a later Israeli prime minister, declared to be non-existent.

The last and by far the most significant in this litany, by dint of recent events, can now change. The psychological and physical state of siege which has been the country's lot – one might be inclined to say, choice – since its inception, can now be lifted. An Israeli national identity founded significantly on participation in armies, military prowess, constant war, conquest, territorial and demographic imperatives, can be jettisoned in favour of something better. Even if the potential peace settlement will be far from just to the Palestinians, their willingness to enter into it in good faith provides a tremendous opportunity for Israelis to begin to view the world in a more posi-

A synagogue in Hungary – no longer the focal point of a community.

Picture: Robin Kiashek

tive light. Their collective physical security is not endangered. Israel will survive, with its national culture and polity intact. The question is, what form will it take?

If Israelis can overcome the conventional wisdoms provided by the Zionist critique, there is a genuine possibility for a *modus vivendi* founded on mutual recognition and common and equitable sharing of land and limited resources. A post-Zionist reality in which the political framework is federal or even cantonal, and in which the issue of identity for the country's inhabitants may remain personally but not politically paramount, is a vision which Jews such as Martin Buber and Judah Magnes once strived for.

Buber and Magnes would have held to this vision, not only for Israelis and Palestinians themselves, but also as an example to the peoples of former Yugoslavia, the ex-Soviet Union and all the world's regions which have resorted to death-dealing and ethnic cleansing in order to assert or reassert the dominance of one national cultural group over another.

Whatever the eventual contours of Palestino-Israeli development, the most exciting prospect it offers us, in the diaspora, is the opportunity to break free of it. That may sound odd, particularly to English or American Jews who feel guilt about not being in Israel. If one holds absolutely to the Zionist analysis, that antisemitism is irredeemable and another holocaust may come, then one must opt for Israel. Zionist ultra-pessimism has served Israel extraordinarily well for the last 40 years, reinforcing, as we have seen with the recent ex-Soviet immigration, the demographic politics of which it is so accomplished. But if we recognise that this analysis has been consciously self-serving and is now completely irrelevant to our circumstances in the diaspora, then we have an entirely different prospect opened up to us.

The growth of Zionism and the cogency of its argument belonged to a particular crisis era in European history, which spawned fascism and Bolshevik-style communism and a variety of political ultra-nationalisms. They found their opportunity out of the chaos and dislocation of the First World War and all of them were monocultures. They believed in a 'people' homogeneity, founded on 'race' or 'class' or 'nation'. This required major projects of social engineering to make everybody the same. If that failed, the only recourse was exclusion, expulsion or liquidation. To group all of these isms together may be unfair. Nazi fascism was clearly the most obviously toxic. But any of these isms, founded on big monolithic ideas, inevitably lead to unsound and destructive technical fixes.

If peace has really broken out, the most exciting prospect for Israel's Jews should be in dumping Zionism and concentrating instead on creating a Levantine niche for themselves (rather than attempting to mentally position themselves somewhere in the mid-Atlantic) so that they can give to,

and absorb from, a wonderfully varied cultural legacy which the fertile crescent has bequeathed. The most exciting prospect it should be offering us is the opportunity to create our own genuine diaspora Jewish identity. I should say identities, since the Jews of modern Britain are a diversity of groups hailing ancestrally not only from Plotsk, Pinsk and Przemysl, but also Berlin, Budapest and Baghdad.

This issue of diversity is important, particularly to those who seek a future in terms of a Bundist legacy. We should recognise our relationship and debt to it but also recognise that its agenda (as with Zionism) is largely outdated. The Bolshevik revolution followed by the Holocaust destroyed its primary Russian and Polish constituencies. Its proletarian solidarity and sense of community among its Anglo-American migrants has been replaced, for the most part, by a very comfortable bourgeois lifestyle for descendants who are distinctly rightward leaning in their politics. Yiddish language, theatre and culture have all but disappeared. Nostalgic interest is no remedy for a living culture. Its revival is not plausible or achievable.

A modern Jewish ethnicity, founded on an awareness of a specific Eastern European milieu at a specific historic moment, will be increasingly marginal as Anglo-Jewry develops as a composite of immigrants of which the most substantial, Polish-Litvak element is only one.

Of course, modern Bundists struggling to create a meaningful framework for a continued Jewish identity which they can then pass on to their children are not alone in having to adapt to major changes in marriage and lifestyle patterns, which are transforming – and possibly threatening – the entire community's social profile.

Nor are they wrong to fervently and passionately proclaim their specific sense of Jewishness based on a particular understanding of their roots. The critical challenge is how to provide an enduring framework which also enhances the opportunities for other Jewish identities to find their niche and to create, in other words, a genuinely vibrant and creative Jewish plurality in the interstices of non-Jewish society and to find space within which their Jewishness can be linked with a commitment to the modern world.

This question of framework is about the type of wider society we seek to create, whether it is to be premised on a reassertion of the nation state, or whether it is to involve some redirection towards a federal or confederal framework of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic communities. And here, interestingly, intellectual considerations from turn-of-the-century Marxist and Bundist perspectives have something very relevant to say.

Jews in Eastern Europe before 1914 lived not in nation states but in two great multi-ethnic empires, Russia and Austria-Hungary. Go to a town like Czernowitz, in the then Austrian Bukovina, and one would have found Germans, Ukrainians, Rumanians, Szecklers, Hungarians,

Gypsies and Jews, all living cheek by jowl and co-existing rather successfully. A different mix could be found in Sarajevo in Austrian, formerly Ottoman, controlled Bosnia. These population hotch-potches were replicated throughout the small towns of Eastern Europe, with Jews nearly always there as an important element.

The problem for (most Jewish intellectual) Austro-Marxists in Austria-Hungary and Bundist theoreticians in places like the Bukovina, as well as in the Russian Pale of Settlement, was how to develop a road to socialism for everybody, within a framework which would prevent political nationalists splitting everything into separate units. Austro-Marxists and Bundists rejected the nation state. They held that any attempt by Croats, Lithuanians, Poles or whoever to impose their will on areas of empire which were a heterogeneous melange would be a disaster not only for socialism but also for any cultural, linguistic or ethnic minority group which found itself trapped within these entities. For which, today, read Bosnia.

The Austro-Marxist and Bundist solution was not minority guarantees. That would merely have confirmed the dominance of one group over another. Nor was it, as doctrinaire Marxists thought, a question of ignoring or dismissing the nationality issue as a 'false consciousness', irrelevant to the real class issues. The Bundists and Austro-Marxists were thinking Marxists, because they recognised how important national identity was, particularly among a more educated population living in a more urban environment, with a better standard of living than peasants.

The solution, argued the leading Austro-Marxist theoretician, Karl Renner, in 1902, was to redefine national identity as a matter of *personal* choice. If you wanted to identify as a Serb living in Vienna among a small community of Serbs, while the majority of Serbs, like you, lived dispersed in other towns or in a compact group hundreds of miles away, that was fine. You should have the right to have your own schools, to teach your own language and maintain your own Orthodox religious instruction. You should be entitled to your own newspapers and cultural organisations, and as you paid taxes you would be entitled to state support for all these initiatives, administered through a bureau for Serbian cultural affairs and presided over by a Serbian government minister. You could use your own language in courts, for tax returns and so on and, where your community was large and cohesive enough, it might be the controlling element in a municipality.

But this would not prevent other groups within that municipality having their own schools and organisations. If you did not want to identify as a Serb, you could send your children to a non-denominational state school.

The Renner scheme divorced personal nationality from political citizenship. One's life could be developed in two entirely separate spheres: your

individual and communal existence, and your participation in the broader political framework. Renner's federal framework aimed at turning an antiquated empire into an inclusive, socialist and humanist Danubian federation. You could live where you chose, be what you chose, but in a markedly decentralised system. It was about human scale.

A version of Renner's idea was tried in the Soviet Union, where the Bolsheviks, picking up from the Bundists, created a Jewish commissariat and provided a framework for a Jewish cultural national existence. The Soviet Union itself was intended as a multinational federation, with the Russians being simply first among equals. The problem was party control, which meant no plurality, no dissent, no decentralisation and certainly no human scale.

If Renner's principle was ultimately quashed under authoritarian, command-economy socialism, and under the weight of a plethora of East European nation-states, today it has a great opportunity in a Western Europe which, already in uncertain embryonic form, is moving towards federation. The European Community has been good for small national groups, Catalans, Scots, Basques, Frisians and Bretons, providing a necessary counterweight to the dominance of the 'sovereign' nation.

And it has been good because it is about coming together, not so much as nations but as regions and units within what still could develop as a larger humanist, democratic, pluralist Europe. In a post-fascist, post-communist but also increasingly post-industrialist continent, the time may be ripe for a new orientation: a Europe of peoples or nations, but not nation states.

This must be the counterblast to the ultra-nationalists in Serbia, in Abkhazia, in Moldova, but also to the purveyors of conventional wisdoms here in the British Isles. We already are, increasingly, a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society, but we live within a social-political framework which refuses to recognise it. For the majority of white 'Anglo-Saxons', adjusting their mindsets to this reality may be painful. They too need to feel valued and the only way a political non-nation-state framework can achieve that is by emphasising the regional and communal, by providing social justice, undermining deprivation, thereby defeating hollow chauvinist rhetoric.

In short, the challenge is how to create stable, environmentally sustainable economies in which diverse groups, including Jews, can live, work and interact as good neighbours and citizens. Identity cannot simply be proclaimed in a vacuum. It is dependent on economic realities, political realities. But if there is a framework, economically and politically geared towards the local and regional within a federal infrastructure, there is hope.

The future, then, has to be pluralist, where we as individuals are many things. The journalist and writer, Atallah Mansour, speaking of his life some

'Zionist ultra-pessimism has served Israel extraordinarily well for the last 40 years'

'The Renner scheme divorced personal nationality from political citizenship'

years ago in a place called Palestine, a place called Israel, introduced himself to fellow students at Ruskin College, Oxford, as 'Atallah Mansour from Jerusalem, Christian, Catholic, Greek Catholic, Israeli, Arab...' He reports his audience bursting into laughter.

But Atallah Mansour's multi-identity, far from being a joke, needs to be the shape of things to come, in the Middle East, as it must be here too. Being Jews can mean being many things. Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Baghdadi, *frum*, reform, part-religious, agnostic, atheist, from mixed backgrounds, confused backgrounds, converts.

We can proclaim our distinctiveness and feel ourselves fortunate in not being alone. There are many groups now in British society who want to be themselves – as well, perhaps, as participants in wider movements for social justice and change.

There are also those who have responded to the instability of the world by turning inwards. If there was a love of Zion which was political, there is now a love of Zion which is a religious revival. It is a return to that sure, comfortable and stress-free cocoon, providing security and warmth. Accept its *halakhik* diktat, on authority from the Chief Rabbi or your local *Chabad* house, and you need not stray. It is surely in many ways preferable to the crass materialism that typifies so much of 'Jewish' life in Britain today. And in terms of Jewish continuity it clearly has a framework of guidelines with which sceptical secularism cannot possibly compete.

But the way of the Chief Rabbi cannot offer answers for the sceptic, for the thinking Jew who recognises that the post-emancipation epoch is also about responding to the world out there as human beings. Returning to the surety of tradition cannot really provide answers to events in Bosnia, Angola, Somalia, to environmental degradation on a planet-destroying scale, to a 'new world order' for which read 'market forces' and rampant capitalism, which is going nowhere, in its massive greed, except down a cannibalistic plughole.

If the problems are global, our challenge as late 20th century diaspora Jews is how to create at our local level islands of sanity, social justice and human scale. Our tools cannot be *halakhik* law or rabbinic diktat, but improvisation and experimentation. We must pick and choose from the great Jewish corpus of knowledge and wisdom, take what is appropriate to our lives and shape them into tools which are serviceable and socially contributive to our Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Israelis, meanwhile, will learn to live their own future and evolve their own identity. We may feel strong sentimental bonds, but their problems and opportunities are not ours. In time, they may have more in common with their Palestinian neighbours than with us. We need not feel guilty. The land is overflowing not with milk and honey but with people. It cannot go on like that. The idea of the ingathering failed to take account of, among other things, scarce water resources. Our place must and should be in the 'normative' Jewish mould, in the diaspora. We need not be ashamed. We have much to do.

Value added Sacks

In the aftermath of the Hebron massacre, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks was interviewed on BBC radio's news and current affairs *PM Programme*. In his view the worst damage caused by the killing of all those Palestinians as they were praying in the Tomb of the Patriarchs was not to those who loved them, nor to the Palestinian people; not to the fragile peace process nor even to the future of Israel – but to Jewish values.

