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The walk will take approximately 1½ hours and will take place on
Sunday 24th September in the afternoon.

Cost: £4 (£3 unwaged).

Places are limited to 25 on a first come first served basis.

All proceeds will go to the Jewish Socialist Relaunch Appeal.

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affecting the Jewish community, other
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the wider labour movement.

The group works and campaigns with
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members who support our political
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internal discussion bulletin, a frequent
newsletter detailing meetings and
events and can participate fully in our
annual conference and in any aspect of
the group's work.

For further information write to: the
Membership Secretary, Jewish Socialists'
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Sunday 17th September
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How to contact us

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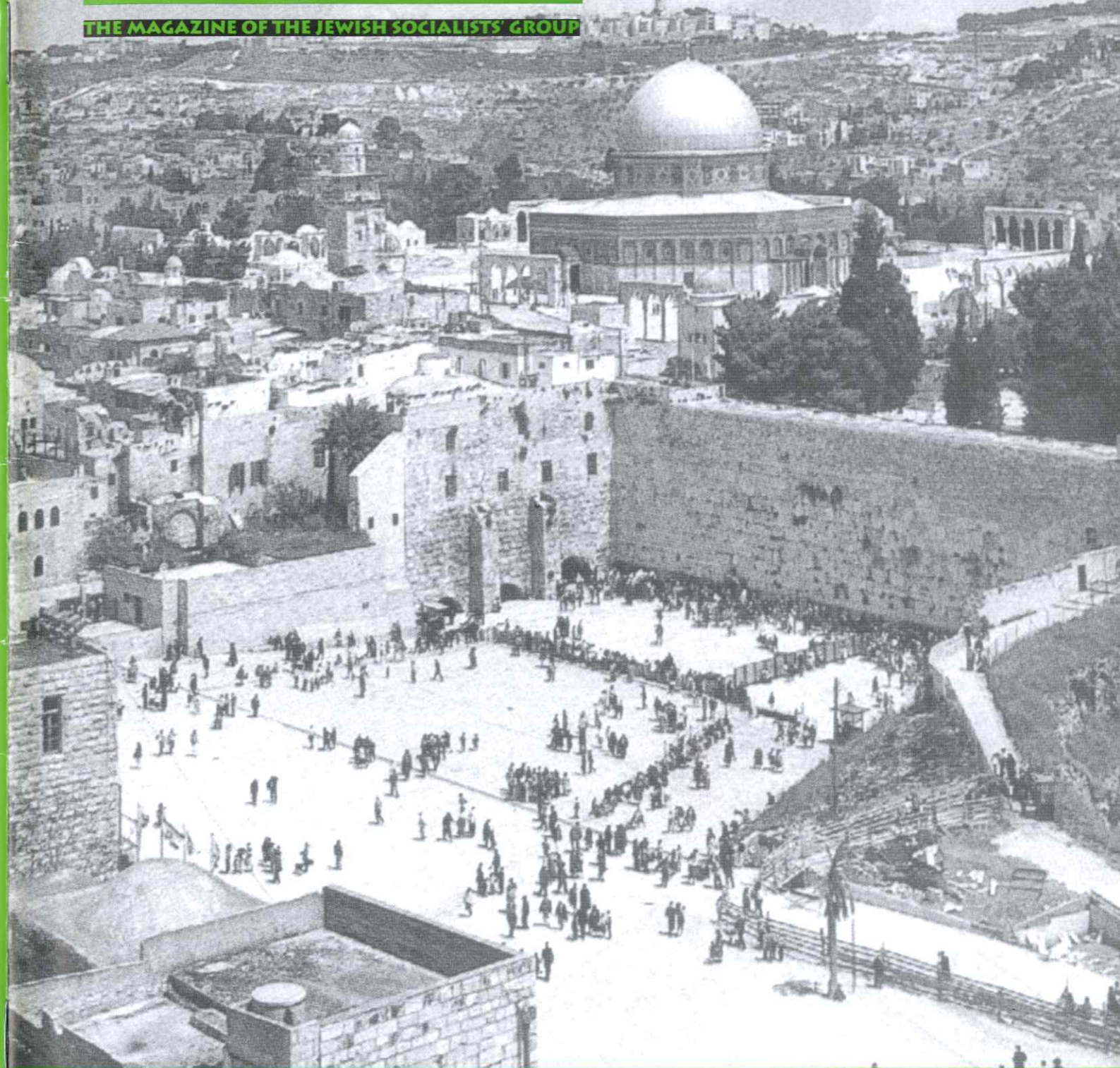
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JEWISH SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP



just another brick in the wall JERUSALEM IN CONFLICT

Austria ■ Jews and social justice ■ Wagner ■ Jeremy Hardy interview ■ Life after Lenin

JEWISH ★ SOCIALIST

NO 42 SUMMER/AUTUMN 2000

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Editorial committee: Julia Bard, Paul Collins, Ruth Lukom, Simon Lynn, Karen Merkel and David Rosenberg
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EDITORIAL

WELCOME to the new issue of **JEWISH SOCIALIST** and many thanks for all your positive feedback and good wishes on our relaunch issue. It is very heartening and much appreciated! A special welcome to all our new subscribers who have signed up since the relaunch issue. We hope we will continue to provide the kind of magazine you like.