Since 'values', in the sense that Sacks was using the term, are derived from longstanding (some might say eternal) laws and texts, and are not vulnerable to the activities of every fraudster or fanatic, presumably he meant what was said more explicitly by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin: that the massacre will bring shame on Jews, undermining their right to claim the moral high ground.

Many Jews, on the left as well as the right, take the view that the difference between our community and others is that we possess a morally superior set of beliefs and values. We, unlike many of the ignorant and insensitive masses amongst whom we live, believe in truth, justice, education and all things humane.

On occasions when Israel's actions are inescapably inhumane (and this was particularly evident during the Lebanon War), left-wing Zionists have generally expressed anguish primarily at the 'moral decline' of the Jewish state and only afterwards at the physical decline of the Palestinian people or the political decline of progressive forces on both sides of the conflict.

The assumption that the behaviour of all (or even most) Jews is guided by a shared set of values, as well as being patently untrue, is problematic in several ways. First the 'values' themselves, even if we were to agree on a list of what they are, are understood in widely different ways by different groups and individuals. A recent editorial in *Manna* (Winter 1993), the journal of the Reform Synagogues, chose ten 'basic Jewish values which can guide us' through the moral maze of '90s Britain, and analysed them in a broadly liberal way saying, for example, 'Judaism is not wedded to a particular model of the family...but family has been at the heart of Jewish society with men and



Vigil following the Hebron massacre: protesting against an attack on Jewish values? Picture: Simon Lynn

women caring for their young and transmitting basic values.'

But for people who don't live in one, Judaism seems to be so closely identified with 'a particular model of the family' that they feel driven out of the community, as the researchers on Chief Rabbi's commission on women have discovered. In this case, as with other commonly accepted 'Jewish values' such as 'compassion', 'justice' or 'education', it is a waste of energy to argue, as some Jewish socialists do, that our (progressive) interpretation is better than their (reactionary) interpretation.

It is glaringly obvious, for example, that the supposed Jewish respect for education does not extend to the Occupied West Bank. 'Defence' ('looking after our own', which is another of those Jewish values) is the justification offered for closing schools and universities and denying education to a whole generation of Palestinians. So 'Jewish values' that value Jews override those that value other human beings. Or at least they do in the hands of the Israeli government and the Chief Rabbi.

No doubt the rabbi who praised Baruch Goldstein at his funeral, saying that a million Palestinians are not worth the fingernail of one Jew, would be able to come up with a biblical reference, precedents in Jewish history and a 'Jewish' moral argument to back up his view. Unless we are Talmudists, we are hardly in a position to argue with that.

But we are not Talmudists, we are socialists to

whom it should be evident that the interests of a fascist settler like Baruch Goldstein are in fundamental conflict with the interests of Palestinians struggling for their human rights just as the interests of Lady Porter would be in direct conflict with a labour-voting council tenant – even if both of them were Jews.

Our community is diverse and represents diverse experiences and conflicting needs. That doesn't make it any less of a community. Chief Rabbis and Israeli governments present their values as if they apply to all of us in order to conceal that diversity, prioritise some needs over others and keep themselves in power. They use 'Jewish values' as some sort of essence of Jewishness, handed down unchanged from generation to generation. But of course every generation, even including those who live strictly by the Book, understands and interprets them differently to meet their own needs and to serve their own interests.

Our politics as socialists do not obliterate our Jewish experience, but draw on our multifaceted and organic culture, our history of living as minorities across the world alongside other minorities, our struggle as dissidents within our community and as fighters for justice and equality in the wider society. To base our politics on 'Jewish values', though, endangers all those resources by papering over conflict and challenge, leaving us with nothing more than a balloon debate, where everyone argues that they should be left alive because they are better and more worthwhile than anyone else.

'They use "Jewish values" as some sort of essence of Jewishness, handed down unchanged from generation to generation.'

Left-wing Jews, like right-wing Jews, often claim to be the true inheritors of Jewish values. Julia Bard questions the use of such concepts

Your shame, not mine

Simone Aspis describes the oppression facing people with disabilities in the Jewish community

Simone Aspis
Picture: Neil Turner/
Insight



As a person with learning difficulties I feel ashamed of being part of the Jewish community. I have no interest with keeping with my kind. It's too painful to attend synagogue and Jewish social, educational and cultural gatherings. I only observe the festivals to keep my parents happy. When my parents die I will more likely abandon everything about being Jewish because of the extreme emotional pain I have had to endure.

My complete rejection of Judaism which eventually led me to discard my star of David necklace and any items that indicate being Jewish was not taken lightly. However, what does one expect when being rejected from JFS, Hasmonean School and Carmel College; encouraged to be in a class of 13 year olds instead of 16 year olds at Golders Green Jewish Study Group after leaving school; refused training and opportunities to be a youth leader for Ravenswood's Unity Youth Club which is supposed to be integrated; nearly refused a place on Hanoar Hatzioni Israel tour and told that I was not suitable for three Jewish camps while trying to survive the Camp America scheme?

As if this is not enough the Jewish community does not think someone like myself should have a voice and opinion about disability issues. I have been told to see a psychologist on numerous occasions to help me not become angry with the social injustice that the Jewish community afflicts upon myself and other people with disabilities. These social injustices are the denial of self-representation and full participation in the community's activities. I was made to feel less human. As a consequence I didn't want to be with disabled people or Jewish

people. All I wanted to be was with 'normal' people as I thought they were a superior race. My internalised oppression was in full operation.

My internalised oppression was there because there was no right of Jewish children with special needs to be educated in mainstream Jewish schools, colleges and universities; there are no anti-discrimination policies laid down by the Chief Rabbi to prevent organisations that affiliate to the Jewish community from excluding members/participants on the grounds of degree of disability or learning difficulty, or by providing little physical access for wheelchair users. There is also little thought given to providing material in braille or large print for visually impaired people and sign language interpretation for people with hearing impairments. Because of these barriers it is not surprising that at every lecture which has a disability dimension I see none with a disability. The barriers are also increased because only professionals are invited to give lectures about our issues such as the Jewish Ethics on Mental Health and Genetic Engineering which were held at Golders Green Synagogue.

There was a series on the Jewish Attitude to Handicap which was held by the Under Five Parent Support Group. I have not yet gone to one Jewish meeting about disability where there is a person with a disability who has actually been given the platform. At these meetings I often meet the parents of children with disabilities. The parents often say that the disabled person copes very well by charming people to get what they want. By charming people it already makes the person with disabilities become unequal to others. Why should a person have to act more nicely to have his or her access needs met by our community?

The number of Jewish disabled people who receive services from charities is also very disturbing. Jewish disabled people don't consider they have the same human rights as their non-disabled peers. This is because Jewish parents have to ensure their children conform to what is expected, to be seen and not heard. Because Jewish mainstream services aren't welcoming places for disabled people, they have separate services that are provided by a particular charity. Ravenswood provide recreational facilities for people with learning difficulties. My parents don't want me to complain about the lack of respect from my accommodation because they feel I might be asked to leave. My parents had always learnt to be grateful for charities and volunteers to provide services for disabled people so it's not surprising I had confused them

by stating I expect a good standard of service for the rent. As a customer I expect my money's worth.

Because I believe I have rights I decided to campaign and get myself involved with disability campaigns. I was involved with the Block Telethon, Children in Need, Civil Rights Bill and Stop the 1993 Education Bill demonstrations and lobbies. On these demonstrations I was surprised at the number of Jewish disabled people who were leading these campaigns. Yet none of them want to go into the Jewish community to address their issues. Unfortunately I had taken this task on my own to champion my own internalised oppression and confront our community wherever disability and social issues are discussed.

The main issues around disability are about our rights:

The right to receive the same educational opportunities as children without special needs in Jewish mainstream schools. At the moment there are pockets of integration but other schools select on the basis of ability. Who has the right to decide whether a child can conform enough to be allowed to stay in their local Jewish school? If the child has been rejected from the Jewish mainstream schools then there are two Jewish special schools. If children are not integrated with people with disabilities then how are we ever going to celebrate diversity?

The denial of rights to accessible services provided by the government. From April local authorities must buy services such as accommodation, daycare and leisure facilities from registered charities. Charities have the same effect as segregating pupils into different schools. Charities provide services for people with specific medical conditions. The MS Society will only cater for people with that condition, MEN-CAP will only cater for people with learning difficulties. Disabled people become disenfranchised and segregated not only from society as a whole but from others who share the same oppression.

Charities also portray disabled people as victims in need of cure which gives the wrong impression to the public. But if people with disabilities were shown functioning as full citizens then the public would not give money as they could not see the need. Why should the public with no life experience of disability decide which organisation is more deserving? Who are you to say that your £7 per month (Charity Aid figures) donation should be given to help people with learning difficulties rather than people with hearing impairments? As the number of charities increases, the distribution of funds becomes thinner. It leads to less money going to more charities which affects the quality of services given to people with disabilities.

The Jewish community is very good at writing cheques to these charities. Do Jewish people support these charities because it saves them having to deal with disabled people in their neighbourhood? Is it easier for Jewish people to fund a village where 500 people with learning difficulties can be put miles away from the Jewish community than to be a friend to a person with learning difficulties in their neighbourhood? Jewish people prefer to rattle a coin box for Delamere Forest School instead of providing support for Jewish children with special needs in a Jewish mainstream school.

The right not to be discriminated against when

applying for employment. At the moment disabled people can be discriminated against. A disabled person is four times more likely to be unemployed. Too often disabled people are paid a lower wage than the average person. As soon as a disabled person takes a job then she or he will lose some or not all their social security benefits – better known as the poverty trap.

The right to have full access to all services, information and transport which is available to able-bodied people. The right to be consulted and have a platform for any debate and discussions that affect people with similar life experiences. The right to self-representation. The right for disabled people to be consulted on any major issues affecting Jewish people.

The degree of disability depends on the severity of society denying the person full participation in the community. These rights will only be acknowledged when the Jewish community recognises that being disabled is another type of social oppression.

The Power House

This is my home
Why can't I spend my money on what I want?
This is my home
Why can't I have a key?
This is my home
Why can't I wear my own clothes?
This is my home
I want to lock the bathroom door!
This is my home
People could enter my bedroom without asking
This is my home
The staff don't let us have our own things
This is my home
The staff have no respect for us
This is my home
Why can't we go out when we want to?
Is this my home?

SOME SUCCESS

JS Ann Frankel's analysis of British racism ('The Moving Right Show', JS30) says virtually nothing about opposition to racism over the last two decades and its effect on the present.

In 1968 thousands of printworkers and meat porters, all TGWU members, marched in support of Enoch Powell's call for repatriation. When Norman Tebbit recently complained that black and Asian people didn't support the English cricket team there were no such demonstrations. Last November, although Tebbit argued on Newsnight that a large ethnic minority population would fracture social cohesion, he had to agree when challenged, 'But black people are here to stay! Surely you would accept that?' Those who disagree, like Winston Churchill, have been marginalised.

Are racist attacks increasing or has police recognition that racist violence exists encouraged the reporting of attacks? In 1977 the police did not acknowledge that the murders of Altab Ali and other Bengalis were racist and seemed determined that the fascists should sell their papers. But following Derek Beackon's recent election

victory police arrested 50 Nazis trying to sell their paper in Brick Lane.

Beackon's victory caused a national outcry - far greater than the election of two National Party councillors in 1976. The Archbishop of Canterbury immediately condemned Beackon. In 1976, the then Archbishop (Donald Coggan) excused racists like Robert Relf who would only sell his house to whites. A leading Labour MP, Bob Mellish, said of immigration: 'Enough is enough!'

It felt far more lonely being anti-racist then. The successful attack on the National Front march in 1977 and the launch of the Anti-Nazi League boosted our confidence and damaged the fascists. OK, Thatcher played a racist card. But if the NF hadn't been humbled they and the Tories might have won support.

Anti-racists also campaigned to make the police accountable, against deportations and to increase opportunities for black people in the only area where the left had influence: local government.

The gains have been limited. The police have been pushed to clean up their act a bit. The rampant police racism of 15 years ago is less prevalent and domestic violence and racial attacks are recognised as crimes.

Even Tory councils and some private firms claim to

be 'equal opportunities employers'. We may question their sincerity but it is clear they employ many more black people, and in senior positions, than before.

What about the battle against racist immigration controls? This is a war of attrition which we are losing. How much worse would it have been without the anti-deportation campaigns. They managed to popularise the message that people were being unfairly discriminated against.

While it is hard to be optimistic about reversing the tightening of controls, it isn't true that 'rough treatment of aliens is now perfectly acceptable'. Ann Frankel is dismissing the opposition by writing this.

Between 1962 and 1971 there was such an escalation of controls that many believed repatriation would be next. This hasn't happened. When we heard of passport cheques in factories, dole offices and hospitals we believed this was the beginning of a concerted policy to deprive black people of welfare rights. Such checks are still sporadic.

Despite the impression created by Ann Frankel's article, progressive forces have won a few battles. If we don't recognise our victories, who will?

Bernard Misrahi
London N17

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

JS Congratulations on the new *Jewish Socialist*. I had been sceptical of any changes planned in the production of the new version of the magazine because it was difficult to see how the quality of production you have sustained for so long could be bettered. However, I thought the latest issue surpassed anything that has gone before.

Congratulations also on the co-production of *You Are, Aren't You?*, a work that ranks in its own way with such classics as Mike Rosen's *Little Rabbit Foo-Foo* and *Goodies and Daddies*. I do have one quibble though - in *Trying to be Jewish* 1:

Zeyde didn't go to *shule* either, he went to Hackney Downs instead and stood around with a lot of old men in dark suits with shiny bits on the *tukhes* of their *gatkes*.

I always thought *gatkes* were long-johns as in 'Don't let zeyde answer the door in his *gatkes*!' Consulting Weinreich's Yiddish English dictionary I find that *gatkes* is translated as 'underpants or drawers' and that the Yiddish for trousers is *hoizen*. I spent much of my youth skulking around Hackney Downs so I've seen many bizarre events.

But one thing I never saw were elderly men standing around Hackney Downs, or any other open space in Hackney for that matter, in either drawers, underpants or long-johns. Unless, of course, they wore transparent *hoizen* with shiny parts to the *tukhes* of their *gatkes* or the *tukhes* to their *hoizen* were threadbare and the *gatkes* shone through.

Can we get to the bottom of this?

Ralph Levinson
London, N4

● Send your letters to:
Jewish Socialist, BM 3725,
London WC1N 3XX

STRONG ARGUMENTS

JS May I congratulate you on publishing Michael Safier's article in the winter issue of *Jewish Socialist*. It was not written in a pious fashion and it presents strong arguments about 'Jerusalem as a single city for both Israelis and Palestinians' and how there is the need to face up to the social and economic problems.

The article does not denigrate or insult people. It is a lesson to us all in how to

approach a subject in a non-sectarian way and could be read by anyone, whatever their political views.

Barney Lewis
Northampton

SURPRISE, SURPRISE

JS I only recently discovered your magazine. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that I am not the only secular, Jewish, left-wing, non-Zionist left in Britain

Mel Young
London SE24

Gypsy Life

Gypsies have for centuries been an integral part of Hungarian society. But they face continuing discrimination and the threat of fascist attacks

Population The total Gypsy population in Hungary is around 500,000, of whom some 100,000 speak Lovari or the allied Vlach dialects, a smaller number the Carpathian dialect or Roumanian and the rest, Hungarian.

Unemployment is generally rising as factories shed unskilled labour and the Gypsies are the first to go. Many have left the larger towns and gone back to their own villages, but there is no work there either so they may have a daily journey to a town several miles away to work on repairing roads.

Housing In spite of interest-free loans (under the Communist regime), and the practice of working together to build their own houses, there are still families living in unfinished houses (because they have run out of money to buy bricks or windows), or huts consisting of a single room with a roof of straw and plastic sheeting.

Racism In the months after the political changes, major incidents were reported where skinheads attacked Gypsies while the police stood by; in Ketegyhaza the house of a Gypsy was set on fire and the family barely escaped with their lives. Attempts were also made to set light to the house of the Gypsy's brother. In Kalocsa two youths found a Gypsy woman and her child gleaning potatoes from a field which had already been harvested. (Just as in the book of Ruth, it has been the custom for centuries for the poor to be allowed to take what is left after the harvest.) They tied the Gypsy to a tree and beat her and her daughter. When they complained to the police, the mother was hit by a plain clothes policeman.

In Budapest skinheads attacked two Gypsy boys and two girls. The boys fought back and ended up in hospital. On another occasion a skinhead killed a Gypsy.

In Tura two Gypsy men and a woman were picking fallen pears off the ground. A watchman told them to put the pears back then shot one man. As she ran off, the woman slipped and was shot as she lay on the ground; the watchman fired at the remaining Gypsy who fell to the ground but was unhurt. The watchman went into the nearest inn and boasted: 'I have killed three Gypsies.' Two hundred police came from Budapest to stop Gypsies from other villages attending the wake.

Music In every village and town quarter there

are groups playing traditional music. Not the so-called Gypsy music of the expensive restaurants, but traditional ballads and dance songs (songs which accompany solo and couple dancing). Under the influence of Kalyi Jag (who have toured abroad and made three recordings) these songs have been adapted into a kind of 'folk rock'.

Gypsy traditional dance is being revived under the inspiration of Gustav Balazs. he organises summer camps where steps learnt from the older generation in Hungary and Transylvania are taught to young Gypsies.

Emigration Gypsies are not admitted to the neighbouring east European countries where Hungarian citizens are, in theory, allowed in without a visa, but several thousand Roumanian Gypsies have come to Hungary.

Writers Several Gypsies are writing in Hungarian, including Menyherth Lakatos, Bari Karoly and Choli Daroczi. Menyherth Lakatos's novels have been translated into several languages while Choli has translated the New Testament into Romani.

Organisations Phralipe is the largest organisation, with 6,000 members. Founded in 1988, and functioning mainly among the educated Carpathian and musician Gypsies, it did not try to achieve mass membership.

Phralipe included most of the members of the Roma Parliament, working mainly among the Hungarian-speaking Gypsies. The members of this Parliament are not elected by popular vote but are nominated by some 30 Gypsy organisations.

Two journals appear regularly: *Phralipe* (in Hungarian) for its membership, and *Amaro Drom* (99% in Hungarian), a popular magazine available on bookstalls.

Hungarian Gypsies have been involved in Eurom, a cross-European movement originally mooted in Mulheim (Germany) three years ago, and seen by some as a rival to the less militant World Romany Congress.

Romani language There have been classes for adults in Budapest, and these are attended by Gypsies and non-Gypsies. The use of Romani in school is rare and depends upon the enthusiasm of individual teachers.

Choli Daroczi's two-way dictionary has been published in a second edition and is found in ordinary bookshops, and some textbooks are also in print.

Training youth Working in collaboration with a committee based at a cultural centre in

Budapest there is a six-month training scheme for young Gypsies to become community care workers. One Romani speaking woman, thrown out of her factory job without notice after seven years, has taken this course and is working with the elderly. A similar scheme operates from the cultural centre in Bekes. This is a pyramid training system by which the trainees themselves disseminate the instruction which is mainly concerned with how to fill in forms to get the limited unemployment pay and how to contact the correct office if you have a query.

School School attendance amongst the youngest Gypsies (6-10) is reasonably high but tails off as children get older. Very few complete secondary school or go on to further education.

The state children's homes have a high proportion of Gypsy children - often as high as 90% - partly because some delinquent non-Gypsies are classed as Gypsies. These residential schools are large and take Gypsy children who have been involved in petty crime and those whose parents cannot support them. The physical conditions are good compared to those in children's homes in Roumania - but no account is taken of the cultural needs of the Gypsy children.

Parliament and government There are three MPs of Gypsy origin, though only two are regarded as representing the interests of Gypsies: Antonia Haga, born in Nyireghaza in 1960 and Aladar Horvath born in Miskolc in 1964. Both are in the SZDSZ, the Free Democratic Party. Unfortunately they are MPs of an opposition party so have little influence on government policy. The third is Tamas Peli of the MSZP.

A minority rights committee which sits with government ministers has one Gypsy member. The Gypsies want to be considered a nationality, and not just an ethnic minority. There are hopes of new legislation just as there are hopes of money for a central Romany Cultural Institute.

The government funds a large number of Gypsy organisations and projects, but this funding is getting less year by year.

Media There is a TV programme every Saturday morning and a radio programme on Thursdays dedicated to Gypsy news and views.

Last year Helsinki Watch published a report on the Gypsies of Hungary entitled *Struggling for Ethnic Identity*. It concluded that the situation of the Hungarian Gypsies has dramatically changed since the fall of the Communist regime and that many of the changes are positive. There is now a variety of cultural, social and political Romany organisations and publications. But the Gypsies are still the worst paid; unemployment is higher because of discrimination in the work market.

Gypsies are regularly refused service in bars, restaurants and discos, and the discriminators are not prosecuted. There seems to be systematically bad treatment of the Gypsies by the police. It has been shown that police also took part in the attacks on Gypsies in 1991 and 1992. A growing number of racist attacks on the Gypsies are mainly carried out by nationalistic youth, including skinheads.

Jewish Socialist invites your reviews and articles. Please send contributions by 1 May for our summer issue.

Gypsy LIFE



PHOTOS
ROBIN
KIASHEK



Robin Kiashek was born in London in 1957 to Hungarian parents who had left their homeland to escape political persecution. His father was Jewish and managed to escape Budapest in 1939, together with one of his brothers. His second brother remained in Budapest throughout the war and was sent to Auschwitz towards the end of the war – he was one of the few survivors.

His mother was Catholic and having become a refugee in Vienna after the war, escaped the Russian occupation of 1956, settling finally in London where she met her husband.

Robin visited Hungary for the first time in 1988 where relatives still live. Having worked as a commercial photographer in London for the past 16 years, he embarked on a journey recording the agricultural life of eastern Hungary. The photographs were not initially intended to have any particular political or sociological 'message'.

However, it became apparent that all vestiges of the former Jewish life in Hungary had largely been erased (a notable exception being the synagogue in Budapest – the largest in Europe – which in 1988 was being renovated by the actor Tony Curtis); what's more, the same racism which produced the genocide of the war is still found in today's Hungarian society, in particular towards the gypsy population.



HOLLOW CAST

Jake Rosen visited the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington

After only six months of operations, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC has announced it will close temporarily. The crush of visitors has exhausted the staff and necessitated refurbishing the just-completed, \$168 million building.

This is the most effective museum in the United States and the most political. Its professed principle aim is to honour the victimisation of European Jews by the Nazis. Its main effect is to victimise the memory of those heroic Jews who fought the Nazis as they persecuted and murdered Jewish people.

It is a curious thing to memorialise victimisation, which is the oppressor's act of destroying and slaughtering. The Jewish religious tradition – *Kiddush Ha-shem* – requires resistance to the oppressor, and honours that resistance. Three of the five most important Jewish holidays – Hannukah, Purim and Passover – celebrate resistance and rebellion.

This tradition has transcended religion and for a long time has also been a component of Jewish secular culture. But in the teeth of the lessons of all human history, the museum's organisers argue, as did St Paul, that faith alone, and not good works, is necessary for salvation. In the museum organisers' version of the Pauline doctrine, if we bear witness to the doing of an evil, that will make it impossible for the evil to be done again. Yet when have sighs and lamentation, rather than resistance, ever ended suffering?

You do not drop into this museum to see one exhibit and then wander off to see another, like seeing the dinosaurs and the whales in the Natural History Museum. Here there is a message, embodied in the permanent exhibit, which is arranged chronologically over three floors. You start at the top and staff tell you six hours will be needed to take it in.

There are effective film clips (mostly old news-reel) displayed on screens and television monitors. There is what seems to be installation art. There are dioramas. There are artifacts: uniforms, guns, letters, milk cans (in which historical records were hidden), a cattle car used to transport Jews to the death camps, the doors from a crematorium, a barracks from Auschwitz. But mostly there is text, blown up on placards, containing masses of information. The building itself is menacing, self-consciously evoking the feeling of a prison. The lighting creates a solemn and forbidding atmosphere. The museum's techniques are potent. It works. You are shocked and numbed.

But in getting its message across, the museum's most potent technique is the half-truth. Every detail that is stated or portrayed is true, but much more of the truth is left out, and the picture as a whole is rendered false.

The Jewish people of Europe are presented as a

unified, suffering whole. But Jews lived, assimilated, to a greater or lesser degree, as citizens of different countries, and in different social systems. Jewish class divisions, competing ideologies and opposed political movements are ignored as if they were all irrelevant. But they weren't. In fact, during his rise to power a considerable number of bourgeois German Jews voted for Hitler because they were anti-Communist. During the war, the Jewish Police and Jewish Councils (*Judenrate*) – the collaborator organisations the Nazis established to control the war-time ghettos and whose personnel were made responsible for rounding up other Jews for the death camps – were largely composed of Jewish lawyers, other professionals and businessmen who resisted widespread community sentiment in all the ghettos (unmentioned in the museum) not to co-operate with the Nazis.