As we go to press the Camp David negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives have stalled over Jerusalem. Yet even to reach the point of voicing demands face-to-face about how the needs of the city's Israelis and Palestinians can be met constitutes considerable progress.

In this issue we present a penetrating essay about Jerusalem by Michael Safier, a writer with wide experience of working for social and economic reconstruction in cities in conflict. Twenty three years after Jerusalem was annexed and despite daily proclamations that it is the eternal and undivided capital of Israel, Michael Safier describes it as 'a more totally conflicted city than at any time in the last hundred years'. Those who believe it is essentially a question of satisfying national or religious rights must seriously examine issues of power and poverty and the pressures invading every aspect of urban coexistence. Similarly, those who advocate simplistic territorial settlement need to look beyond romantic myths at the shattering reality of daily life in a city that is deeply fragmented.

Talks cannot be stalled indefinitely. The clear declaration by the Palestine National Council in July that Palestinian statehood would be declared in the year 2000 is forcing the pace. As negotiators work for peace, the war over land is continuing. While the talks were opening, 300 Palestinians living in the West Bank village of Beit Iskarya, south of Bethlehem, received a military order to evacuate their homes within one month. Michael Safier reports similar acts of land grabbing in Jerusalem. Although people directly affected won't be able to recognise it, these actions do not represent power but are the last gasps of occupation trying to reduce an inevitable territorial compromise.

Socialists must prepare for the next phase raising ever more sharply the question about what kinds of states will co-exist. Will Israel and Palestine be secular or increasingly theocratic? Will they defend the democratic and civil rights of all their citizens or will they be authoritarian and discriminatory? Will the wealth generated in the potentially affluent lands of Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan bolster those who already hold the lion's share of economic power or will the workers, the poor and the oppressed of these lands be able to organise so that they will benefit? How these questions come to be resolved in Jerusalem in the coming years may prove a significant pointer to their solutions elsewhere in this troubled region.

JEWISH SOCIALIST £4,000 *Relaunch Appeal: Many thanks to all our supporters who have made contributions since the last issue. The fund now stands at more than £3,000. Help us with the final £1,000. Send your donation today to: JS Appeal, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.*

NEWS

Hands up for culture



A new secular Jewish cultural organisation came into being in June, called YAD (Hebrew for hand). It sponsored several evenings (jazz/klezmer) at the recent Jewish Music Festival, and had its own launch event: 'Naming the Golem – a night of radical Jewish culture' at the Rhythm Factory in Whitechapel in London's East End.

YAD aims to encourage a sense of awareness of Jewish identity and heritage by working with cultural artists exploring Jewish roots and contemporary reality, providing an opportunity for dynamic young artists and musicians to expand perceptions of Jewish culture in their work.

YAD supports artists who examine their identity and seek to add their voice to the multi-cultural British scene.

They are planning a series of quarterly cultural nights initially in London and then around cities in Britain.

Further details from YAD Arts, Flat 49, Basildon Court, 28 Devonshire Street, London W1N 1RH.
Tel: 020 7486 5627
Email: info@yadarts.com
Website: www.yadarts.com

Children of the ghetto

Children from the Jewish Socialists' Group's Red Herring Club followed in the footsteps of their grandparents and great grandparents in June on a guided walk round landmarks of the Jewish East End.

They visited sites of the first Yiddish theatre, the Rothschild buildings, a soup kitchen and synagogues; they also shared some family histories and learned a Yiddish song which they can sing if they work as tailors when they grow up!

● Discover the radical Jewish East End for yourself – see the ad on the back cover.



Photo: Simon Lynn



Photo: Ann Frankel

OXFORD REDS

For the past three years, the Oxford Institute for Yiddish Studies has organised an academic conference in the week prior to the Oxford summer programme in Yiddish and some of the guest teachers on the programme participate. This year the theme was 'Yiddish and the Left'. With delicious irony, the sponsors are Texan millionaires, Jack and Naomi Friedman.