Eighty-eight per cent of the Jewish Police in towns in different occupation areas were members of Zionist organisations. Within the ghettos, the opponents of resistance were not just within the Jewish Council, but were almost the entire group of establishment leaders of the old society – rabbis, Zionist leaders, former professionals and business people.

The Zionists who did resist were, on the whole, the youth groups, and principally the socialist Zionist youth groups, and they had to break with the Zionist leadership before they could join with the Communists and anti-Zionist, anti-Communist Jewish Socialist Bundists in organising resistance.

It was the opposition of the establishment Jewish leadership that, more than anything else, explains why the resistance to the Nazis was so difficult to achieve and took so long to get organised. The museum is silent about the Communists – a major group within European Jewry, without whom there would have been no resistance, although a few individuals are mentioned. Every alibi used by the Jewish Council members to excuse their working hand-in-glove with the Nazis is displayed. But the museum is again silent about the fact that Jewish resistance groups targeted the collaborationists of the Jewish Councils and Jewish police first, because they were the embodiment of the Nazi regime in the ghettos.

When the museum does describe the ghetto resistance and uprisings, it is skimpy and focuses on their weaknesses and failures. Yet there was resistance in every ghetto and in many it rose to the level of armed uprising. The Warsaw ghetto uprising, which started on 19 April 1942, was the first major civilian revolt against German forces in all of Occupied Europe. Of the greatest of the ghetto resistance organisations – the one in the Minsk ghetto which successfully organised the escape of 10,000 Jews from the ghetto to the forest where they joined the Red Army-led Byelorussian partisans and organised their own partisan forces –

there is but one sentence of text, and that sentence is false. What set the Minsk ghetto apart from the others was that the ghetto leadership, from the start, was in the hands of Jewish cadres of the underground Soviet Communist Party who had volunteered to go into the ghetto to organise the escape of the Jews imprisoned there.

There is nothing in the museum about the uprising at the Treblinka concentration camp. There is nothing about the successful escape of all the prisoners at Sobibor, which forced the Nazis to destroy this death camp. Nor is there anything about the sabotage done by slave labourers forced to work in the Ruhr industrialists' factories.

The greatest dishonour – and this is to be expected from those who honour victimisation – is shown to the thousands of Jewish partisans. They appear nowhere in this memorial museum. Not a word. Though by war's end there was scarcely a Jew anywhere in the world – or an anti-fascist of any nationality – who did not know the Jewish Partisan anthem *Zog nit kaynmal* (roughly translated, 'Never give in' which for years afterwards was sung at rallies and commemorative meetings throughout Europe and the US, in Yiddish and in translation, by Jews and non-Jews).

Despite the museum organisers' rationale, 'bearing witness' does not generate a reaction to current events. The pictures of starving people in concentration camps, look remarkably like TV pictures of the atrocities committed by all the nationalist groups in the former Yugoslavia. Text about people made refugees and cast into ghettos is remarkably like news stories about the 44 million people currently forced to become refugees by the fascist-like nationalists in Europe, Africa, Asia and South America. The description of how the governments of the US and Cuba shipped Jewish refugees from Nazism back to Europe is remarkably like news from Haiti and about the US, Britain, Germany and Canada tightening their immigration laws so the number of persecuted refugees admitted to the US is declining. The Nazi persecution of the Gypsies mirrors the Romanian and Hungarian nationalists' persecution of Gypsies. Images of Nazi pogroms are like pogroms in India and Sri Lanka. Yet no one seems as angry as I am.

Behind the museum's professed aim of memorialising the victimisation of the European Jews is the unspoken aim of strengthening a xenophobic Jewish nationalism. This is the real political agenda of 'Holocaustism', of presenting Jewish history before and during the Second World War as 'victimisation'. The right-wing Israeli Likud governments under Begin and Shamir sponsored this approach and lobbied Washington to establish this museum. In a similar programme their Education Ministry regularly organise plane-loads of Israeli high-schoolers to visit Auschwitz to promote Jewish nationalist ideology. If you are a Jew you cannot help leaving this museum thinking: 'I'm Jewish and to hell with the rest of you. Look at what you did to us and what you condoned.' A non-Jew feels guilty. These nationalist responses are provoked by the museum's manipulation of half-truths. But those who collaborated, or condoned or failed to fight the Nazis did so because

they were themselves Nazi, or pro-Nazi or, at least, not anti-Nazi, not because they were American or British or Cuban.

One placard reads, characteristically: '...when the Nazis collapsed....' But the Nazis never collapsed. They had to be killed to be stopped. The Nazis in every nation – for the Nazis were just the strongest of the fascist groups that existed then in every nation, just as they exist today – were determined to continue their common policies of racism, totalitarianism and genocide as long as they had the power to do so. To crush that power required mustering the combined, fraternal fighting resistance of the anti-fascists of every nation. And that is exactly what happened. The Second World War was a civil war fought on an international scale: anti-fascists against fascists.

In that prolonged gigantic battle millions of anti-fascist Jews showed themselves to be true heroes, not victims. This is what needs to be remembered, honoured and memorialised. This alone is what will help stop today's fascists. But this is precisely what is suppressed in the Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Jew baiting in Rumania in the 1940s



In the first of two articles, Michael Rosen reviews books for young children on the Holocaust

People writing children's books about the Holocaust do so in many contexts. For convenience sake I'll use names to describe some of them.

● **Revisionism** On 7 July 1992, historian David Irving was reported in *The Guardian* as saying, 'I predict that one year from now the Holocaust will be discredited.' The Holocaust he described as a 'legend based on baloney'. (Not only a bad historian, also a lousy prophet.)

● **Impossibilism** 'The world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason' (George Steiner), meaning that the subject is beyond description.

● **Substitutionism** '[Words] destroy what they aim to describe, they alter what they try to emphasise. By enveloping the truth, they end up taking its place' (Elie Wiesel) – meaning that words are not the thing itself, and so writing seems to take the place of the Holocaust. The chat about the Spielberg movie might be a case in point here.

James E Young has written, 'Holocaust survivors suspect that if events are perceived after the fact as coming to exist only in their literary testimony, then their experiences might also be perceived as having never existed outside of their narrative...if one can write the Holocaust, and even rewrite the Holocaust, then perhaps one can also unwrite the Holocaust.' Perhaps this was Primo Levi's fear.

● **Relativism** In a famous article, Hayden White wrote, 'One must face the fact when it comes to apprehending the historical record, there are no grounds to be found in the historical record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning over another.' In other words there is no such thing as truth, and, the suggestion seems to run, there's not much point in trying to establish it.

Revisionism, denial and neo-Nazi activity are certainly motives for people wanting to write children's books about the Holocaust. Impossibilism and substitutionism are really the matching twins of pessimism, born out of the defeat and hopelessness of the Holocaust. Relativism is the latest version of this pessimism but of a very academic variety.

That's to say, it's much easier to sit around in libraries and lecture theatres saying there is no such thing as Truth than when one is sitting in Auschwitz, or (and I don't mean to be flippant) on the loo. The material reality is most easily denied when it is apparently being least lived. Traces of these ideas can, I think, be found in the ways people write about the Holocaust when writing for children.

However, the main surface concern in this area lies in the construction of children as innocents. This is an ancient idea, quite happily co-existing with the idea of children as born evil. And before mocking this, we only have to look at ourselves and find that we constantly follow this approach in our lives and institutions. Certain things are thought unsuitable for children to hear, see and know. Plenty of people are worried by activities that seem premature: Shirley Temple, child geniuses going to Oxford, Suzuki violinists. In

order to highlight the awfulness of war, newspapers quote child injuries and deaths. So, as one children's book critic put it, perhaps the Holocaust is not suitable material for children's books because it might 'serve to undermine the young person's trust and confidence in the future'.

But this critic, Hamida Bosmajian, also said, 'We...must recollect and imagine many more tales to help free our civilisation from its consuming obsessions and death-bringing powers'. This is the perfect opposite to Wiesel and Steiner's pessimism. The optimism is of course encouraging, but as we know, the Holocaust offers up many conflicting conclusions and deductions. Telling it doesn't of itself lead to the conclusion 'never again' or to good ideas on how to make sure it doesn't happen.

All this raises the never-ending questions about the ideology of books – what is it really trying to say? – and the freedom (?) of the reader to interpret the tale anyway he or she likes. None of the children's books I have looked at has been able to describe or explain the growth of the Nazi machine, or for that matter give an account of a death camp. Is this ideological? Squeamishness in the face of the 'innocence' of children? Or should we simply take these books as open-ended suggestions? Ideas and stories which parents and children will surround and interpret with other stories, facts, ideas and knowledge?

In passing, it should be said that 'left' and marxist criticism has traditionally treated literature as chunks of ideology that the critic deduces from the tale. But there's no reason why a Marxist should not say that a tale means what it does according to the ideological position of the reader. This has important consequences when we say that such and such a book means 'x' or 'y'. The word 'means' really stands for 'means to me'.

There are to my knowledge just three books for very young children that attempt to talk about the Holocaust. *The Children We Remember* by Chana Byers Abells was published first in the US in 1983, then in Britain by Julia MacRae Books in 1987. The book is made up of one page text, one page black and white photo, dividing into four sections: Jewish life before the Nazis come, life after the Nazis come, death at the hands of the Nazis, survival after the Nazis. The narrative is in the impersonal voice: 'Families were forced to live on the streets'. The photography is similarly without voice. I ask, who took these photos? Nazis? Jews? Allied soldiers? Why?

This faked neutrality is, I think, a nervousness in the face of revisionism, as if to say: 'We are not going to present any emotional stuff here. This is the raw truth. Here are photos to prove it.'

But what of these pictures? 'Some children lived in towns like this,' we read, looking at a row of fairly prosperous terraced houses. And there's nothing to distinguish them as Jewish houses, no Hassidim hanging about, no mezuzahs, no candles. So Jews are really normal. Well if they were so normal, why

did the Nazis kill them? The book cannot and will not provide answers. The only country mentioned by name is Israel, though it's clear in the book that Jews before, during and after the Holocaust live elsewhere. So who are these Jews? Where are they? Might we not think, perhaps not being in Israel was their problem ... or perhaps it was just being Jews hanging about pretending to be normal. My extreme reaction to this book.

Of course, it is meant to be supported by parental and teacher involvement and maybe its agenda is to be so non-committal as to send a child running to a nearby adult for answers. The problem there, as we know, is that many adults don't know them.

Rose Blanche is a picture book by Roberto Innocenti, 'Text by Ian McEwan based on a story by Christophe Gallaz' published by Jonathan Cape in 1985. This is a bizarre number. The illustrations are full page, ultra-realist, full colour depictions of life in a small German town. Rose Blanche is a young non-Jewish German girl who acts as our witness to the arrival of the Nazis, the seizing of German Jews, and the presence of a concentration camp – all graphically shown as if from a high-up wide-angled camera. To the adult eye, various parts of the pictures seem strangely familiar, for yes, they do come from famous news photos of the time, including the boy with the floppy hat from Warsaw. (But isn't that in Poland?)

Rose Blanche is appalled by the concentration camp, so she takes food to the children in the camp. (Who are they? Why are they there? The word Jew is never mentioned.) Then as she is putting flowers on the barbed wire, the Russians arrive (not named) and shoot her by mistake. Mother never finds her. But grass comes and grows over the camp. 'Spring had triumphed.'

Is this crazy or what? The pseudo-documentary approach highlights the ludicrous inaccuracies and impossibilities. In real life, we know that the camps where German Jews were taken to weren't conveniently situated on the outskirts of the towns they were taken from. Of course, as readers, we are inclined to wish Rose Blanche every strength in her desire to feed the victims, but we soon learn it is impossible and ...she gets shot when she's by the camp. (Why? What for? Why by the Russians? What relief is spring?) It's unpleasant to say it, but there is something Christian about her martyrdom as if truth comes through the sacrifice of innocence. The Holocaust is not a tale of Christian martyrs.

I'm sure the book prompts quite deep feelings in anyone brought up in the context of Christianity and self-sacrificial stories (not restricted to Christianity). But as Rose Blanche's activity seems so pointless and doomed, I can't see why I would put this book in front of children. There's so much here to be de-explained and revised, it would be better to stick with a dry historical account.

Let the Celebrations Begin! by Margaret Wild and Julie Vivas was published first in Australia in 1988 and then in England by Bodley Head in 1991. It was



An illustration from Margaret Wild and Julie Vivas' *Let the Celebration Begin*.

attacked by Lord Jacobovits for being, I seem to remember, too happy and jolly about something so serious and tragic. It tells the story of Miriam who lives in a hut with some other women who make a toy for a party. Some soldiers are coming to set the people in the story free. Within the text of the story and pictures we do not know why they are in a hut, hungry and unfree; nor why soldiers are coming.

However, the story is 'framed' by some text for adults. At the beginning is a paragraph on the Holocaust, describing that people, especially Jews were put in camps (why?) and a second paragraph saying that a small collection of stuffed toys has been preserved which were made by Polish women in Belsen for the first children's party held after the liberation. At the end of the book is a survivor's writing giving an account of liberation (from where?) by British soldiers.

The only people seen in the book are camp inmates, mostly girls and women, not looking in the advanced state of malnutrition that was reached by virtually all inmates and recent arrivals in Belsen in 1945. There are no dead bodies, no soldiers, no barbed wire. Everything revolves around the difficulty in making the toy. The book for me is a good story about a child's problem, with magnetic pictures but one that bears a strange relationship with the Holocaust. It is, of course absurdly sanitised and dislocated from any context other than the need to make a toy. More shades of innocence here.

The framing, though very fragmentary, at least begins the possibility of opening up a conversation without the need to re-explain. But the book is also about a subtle kind of resistance. Claudia Koonz said that 'victims and resisters ... knew that sanity and survival depended upon preserving private integrity against Nazi power'. Though it is not clear what or where this Nazi power is, or that it threatens their lives, the book at least shows this 'private integrity'. For that, many thanks.

This then is all you have on offer for very young children. Next time, I will deal with material for older children.

ONCE UPON

A CRIME ...

POEM BY MIKE ROSEN

ALDERMASTON MARCH

I ran away from home once.

I was 13

the second year of the Aldermaston March
marching from Aldermaston to London
to Ban the Bomb (for evermore).

I said, I'm going on the Aldermaston March.

They both said that this was out of the question,
the boy's mad, crazy.

My mother said,
where will you stay? you'd have nothing to eat
you don't know anyone, what would you eat?
you're not going.
Harold say something, he's too young,
look at him, he's packing.
You can't go without a spare pair of trousers
how can he carry a bag like that for 20 miles a day?
Stop him Harold
what would you do in the evening?
you need to eat, you get ill if you don't eat
take a tin of beans, you can always eat beans

Harold, stop him.

There's the chicken, take the chicken
if you're taking a tin of beans, take 2
he's thirteen Harold, go next year
wait till next year, they won't have banned the bomb
by then,
believe me. There'll be another march, go on that one.
You must keep eating fresh fruit.
And you like dates. He's always liked dates, hasn't he
Harold?

Just squeeze them in down the side of the bag.
Couldn't he wait till the last day
when we'll be there?

We can all go to Trafalgar Square together
Harold have you got the chicken?
Just because it's Easter doesn't mean it's warm.
It can snow at Easter, wear the string vest.
Who's organised the coaches?
Do we know these people Harold?
One orange! Take five. And raisins.
He's 13. It's ridiculous. He can't go.
Keep the chicken wrapped.
Phone us if you need more food.
Goodbye.

Picture: Courtesy of CND archives



Avrum's overcoat

Once upon a time – no, not as long ago as that – I should say years and years ago. Well, more exactly some time in the thirties (don't make me out a liar for a few years more or less), they were sitting around the dominoes table in the social room of the Garment Workers' Union, sipping lemon tea and nibbling kichelech and they got round to arguing about who was the best tailor they'd ever come across like others argue about the best centre forward or the best violinist. My Uncle Max was there and of course he said, 'I know who was the best tailor ever!' and he told them what he's told us so many times that we could tell it along with him.

Was Avrum Plotnik a great tailor! He could fit a jacket for you like you'd been poured into it, make a nobody look like a somebody. His wife, Yetta swore that in a room full of people she could pick out a Plotnik jacket. Maybe, maybe. But if he was a tailor in a million it didn't stop him from being poor. There weren't many people around any more who'd pay good money for a suit of fourteen ounce wool, with hand-stitched edges, hand-sewn button-holes and three fittings into the bargain. There wasn't that kind of money about. So even the flash boys along the Whitechapel Road and the frumme whitebeards in the schul would wear their suits for much longer or, more likely, buy ready-mades from the Fifty Shilling tailors by Aldgate Station like the goyim who didn't know any better.

So Avrum was beginning to despair of ever making a decent living. And he had even started talking to Yetta in the evenings about turning his hand to something else – a fabrics stall in the market, selling drapery from door to door on the never-never, even taking a job as a schlepper in Cousin Solly's shop in the Lane. A tear or two was shed but in the finish he couldn't bring himself to part with his beloved sewing machine, tailor's dummy, the big pressing irons, the brass-handled shears and his boxes of flat, sharp-edged chalks.

It happened that at this very time Yankel Goldfarb made a killing. I should tell you that Yankel Goldfarb was a bit of a mystery. When anyone asked what he did for a living he'd give a bit of a smile and say, 'I buy a bit and I sell a bit, I buy and I sell.' Suspicious people said, 'God knows

where he gets that dreck he hawks around. Not from the Houndsditch Warehouse, that's for sure.' Suddenly Yankel was in the money. No one knew how. There was talk of bankrupt stock but no one knew for sure. He moved from his house in Varden Street to Golders Green. Like everyone said, he'd become a ganzer macher, a big shot. All of a sudden there's his picture in the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Die Zeit* as the well-known businessman, Y. Goldfarb, making a donation to the Jewish old people's home in Brighton or opening a new synagogue in Finchley. Eventually he was in the daily papers, laughing with politicians, footballers and men in DJs with smiles like chainsaws. If you looked very closely at the pictures and you knew anything about such things, you might say, 'He may be a bit of gunuf but he knows how to choose a tailor' and if Yetta happened to be there she'd say, 'Of course he does. That's a Plotnik suit. Anyone can see that.' Yes, it was true. Plotnik had become Goldfarb's tailor.

When Goldfarb made his killing that nobody asks too many questions about these days, and began mixing with the high and mighty, he realised that he had to change a thing or two, to talk differently, to walk differently and to dress differently. The talking and walking he paid good money to make English. But when it came to clothes he knew just what to do about them. He wasn't going to be conned into rushing off to Saville Row. A good East End tailor it had to be.

He employed at that time a kind of secretary, agent, public relations man, sniffer out of trouble, legal eagle. He'd taken him straight from college, licked him into shape and showed him a thing or two they don't teach you at Oxford. He learnt fast so that press men and a politician or two got a bit jumpy when they spoke to him. We don't have to get nervous about him because he's going to leave this story very soon and Goldfarb won't be around much longer either.

Goldfarb had noticed that his right-hand man wore suits that were the envy of even the most well-heeled of his – what did he call them? – business associates. One day he said to him, – Stephen, my boy, that suit you're wearing. Tell me who made it.

**A short
story by
Harold
Rosen**

**From
Troublesome
Boy (English and
Media Centre,
£6.95)**

Plotnik, Goldfarb put an arm round his shoulder, you want to keep this job? Do me a favour – think a bit bigger...

– You wouldn't know him, Mr. Goldfarb.
– Did I ask you if I knew him? Who is this needle-pusher and why are you making such a secret about it?

– Mr. Goldfarb, you know very well my people come from Old Montague Street. So why shouldn't I know a good tailor? He's a relative of sorts, lives in Mount Street behind the London Hospital. When I had my first long-trouser suit (my barmitzvah, of course) my mother said, 'It's Avrum Plotnik or nobody'. I should tell you, though, he's just a poor little tailor who works out of his front room.

– Stephen, the time it takes you to spit out an answer to a simple question I could do ten thousand quids worth of business.

So that's how Avrum got called to Goldfarb's office in Holborn and stood in front of a desk you could have played table tennis on.

– A double-breasted suit, Mr. Goldfarb? Six button jacket? Contrast silk lining? A smart charcoal flannel? Inch-and-a-half turn ...?

– Plotnik, Plotnik, Goldfarb put an arm round his shoulder, you want to keep this job? Do me a favour – think a bit bigger. It's a whole wardrobe I'm asking you to make and I'm not talking about cabinet-making.

A whole wardrobe turned out to be five suits, two winter overcoats, one spring overcoat, sports jackets, a blazer, trousers galore. Avrum rushed to and fro with sample swatches of cloth and put them on Goldfarb's desk – cashmeres, serges, meltons, gabardines, corduroys, worsteds, barathea, cavalry twills, Norfolk tweeds, Harris tweeds, donegal tweeds, in pin-stripes, dog-tooth, Lovat, herringbone, pepper-and-salt and checks. Goldfarb banged his desk, jutted his jaw and browbeat Avrum as he browbeat everyone else.

– Don't forget, he said, I can buy tailors like you two-a-penny. The East End's lousy with them. They'd give an arm and a leg to make me a waistcoat. They'd sell their mothers for the whole wardrobe. So don't bring me shmutterers I wouldn't be seen dead in. And no more hairy tweeds that make me look like a gorilla.

Avrum held his tongue. He knew by now that when Goldfarb had finished throwing his weight about he'd make a choice. And that's how he got the commission for the wardrobe and I don't mean cabinet-making. For the first time in his life he was making good money. In fact, once Goldfarb started wearing

his suits he couldn't resist boasting about his tailor and Avrum got more orders than he could cope with. One day he came home from a fitting and Yetta cleared a space in the front room he worked in. She needed to. There were bolts of cloth higgledy-piggledy on the sideboard, the table was covered in brown paper patterns and there was wadding and canvas all over the chairs. On the mantelpiece were rows and rows of cotton reels and white boxes of buttons, black, brown leather and brass sewn onto cards. The floor was covered in snippings and clippings and the tailor's dummy looked at them from a corner wearing a half-finished jacket covered in white basing stitches. Yetta brushed a space clear and put out some food.

– Good tailoring never came from an empty belly, she said, so enough work for one day. Have some borsht. Half way through eating Avrum stopped.

– You know something, Yetta? I've made enough with my needle and shears (and I haven't forgotten your felling and basting and button-holing) to do something I've wanted to do ever since I became a master tailor.

– You mean go mad and go to Brighton for the day and eat like a horse at Mrs. Levi's restaurant?

– No need to mock, Yetta. We can go any time we like and for a fortnight maybe. But you know what they say, 'Who shaves the barber? For thirty years I've made overcoats enough for a regiment of soldiers. To make myself a quality overcoat there's never been a time. That one I wear came down to me from my great uncle Izzy, uvver sholem. Quality, yes, but I never liked the style. That belt with the big buckle and the buttons like cartwheels. And patch pockets! Makes me look like a bookie or a boxing promoter. So I tell you what. I'm going to make an overcoat for myself like you never saw.

– Why not? said Yetta. If that gangster Goldfarb can have umpteen overcoats hanging up to try and make him look like Lord Muck, can't an honest tailor have one overcoat to make him feel like a real mensch on a winter's day?

– Goldfarb's no gangster. Shady dealings, maybe. Driving hard bargains when he's put the frighteners on, faulty goods sold as perfect, funny money, but he...

– Anyone who makes that kind of money by me is a gangster.

– Forget that momser. I'm thinking about that overcoat already.

It's a whole wardrobe I'm asking you to make and I'm not talking about cabinet-making

he sipped his lemon tea, closed his eyes and sighed with pleasure.

So Avrum Plotnik made himself an overcoat, an overcoat like a work of art. You could have hung it in a gallery. There's not a lot I can tell you about it because a beautiful overcoat you wouldn't hang in a gallery, would you? No, you have to see it in action with a person inside, moving along the street. In any case what no one would actually see was the love and joy which went into every stitch. I remember Avrum's bitter curses in the summers when he made overcoats for the winter trade. At the end of the day his arms ached and his hands trembled. But the making of his own beloved overcoat drew not a complaint from him. This much I can tell you about it. It was made of the finest dark brown melton with a Prussian collar, raglan sleeves, turn-up cuffs and double stitched seams. The lining was a dark red shot silk and the buttons leather knots and I can tell you when he first wore it, heads turned. He wore it everywhere, to school, of course, to barmitzvahs, to weddings, to funerals. In fact he wore it whenever he left the house. He wore it even when he went up the street to buy an evening paper. He loved that overcoat so much he could scarcely bear to take it off when he came indoors. He sweltered in it till late spring and when summer came he couldn't wait for the cool days of autumn.

Small wonder, then, that the day came when the overcoat began to show signs of wear. The nap began to go, the cuffs frayed and the collar was stained with sweat. The hem was discoloured and loose threads hung from it. Avrum could not admit this to himself. He walked about in his coat as though it still shone in its first glory. But when he caught sight of himself in shop windows he quickly turned his eyes away and poor Yetta, she was torn. She didn't need telling how Avrum adored that overcoat but she was ashamed that he walked about looking shabby and neglected. Mrs. Michaelson – who else? said to her one day,

– What's the matter with Plotnik? He walks around looking like an alter schnorrer begging for pennies. A real nebbich, and him a tailor good enough for that Yankel Goldfarb.