Contributions ranged from the fascinating to the obscure. Two of the speakers spoke with particular passion. Bill Fishman gave a rousing presentation on Rudolf Rocker, the non-Jewish German anarchist who came to England at the turn of the century, learned Yiddish and became editor of the Yiddish anarchist paper *Arbeter Fraynd*. Rocker won the trust of the immigrant Jewish sweatshop workers and persuaded them to support the tailoring workers' strike of 1912, thus improving working conditions and relations between Jewish and non-Jewish workers.

Joseph Sherman, a Johannesburg professor, gave a fascinating talk on South African Yiddish literature and apartheid. Immigrant Jews who had been oppressed in Eastern Europe found they were awarded privileges not available to black people. Those privileges, along with a fear of reprisals from the state, muted their political principles. Yiddish writing in the 1920s and '30s was colonialist and paternalistic, idealising rural black life. Guilt could be avoided by projecting all racism on to the Afrikaners. Yiddish-speaking immigrants who did become activists in the struggle against apartheid tended to be those like Joe Slovo who were fiercely internationalist and saw their Jewishness as irrelevant.

The conference papers will be published by Legenda, publishing arm of the European Humanities Research Centre at the University of Oxford. Ask your local library to order a copy. ■ **Myra Woolfson**



CHANGE
THE WORLD

Change the World

is a regular slot publicising initiatives and campaigns on the left. Send details of your group/campaign/organisation to: CTW, Jewish Socialist, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX

Shadow puppets

It's all change at the Board of Deputies – or is it?

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

Since the 1991 Gulf War hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children have died as a result of UN sanctions. Although nominally a UN enterprise, in reality, economic sanctions remain at the behest of the US and British governments. Voices in the Wilderness started in the US at the end of 1995 when a group of activists, deeply disturbed by the mounting humanitarian crisis, decided to openly break the sanctions by taking medical supplies to Iraq without applying for export licences.

For Voices, breaking the sanctions is a powerful act of civil disobedience against what one US Congress person recently described as 'infanticide masquerading as policy.' Despite warnings from the US Government that those involved risk 12 years in prison and up to \$1 million in fines, Voices US has now sent over 30 sanctions-breaking delegations to Iraq. The group has already received notification of \$163,000 in fines.

Voices in the Wilderness UK began in February 1998 after two British nationals, Milan Rai and Martin

Thomas, travelled to Iraq under the threat of bombing with a six-strong Voices US delegation. The £400 worth of children's antibiotics in their luggage was impounded by Customs officials at Heathrow and the pair were arrested and threatened with prosecution shortly after their return. UK sanctions-breakers risk a maximum of five years' imprisonment.

In the end, no prosecutions were brought, despite the fact that according to Customs there was 'sufficient evidence to support criminal proceedings'. Voices UK has sent a further five delegations to Iraq.

Both groups recently held civil disobedience protests in Washington and London to mark the 10th anniversary of the imposition of sanctions.

Gabriel Carlyle

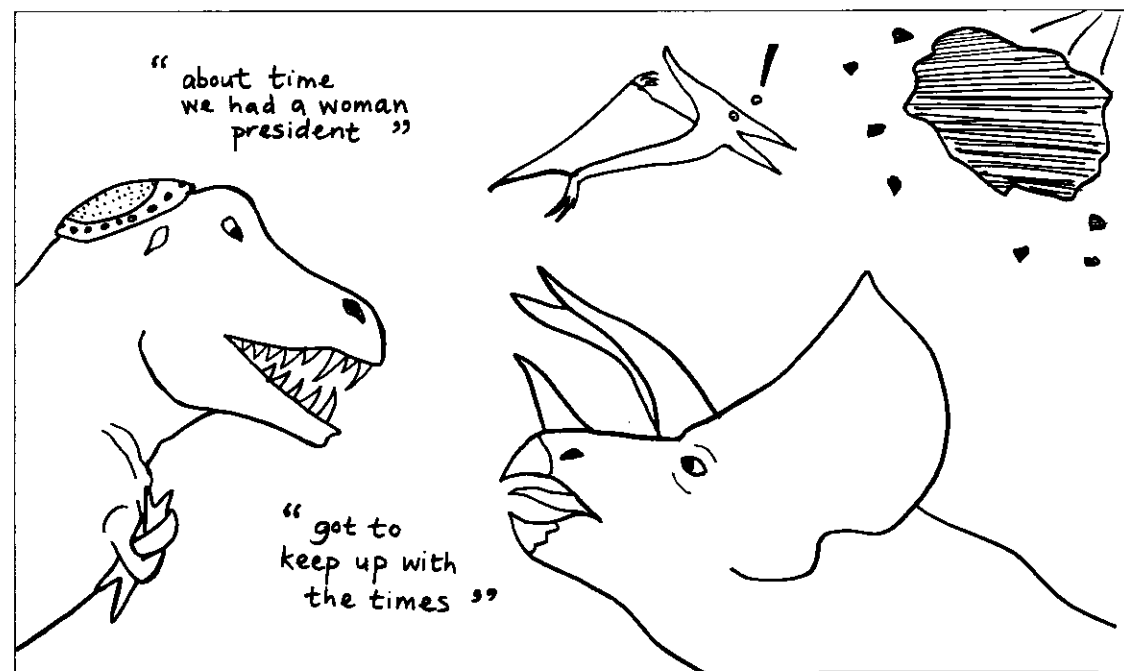
For more information on sanctions or Voices - or to arrange a speaker for a meeting, contact: Voices in the Wilderness UK, 16b Cherwell Street, Oxford OX4 1BG. Tel. 01865 243232. Email: voices@viwuk.freemove.co.uk