That was the last straw. That day she held up

Avrum's coat in front of him.

– It's no good. This coat is so threadbare it's not fit to be made into shmutterers for cleaning the floor. You waiting for it to fall off your back, or for the lobbies to shout after you in the street? Come on, admit it.

– I admit it. I admit it.

He took it from her and was ready to throw it away. He picked it up and looked it over carefully from top to bottom, from back to front.

– It's true. It's finished, he said. Well, not quite. From this I could make a decent jacket.

He cut out the areas which were not worn or stained and from them there emerged a single-breasted jacket. A bit thick for a jacket, maybe, but for Avrum it was a kind of resurrection of his wonderful overcoat. He wore the jacket just as he had the overcoat, everyday, everywhere and for everything. He kept it going for as long as he could. When it was out at elbow he made neat oval leather patches and he sewed narrow leather strips round the frayed cuffs. But its time also came. It was a sad sight, dilapidated, frimpy and shapeless. Yetta said quietly to him,

– Avrum, the jacket is done for. Don't go round looking like a down-and-out.

– You're right, Yetta. It's only fit for Stern the rag-picker.

He took it from its hook and he was just going to stuff it into a carrier bag when he took another look at it. I dunno, he thought, done for? Well, not quite. From this, I could make a decent waistcoat. He took some rough measurements with the span of his hand. He then rescued enough cloth for the two front panels of the waistcoat. That's all he needed, for the back was made of new black twill.

Well, the waistcoat didn't see a year out. The bits he'd salvaged were not as good as they looked. If you'd have held them up to the light you could have read a newspaper through them and between you and me, Avrum had a bit of a paunch so lockshen soup got dribbled down the front and the other shmaly spillings left their trademarks. Not that Yetta and he didn't try to get these embarrassments cleaned off, but that only meant that the cloth got more and more worn and finally so shabby that Yetta had to say,

– Avrum, that waistcoat had died. Bury it.

Avrum, with a needle you can work miracles but the same I can't let you sit and daven in that.

Avrum was silent at first and then took a last look at it. Take, he said, it's all over with it. Then he took another look

Well, not quite. From this I could make a decent little skull cap, a yamalka with a strong lining.

And that's what he did.

Mind you, the cap didn't last very long – how could it? It had served its time and reached the end of its days. Yetta said,

– Avrum, with a needle you can work miracles but all the same I can't let you sit and daven in that. For praying and reading the holy books you must be covered right. How you can bear to put the praying shawl over it I don't know.

– You're right, said Avrum, the cap must go. Its duties are finished Well, not quite. From this I could make a decent little cloth-covered button.

So he clipped out just enough to make a button. He pinned the button to the lapel of his jacket where he could always see it out of the corner of his eye. He loved that little button. sometimes he'd rub it with his thumb as though it brought him good luck or warded off the evil eye.

But he couldn't go on rubbing it forever. It began to fray away. The threads parted and stuck out round the edges and the blackish metal underneath showed through till it wasn't a cloth button any more. Avrum didn't wait for Yetta to protest. he unpinned the button and held it in the middle of his palm for a long time. Then he said to it,

– Little button, little survivor, in spite of everything you must go, for this is the end of the road. Well, not quite. From this button could I make a story! And that's the story I've just told you.

The Story of the Story

There is always the story of the story, even several stories.

We had been at a storyteller's gathering, Betty Rosen and I, and had been in different groups. In the car going home she had given me a minimalist version of a story she had heard told by Patrick Ryan, a well-known storyteller. It had no specific geographical or ethnic setting but I felt instantly on hearing the very condensed version of the story of the tailor and his overcoat that it was asking to be made into a much longer version about a Jewish tailor in the East End where I grew up. I had about ten lines scribbled

in the car in a very small notebook. This became a story told by my fictitious Uncle Max about the master tailor, Avrum Plotnik.

I was honour bound to send my version to Patrick Ryan. he responded warmly and, as I have since discovered, typically. he told me his story of the story of the story: 'I heard David Holt tell it at a workshop for teachers at the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago. David told me that he'd learned the story and the methodology of his workshops from a woman named Nancy Schimmel. In the late seventies Nancy wrote a book on storytelling which became a sort of bible, Just Enough to Make a Story....'

I should have chased up the book but procrastination took over. Almost a year later an American woman came to see us. She was engaged in a personal and serious investigation of storytelling for a piece she was writing. We spent a sunny afternoon in the garden sharing hunches, ideas, pleasures. It turned out that she was also about to embark on a doctorate and when she returned home she wrote and asked me if I would be one of her supervisors. The letter contained relevant documents. She threw in for good measure little gift, Nancy Schimmel's Introduction to the book Patrick Ryan had mentioned. That rang a bell, of course. Her economic version of the story begins:

In a village there once lived a poor tailor. He had made overcoats for many people, but he had never made one for himself, though an overcoat was just what he wanted.

and ends:

... he could see there was just enough left of that button to make a story so he made story out of it and I just told it to you.

She goes on to tell us that she first met the story when 'I heard someone sing a Yiddish folk song at a concert and explain in English what the song says.' At this point I remembered a book my son had given me, an anthology of Yiddish folk song, *Voices of the People*. I searched through it and found that it contained the song but, strangely, only the first and last verses. Here's the translation of the last one:

*I have nothing left the ancient stuff
It hasn't a whole stitch in it
Therefore I made up my mind
To make a little song out of nothing*

Now you know why Avrum's Overcoat is not my story and why it is my story. No matter what the story, that's always the way of it.

Transfer of responsibility

Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948

by Nur Masalha

For many years, the West accepted the Israeli version of the Palestinian refugee problem. This version blamed the Palestinians for their own plight. It argued that some 750,000 had fled Palestine in 1948, after orders from their leaders to evacuate Palestine to facilitate the advance of the invading Arabs.

While always questioned by the Palestinians' supporters, this propagandist myth was systematically demolished by numerous Israeli revisionist historians in the late 1980s. They used recently declassified Central Zionist Archives to demonstrate that many, if not most of the Palestinian refugees fled under overt Israeli pressure, including direct military expulsions.

In his *Expulsion of the Palestinians*,

Masalha helps to place this debate in a broader historical context. He maintains that the concept of 'transfer' – organised removal of the indigenous population of Palestine to neighbouring countries – has occupied a central position in Zionist thought since its inception. Thus, Zionism's founder, Theodore Herzl, hoped the penniless, native Palestinian Arab population could be 'spirited across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, whilst denying it any employment in our own country'.

Masalha demonstrates that the concept of transfer was endorsed by both Labour and right-wing revisionist Zionists. Some form of transfer was advocated by Zionist leaders as diverse as Israeli prime ministers Ben-Gurion, Moshe Shertok and Golda Meir, the first Israeli President, Chaim Weizmann, socialists Arthur Ruppin, Nahman Syrkin and Berl Katznelson, Jewish National Fund Chairman, Menahem Ussishkin, and revisionist leaders Jabotinsky and Eliahu Ben-Horin.

Support for transfer reflected the Zionist movement's denial of a distinct

Palestinian national identity. Zionist leaders, such as Ben-Gurion, said the Palestinians had no historical ties to Palestine and belonged to a larger Arab nation which happened to reside in that particular country. They could be shifted to neighbouring Arab territories without undue hardship. References were made to the precedent of the allegedly successful Greco-Turkish transfer, which had occurred under the aegis of the League of Nations after the first world war.

Following the 1937 Peel Commission, which recommended partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, the leading organs of the Zionist movement – the worldwide Zionist Congress and the Jewish Agency Executive – agreed the idea of transfer with little dissent. The only critic was the left-wing, kibbutz-based Hashomer Hatzair movement. It objected on moral and political grounds. Masalha shows that transfer was a natural concomitant to partition. Otherwise, the proposed Jewish state would have been left with a sizeable Arab minority, only just smaller than the Jewish majority. The Zionist movement later formed a population transfer committee, led by Yosef Weitz, Land Settlement Director of the Jewish National Fund. The committee was instructed to devise practical ways to transfer the Palestinian Arabs.

Perhaps the most important and controversial part of the book deals with the 1948 Palestinian exodus. It declares that the exodus was 'the culmination of over a half-century of effort, plans and (in the end) brute force'. According to Masalha, the Israeli army's Plan D inspired policies that caused the flight and direct expulsion of tens of thousands of Palestinian Arabs. Masalha contends that Plan D involved the practical and deliberate implementation of the long-planned concept of transfer.

Not all revisionist historians accept Masalha's thesis that the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs was governed by premeditated plan or design. In a recent *Journal of Palestine Studies* debate, for example, leading Israeli revisionist histo-



Mother and child standing on their destroyed home in the Occupied Territories.

rian, Benny Morris, claimed no evidence indicates a systematic, blanket Israeli policy to expel Arabs. In his view, the fact that 100,000-160,000 Arabs were left in Israel after the 1948 war and expulsions were implemented haphazardly, inconsistently and without direction from any central authority, proves there was no arranged master plan to purge Palestine of its Arab inhabitants.

Certainly, there is no demonstrated connection between the Zionist movement's earlier transfer plans and expulsions during the 1948 war. Nevertheless, Israeli policy makers, including some involved in the earlier transfer discussions, such as Weitz, keenly exploited the war to effect what Weitzmann called 'a miraculous cleaning of the land'. Weitz played a key role in ensuring the Palestinian refugees were allowed back to their homes.

The expulsion of the Palestinians – premeditated or otherwise – presents Jewish supporters of Israel like myself with a clear moral challenge. How can we support a state founded on the deliberate and often brutal dispossession of another people? Yet, perhaps this is too simplistic a question to answer. It is being asked in a context far divorced from the passion of the original events.

Balanced judgement of Zionist-Israeli intentions in 1948 needs also to consider the motives of the Palestinian Arab side during the war. Without declassified Arab archives, we do not know what the Palestinians would have done to the Jews if they had been successful in that war. We know one of the few Arab victories in the war, at Kfar Etzion, resulted in a massacre of the surviving Jewish settlers. Clearly, the Palestinian Arab side was not faultless.

While the concept of transfer is considered morally and ethically repugnant today, perhaps further study is needed on the mainstream Western attitude towards the transfer of indigenous populations during this period. Certainly, the British Labour Party's declared support for transfer in 1944, documented by Masalha, demonstrates that much Western liberal and even socialist opinion regarded the transfer of third world natives as a legitimate enterprise.

However, there is a clear moral blindness involved in much Jewish-Israeli discourse about this issue. Even today, few mainstream Jews/Israelis acknowledge Israel's substantial responsibility for the Palestinian exodus. Some are still attempting to blame and belittle the victims of this tragedy. One can only hope the current Israeli-PLO negotiations will resolve this issue in a fair and just manner.

Philip Mendes

Rebel in ermine

Emanuel Shinwell:
An Authorised Biography
Peter Slowe
Pluto Press

Perhaps the nearest Britain came to revolution in the 20th century was on the Clyde in 1919. Industrial organisation there had been successful in getting the government to make concessions during the war. Now, as it came to a close, the Clyde Workers Committee was set up, in order to organise a strike for a 40-hour week. The expectation was that other areas would follow suit. At the very least the government would be forced to concede their demands; at the most, well this was 1919 and revolution was in the air.

By Friday 31 January, the fifth day of the strike, 100,000 were out. Six thousand of these packed into George Square, where Emanuel Shinwell, chair of the committee and president of Glasgow Trades Council, led a deputation to see the Lord Provost to receive an answer from the government to demands telegraphed two days earlier.

However, Lloyd George had no intention of following Kerensky's example. As the Lord Provost prevaricated about telegraphing London, troops moved into the square. By the end of the afternoon 60 demonstrators had been injured (two people died in subsequent disturbances) and 12,000 troops had taken over the city centre. Shinwell, along with others, was convicted of incitement to riot and sentenced to five months in prison.

While in prison, Shinwell obviously decided that career prospects for a British would-be Lenin were somewhat limited. Five years later, he was in Ramsay MacDonald's first government as Minister for Mines. He served in every Labour government until 1951, and remained a member of parliament until 1970, when he was 85.

In Peter Slowe's affectionate biography, Shinwell emerges as slightly raffish, not above getting involved in violence while an organiser for the dock workers union. As a Labour MP from a firmly working class background, he did not

trust those like Dalton and Gaitskell who came via public school and Oxbridge.

To what extent was he a Jewish socialist? Early in his career, he joined the general tailoring union in Glasgow as opposed to a specifically Jewish union which organised the rest of the workforce, earning the sack for his pains. He explained that he 'could not see what your race or religion had to do with getting a few more bob a week'.

He would not tolerate antisemitism and once perforated the ear drum of an oafish Tory, Commander Bower, who advised him to 'go back to Poland' during a House of Commons debate.

But during his later years he became a fierce Zionist, even though when he was approached by Selig Brodetsky to do work for the Zionist movement, in 1932, Shinwell, then unemployed having recently lost his seat in the general election, walked out in disgust when it was

'Shinwell once perforated the ear drum of an oafish Tory who advised him to "go back to Poland" during a Commons debate'

made clear that he would be expected to work for nothing but the *yikhes* (honour). But by the 1950s he was supporting Israeli policy to the hilt, including a justification of Israel's killing 66 Jordanians in a border village.

A non-Zionist who became a member of the 'Israel is always right' brigade and a tyro revolutionary who ended up making rambling speeches in the House of Lords (he in fact resigned the Labour whip in the House of Lords in 1983, at the age of 98, over defence policy), his many changes of direction emerge in Slowe's hands as going with the course of history. I would have liked more analysis. Was there ultimately no 'third way', for example, between Shinwell's course and that of his fellow Clydsider and Independent Labour Party member Jimmy Maxton, who ended up an isolated figure in a disaffiliated ILP reduced to three seats?

Shinwell emerges as a consistent bit player, rather than a protagonist, who was shaped by the movements of the 20th century rather than shaping them. Neither a theorist (like Laski or Crosland) nor an administrator (like Morrison) he nonetheless deserves an affectionate footnote in history, if only for the damage he inflicted on Commander Bower's eardrum.

Michael Heiser



Not just a family affair

Between Family Lines
Cultural Partnerships,
The Art of Change and WAF

Between Family Lines is a tape slide show, produced by Cultural Partnerships and The Art of Change in collaboration with Women against Fundamentalism (WAF). It weaves the stories of five women from diverse religious backgrounds – Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, (Irish) Catholic and (Iranian) Muslim – into a luminous tapestry of cultural affirmation and defiance. What has pleased us in WAF is that it represents in an elegant and accessible manner our political position – boldly, and at the same time doing full justice to a complex argument.

At a time when traditional family values are being promoted as a solution to society's ills, it graphically illustrates the oppressiveness of a variety of family structures, particularly when bolstered with patriarchal values incorporated from orthodox religions. It promotes the right of women to be autonomous and self-directing; at the same time it illustrates how women can establish richly sustaining households for themselves and their children, with or without partners.

The show goes beyond the classic 'cultural conflict' thesis about minority ethnic families which poses only two stark choices for women – total conformity, or

total isolation from family and community. Without disguising the pain and loss involved in change, it represents culture as a dynamic process, which women can help to re-define and re-create. Most importantly, it illustrates the central role of new political identities – forged in action against domestic violence, for reproductive rights, and for political prisoners – in the process of cultural transformation. It is a heart warming piece, but also sharp and controversial. It will make middle-of-the-road multi-culturalists uneasy because of its devastating critique of aspects of 'minority' cultures and religions. At the same time, it will puncture complacency by its refusal to see minority ethnic women only as victims, and by its emphasis on the possibility of change through political action.

How does it do all this, in only 25 minutes? The narrative structure has the looseness of a dream or of memory, weaving one story into another according to a pattern of flexibly defined themes – memories of childhood; first conflicts with the family about its narrowly defined roles for young women; exile and isolation; new self-definitions and identities. The story of Kiranjit Alluwalla (who killed her husband after years of abuse, was convicted of murder and released last year after a remarkable political campaign) is the single most powerful one, in its depiction of pain and of bitter-sweet triumph. Indeed, so resonant is her story

that there is a danger of its overwhelming the whole production, not because of its treatment here, but because of its intrinsic drama and fame. The other stories are less extraordinary, but all trace the same elements of rebellion, loss, and recovery, leading to contemporary lives full of cultural and/or political creativity. Not so much the conventional 'happy ending' (though there are elements of that) as the hopeful suspense of 'to be continued...' Ann, the Irish character, sums up her life with cheerful relish: 'it's struggle struggle all the way!'

This is not a video (although there are plans to produce one from the same material) and the style is not that of conventional documentary. For example, we do not see the women's faces as they are talking; rather their voices blend with music, and with each other's, in a rich variety of mood, tone and accent. The slides are an eclectic mix of the sacred and the profane: cities and houses, religious icons, household shrines, the paraphernalia of domestic life – saucepans, clothes, musical instruments and old photographs; and later on, as the women move beyond the immediately domestic, political banners, dramatic news headlines, community centres and communal activities which bridge the private and the public spheres, the social and the political. *Jewish Socialist* readers, for example, will probably recognise members of Royte Klesmores, the secular Jewish feminist band, and the liberationist tone of what Dena, the Jewish character, calls 'our own version of the seder'.

One of the show's pleasures for me was the visual evocation of the half-remembered rituals of an Irish Catholic girlhood. For many viewers from religious backgrounds, the shock of recognition, through a transforming frame, will be savoured. The symbols of worlds that may be unfamiliar, also, are illuminated and made meaningful by the process of thematic linking – through the blend of voices. But beyond the discursive level, most of the visuals are simply and stunningly beautiful, from the opening slides of the starry Iranian sky onwards.

This is a show for many audiences. Although just completed, it has been shown to the acclaim of a group of Western and Eastern European feminists gathered in Turkey, it has been submitted to the International Year of the Family exhibition in the Barbican, there are plans to show it to schoolgirls in Southall. An exhibition to accompany the tape-slide show is in preparation. We wish it well on its travels.

Clara Connolly

● The creators, Loraine Leeson (071-702 8802) and Karen Merkel (071-254 8217) can be contacted for bookings.

Faith healing

**A Very Light Sleeper –
the persistence and
dangers of antisemitism**
Runnymede Commission
on Antisemitism
Runnymede Trust, £7.50

A very light sleeper – the persistence and dangers of antisemitism is the report of the working party set up by the Runnymede Trust, chaired by the Reverend Richard Harries 'to examine the nature, causes, and consequences of current anti-semitism in Britain and to make policy recommendations as appropriate'. It is a mixed blessing.

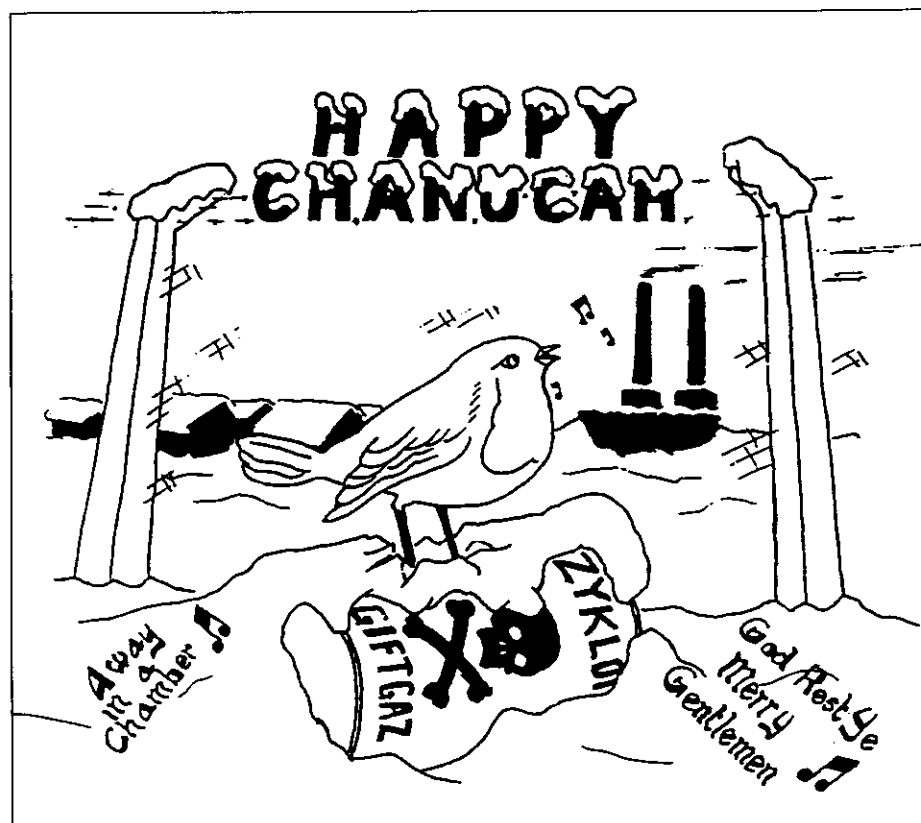
The report makes a distinction between three main types of discourse, and terms these respectively as anti-Judaism, antisemitic racism, and anti-Zionism. But though it points out that these are three different kinds of discourse, the report proceeds to entangle them in such a way that it leaves only a grudging space to oppositional and critical perspectives on Zionism and religion.

It is not that anti-Zionism, or anti-Judaism cannot be coded or explicit expressions of antisemitism, but when they are, they should be judged in this light, rather than as illegitimate in themselves.

The report concedes this, but every time it does it hedges its bets: 'In theory at least anti-Zionism is not synonymous with antisemitism, nor do antisemitic premises automatically or inevitably underpin an anti Zionist position' or 'criticism of the government of Israel frequently appear (but of course are not necessarily) coded expressions of antisemitism'.

One line in the report recognises that 'quite a large proportion of Jews were opposed to Zionism before the creation of the State of Israel.' This is disingenuous, since what changed the balance was that the mass of European Jews, the opponents themselves, were destroyed, rather than the State of Israel being created.

In the same way the report's emphasis on the place of Judaism and its central recommendation that legislation should be introduced against 'incitement



The hoax card was sent to Jewish organisations and prominent individuals in 1992.

to religious hatred' does nothing to validate a diversity of Jewish identities, including secular, lesbian or gay, often struggled for in a critical relation to religious definitions of being a Jew. This emphasis in the report looks to interfaith dialogue and networks, to religious values and to education in order to address antisemitism. In these terms there is also a proposal to establish a commission to look at anti-Muslim prejudice 'Islamophobia' in Britain'.

These concerns reflect the make up of the Runnymede Commission, though conflicts are evident but left unresolved. The perspective of the Board of Deputies is clearly present through the contribution of Neville Nagler. The review names among others the Socialist Workers Party as antisemitic 'in effect' and places a touching faith in the strengthening of liberal democracy.

Whatever their faults, when push comes to shove I would rather call on the SWP for solidarity against antisemitism than an interfaith network or the centre for study of Jewish and Christian rela-

tions, which are the only sort of contacts given in the report.

Reported antisemitic incidents rose by 85% in Britain between 1984 and 1992 from 153 in 1984 to 284 in 1992, (this is clearly an underestimate): Physical attacks, desecrations of cemeteries and meeting places, graffiti, books, pamphlets, phone calls and letters, as well as 'Holocaust revisionism' gaining ground. This is the background to a necessary elucidation and opposition to antisemitism, and the linking of it, to general opposition to racism.

The strength of report is that it does link antisemitism with other forms of racism saying 'The struggle against racism needs to be holistic and indivisible, an attack on one minority group is attack on all.' It presents current and historical material clearly and looks at a wider European context as well as Britain. It is useful if read with a critical eye.

Simon Lynn

● Available from the Runnymede Trust, 11 Princent Street, London E1 6QH, £7.50.

Telling stories

**Troublesome Boy:
Stories and Articles**
Harold Rosen
English and Media Centre

I enjoyed this book and have never read one quite like it. The first part contains a number of autobiographical sketches from Rosen's childhood. Then come two Jewish folktales reminiscent of Peretz. The last four pieces are scholarly articles about writing and autobiography. It's a strange mix but it works brilliantly.

I thought of Harold Rosen as a distinguished Professor of Education, and it took a while to identify the mischievous boy from the early chapters with the serious, progressive and provocative man who I once heard speak at a conference.

As a boy, Rosen stole from shops, hated school, misbehaved in class and was punished. Come to think of it, I hated school, often misbehaved, and couldn't put my hand over my heart and claim that I have never stolen from a shop. Maybe honest autobiography is uncomfortable reading precisely because it reminds us of things in our own past which we would rather forget.

Rosen's mother was an active Communist in the East End and his description of what it was like growing up in the Party makes poignant reading. What sticks in my mind is a question which confused him as a child and, he

writes, still troubles him. His mother tried to keep him out of official, establishment ceremonies like Empire Day, telling him that May Day was 'ours' – meaning something belonging to the working class and not imposed from above. What young Harold couldn't figure out was why he was the only child

**'I thought of Rosen
as a distinguished
Professor and it took a
while to identify him
as the mischievous
boy from the early
chapters'**

who celebrated 'our' day and rejected 'theirs'. It's a grim reminder of how working class culture was crushed and marginalised by people who knew exactly what they were doing.

The eloquent, scholarly articles at the end of the book seem at first sight to be completely unrelated to the world described at the beginning. The link

soon becomes clear, though. Rosen's initial theme is the importance of storytelling as an act of individual creativity and of social cohesion. But going beyond the sociologists he cites in support of this view, Rosen argues that narration – especially oral narration – can be an act of resistance to oppression and a crucial step in liberation.

My first reaction was that this thesis overestimates the importance of cultural politics as opposed to real politics. On reflection, I think that's a wrong reaction. What the British left too often lacks is precisely the creativity and solidarity which Rosen talks about. We need to tell each other our stories so that we can build up solid relationships and achieve real unity.

I opened this book with a one-dimensional picture of Harold Rosen. I finished it with a picture of a real person, a Jewish socialist and teacher, and I learned and relearned some important lessons in the process. I liked the book and its author: he can come and tell stories in my house any time.

Raf Salkie

● Available from the English and Media Centre, 136 Charlton Street, London NW1 1RX, price £6.99.

Cold comfort

The Sandbeetle
Zina Rohan
Hodder & Stoughton, £15.99

As people are tipped out of their homes and countries in the post-Cold War struggle to assert power, grab resources and redraw borders, more stable governments are becoming less and less willing to recognise the concept of 'refugee'. The British government has virtually redefined the term to mean illegal-immigrant-cum-drug-smuggler, and has successfully separated the 'problem' of those trying to get in from the tragedy of those escaping from Bosnia, Somalia, Turkey or wherever.

The Sandbeetle, Zina Rohan's second

novel describing the dislocated life of a refugee from Nazi Germany, is a reminder of Britain's long and dishonourable tradition of hostility to those who need a safe place to go to.

Leo Beck, a Jewish child sent by his parents from Berlin to board with a solicitous but old-fashioned English couple in London, tells his own story: how he learnt to become a young Englishman, to do well at school and to minimise the memory of his origins: 'I had ceased thinking about my parents except when my mother's letters arrived, like hospital visitors, not unwelcome, but disturbing our closed community.'

But with the war came greater disturbance; internment and deportation to Australia as an enemy alien along with an assortment of other equally confused

and undeserving victims of British official idiocy. With subtlety, sensitivity and an eye for the absurd, Zina Rohan conveys both the vulnerability and the strength of a young man growing up and forging relationships through these extraordinary events. She's an engaging story teller, weaving humour, tragedy and anger through the fabric of her characters' lives, while enabling them to challenge the political and ideological roots of their predicament.

If anything, the author has tried to cover too much ground in this novel. Towards the end she seems to be rushing through such a huge volume of material, it could be the basis for another novel. As a result she concertinas too many ideas into too short a space and some of the dialogue tips over into polemic. But this is offset by her humour and gift for narrative. The result is a compelling and moving book about an unedifying episode in British history that needs to be exposed.

Julia Bard



Seamen waiting to see the doctor at Well Street Seamen's Hospital, 1881.

London's pride and prejudice

The Peopling of London Museum of London

There is a common misconception that large-scale immigration to London is principally a post-Second World War phenomenon. Jewish Londoners know differently since most can trace their descent to the mass immigration from the Eastern end of Europe to the East End of London after 1881.

One of the main strengths of this imaginatively planned exhibition is that it shows how London has received waves of immigrants in different historical periods since the Romans.

The historical narrative is brought to life through a stimulating and engaging use of artifacts, posters, family trees and recordings of life stories on phones and video that span different generations and an array of different communities.

Throughout, it confronts two abiding myths that continue to soak up the defensive energies of anti-racists: one, that Britain (and thereby London) has always 'welcomed' immigrants; and two, that immigrants can be usefully divided into 'political' and 'economic' migrants – in other words – 'deserving' refugees from persecution and 'opportunistic' seeking material improvement.

The exhibition clearly demonstrates

that communities have come here, often directly recruited, under strict conditions and for specific purposes. Particular skills have been 'welcomed' rather than the people that possess them. The very presence of immigrants has consistently been greeted by an element of hostility which under certain conditions has been fanned to murderous proportions.

London's first black political leader – Olaudah Equiano – was born in Nigeria in 1745 and shipped to London as a slave.

London's Jewish history from the 11th century, is well represented and shows how political and economic motives and pressures often overlap. Having endured substantial exclusion and enjoyed certain privileges, Jews were persecuted and then expelled from England in 1290. In the mid-17th century, the Jews were invited by Cromwell to return but again it was to fulfil particular economic roles and the social and political impediments of exclusion remained in force.

The more the exhibition reveals how and why different communities have settled in London from across the globe the harder it becomes to draw any neat line dividing 'economic' and 'political' migrants. Britain has undoubtedly provided a port for many refugees refused asylum elsewhere. Indeed, the French word 'refugee' entered the English language with the arrival of persecuted French Protestants (Huguenots).

All of the immigrant communities who arrived in substantial numbers are represented here in a level of detail that validates their history and struggles rather than just acknowledges their geographical journeys. Although sections of the Tory Party continue to treat African, Caribbean and Asian communities as transient migrants, the exhibition traces their contribution to London life over several centuries, providing fascinating detail about South Asian sailors (Lascars) who began to settle in London in the 1730s.

A contemporary anti-racist discourse that centres on blackness often obscures the existence of various minorities who retain their cohesiveness and sense of identity – such as the Irish or Italians. This exhibition helps us retain a broad perspective about how London has been and continues to be peopled. It does have its weaknesses and omissions though. I could find no reference to London's Gypsy communities who have been part of London life since Elizabethan times.

And there is one very important voice missing. There is evidence of the views of the migrants and their racist detractors but we do not hear the voices of deep-rooted Londoners who regard the changes brought by immigrant communities as beneficial; who recognise that their lives have been culturally enriched. The exhibition presents a very full picture of migrants' contribution to London but it is weaker on its portrayal of the fruits of interaction.

The exhibition goes to considerable lengths to avoid stereotypes and constantly stresses the diverse nature of each community that has come, but it says little about relations within communities after they have arrived. When it explains how Jewish immigration was limited by the 1905 Aliens Act it fails to mention that among the most ardent and hardworking lobbyists for restriction were significant figures in the Anglo-Jewish establishment.

Although the exhibition is a counterblast to ethnic exclusivity it could have presented much more information about the successive racist acts of immigration and nationality legislation passed by both Tories and the Labour Party from 1962 to the present day which continue to divide families.

These criticisms notwithstanding, it is an excellent exhibition that deserves to be widely seen. Following on closely from the Museum's superb exhibition on the suffragettes it seems that some political archaeologists are unearthing treasures close to the heart of the City of London.

David Rosenberg

● The Peopling of London runs until May 15. Further details from 071-600 3699.

Do you remember the spoof aeroplane disaster movie where someone asked the stewardess for some light reading and was given a single sheet of paper about Jewish sporting achievements? Putting Mark Spitz and 40,000 chess players to one side for a moment it is certainly true that 'Jew' and 'sport' seldom go together in word association games. This cannot simply be to do with the difficulty of keeping on a yarmulka while playing rugby or a sheytl while playing hockey, so I turned to *Foul Play: a class analysis of sport* by David Hammond (Ubique, £4.75) to seek enlightenment. But I didn't get any.

There is mention of East End black people escaping poverty through boxing (and correctly pointing out that for every one to succeed countless broken bodies are left who failed) but not of the Jews such as Ted 'Kid' Lewis who preceded them. There is mention of sports clubs keeping out working class people and black people but not of the antisemites who excluded Jews from countless golf clubs. There is discussion of racist taunts, but no mention of the antisemitic chanting when Tottenham are playing.

Please don't think that this columnist is becoming like those who, writing for some Jewish weeklies, see antisemitism whenever Jews are mentioned and whenever they are not mentioned. It's just that: 'Munich 1972 of course witnessed the Palestinians attempt to highlight their grievances to the world...' hardly tells the full story. And the one time an antisemitic act is mentioned it becomes 'anti-semitic', though given the poor proof reading of the book let's not read too much into that. Sorry for the pun but *Foul Play* has little in common with chicken soup.

As it happens, some of the community place all their faith in chicken soup, while others boycott it. If you want to understand why, Adrienne Baker's *The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society: Transitions and Traditions* (Macmillan, £15.99) is a good place to start. Her book is skewed towards a religious, rather than a broader ethnic definition of what it means to be Jewish. This is perhaps reasonable given that the current explosion of Jewish women's activity has been within the formal parts of the community and around the debates about separate women's prayer groups. This may ultimately draw secular and religious women closer together and there are signs of that. However, given the dearth of material available to draw on, Adrienne Baker has been stretched at times beyond her limits in portraying the vast array of experiences.

Newly reissued is the *Penguin Book of Jewish Short Stories* (£6-99). This

ON the shelf

book first came out in 1979 and has been reprinted without changes. This makes Emanuel Litvinoff's introduction seem a little strange (the Soviet what?) but more importantly portrays what will be for many people their first introduction to the Jewish short story as an overwhelmingly male experience. It would be impossible to imagine such a collection without Peretz, Sholem Aleichem and one of the male Singers, but there really is no need to have only two women (Spark and Ozick) represented in a collection of 20 stories.

Searching for an alternative, *America and I: Short Stories by American Jewish Women Writers* (Beacon, £8.95) comes to mind, a useful volume of short stories from throughout this century. With writers such as Grace Paley, Tillie Olsen, Anzie Yeziarska, Susan Fromberg Schaeffer and countless more available, Penguin should realise that they just can't represent women so badly. Maybe the women of Stanmore should set about them.

If you want a bad night's sleep I can heartily recommend *Public Enemies*, a photographic book by Leo Regan (Deutsch, £12.99). This book is a record of a couple years tagging along with hard-core nazi skinheads. The photographs are unpleasant and the text based on interviews with those pictured shows that the people (in the words of Nicholas Mosely's otherwise tedious introduction) 'seem to hate themselves as much as their enemies'.

More interesting reading can be found in *Pacifism and the Jews* by Evelyn Wilcock (from Hawthorn Press, 1 Lansdown Lane, Lansdown, Stroud, £9.99 plus £2 p&p), though the content

is necessarily obscure. Pacifism as a movement has had little influence on the Jewish imagination as compared with mass movements that have developed in opposition to specific wars such as Israel's invasion of the Lebanon. Wilcock explores the rather obscure and individual world of the often religious Jewish pacifist and sheds a little light on the unwanted advances of Nazi sympathisers to the Peace Pledge Union prior to the Second World War.

William Fishman will be very familiar to most *Jewish Socialist* readers, not least for his books on the Jewish East End and I, for one, still find myself moved to tears for a world we have almost lost when reading the beginning of *East End Jewish Radicals*: 'As long as there is one cobbled alley, one undeserted tenement left, which recalls the images of the *chaverim*, I still walk with my father'. *Outsiders and Outcasts* edited by Geoffrey Alderman and Colin Holmes (Duckworth) is a collection of essays in honour of Fishman by fellow academics, covering areas of interest to him. I turned first to the essays on the British Union of Fascists in Hackney, Tony Kushner on how Jew and non-Jew got on in the East End and labour historian John Gorman's own East End memoir. But I am very annoyed at the price: £35.

Turning to *Political Entropy in the Jewish Diaspora* by Benjamin Franks (Pentagon, £1, perhaps to be found in the obscure pamphlet sections of a few leftie bookshops), I find a critique of *Jewish Socialist*: '... blighted by romantic dreams of the past. Fantasising of rebuilding the Bund. This time instead of the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe, it will be made up almost entirely of bearded social workers and well-meaning journalists and teachers.' Shucks, we've been rumbled.

R Buch-Soicher

● All books mentioned or reviewed in *Jewish Socialist* can be ordered from Mushroom Bookshop, 10-12 Heathcote Street, Nottingham, NE1 3AA. Add 10 per cent to the list price for postage or send your credit card details.

FIFTH COLUMN

Be part of the Fifth Column. Send listings (50 words max) to *Jewish Socialist*, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

London JSG meets regularly. Dept LON, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

Nottingham JSG meets regularly. Dept NOT, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

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

Bristol JSG meets regularly. Box 21 Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston St, BS1 5BB.

Manchester Jewish Socialists. Dept MAN, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

South Wales – I wish to meet with other Jews living in South Wales, whatever your upbringing and heritage, whether observant or not, to explore Judaism, Jewish issues and politics. Dept WAL, JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.