We were all ready to let the Newsnight cameras in on a Jewish Socialist editorial meeting in July when the BBC phoned to say it was off. They had been planning an item on Jo Wagerman's imminent appointment as president of the Board of Deputies and were going to look at whether Jews feel they are represented by this institution. The piece would include film of members of the ultra-orthodox section of the Jewish community and of secular elements – us.

The 'election', it turned out, was more like Soviet Union-style democracy than a chance to choose between competing policies. There was only one candidate. Not that we were expecting the first woman president to herald glasnost after the uninterrupted parade of men we have had since the Board was set up in the 18th century.

In the event, we didn't even have to wait until her appointment. The day before they expected to film, with camera crew booked and the editorial committee all set to behave themselves, the reporter told us that Jo Wagerman had pulled out.

The point of the piece was to put her on the spot about the Board's unfounded presumption in claiming to represent us. Without her, there would be no one to answer the case. Perhaps because the case is unanswerable. Jo Wagerman wasn't the first member of the establishment to chicken out of that debate, but even by their standards her excuse was laughable: she was too busy preparing for the election! We wonder what kind of challenge she was expecting from her phantom contestant. **Julia Bard**



Cartoon: Sophie Nicol

EYE ON ZION

THE ROAD TO RUIN

The settlers love this country. They say so every day. They settle everywhere. But their love is like that of the cannibal. This thought came to my mind a couple of days ago, when I was standing on a hill north of Ramallah, near the village of Dora al-Kareh. Before me there stretched a beauty spot I did not know before, hidden from the Jerusalem-Nablus highway.

A charming, flat valley between two ridges of steep hills is divided into small plots on which vegetables grow organically. The water of local springs flows in small canals which, the locals say, date back to Roman times. The water is divided between seven *hamulaks* (extended families), according to an unchanging quota worked out 400 years ago. On the Ramallah market, these well-known vegetables fetch prices considerably higher than others.

All this beauty is now threatened with extinction. All in the name of love for the country. The slogan is 'bypass road', two innocuous words that hide a cruel reality.

On the face of it, what's wrong with a road? It helps the flow of traffic. A narrow strip of asphalt can't bother anybody. That's what people think when they hear about yet another bypass road. The reality is quite different. Let's take, for example, this particular road. It is designed to connect two settlements - Beth-El and Ofrah. Length: 5.9 km. Breadth: 220 (220!) m. The road itself will be 60 meters wide, with a security margin of 80 meters on each side. Some 370 dunams will be expropriated outright, another 950 dunams will be rendered useless.

But what is hidden is more important than what is transparent. The road will separate three villages from a great part of their lands. In practice, these will be added to the settlements.

Some explanations may be in order: Before the elections, Ehud Barak visited Beth-El and Ofrah and promised publicly that they will stay there

forever. That was rather odd, because the recurring theme in his propaganda was 'separation' ('We shall be here and they will be there'), meaning that only big 'settlement blocs' will be annexed to Israel, while the settlers in isolated spots will be evacuated or become residents of Palestine.

Beth-El and Ofrah are both isolated in the middle of the Palestinian population, far from the green line. But the leaders of the fanatical settlers live there, and Barak wants to cultivate them. How? Simple. These isolated settlements will be turned into a new 'settlement bloc', to be annexed to Israel.

The 'bypass road' serves this purpose. From a transportation point of view it is quite superfluous. These two settlements are already connected by existing roads. The new road will save the settlers five minutes driving time. Even if a new road has to be built, it can be much shorter.

The planned road is unnecessarily long and winding. So what's the real purpose? Well, the road is, of course, to be annexed to Israel. It follows automatically that all the land between the road and the settlements will be annexed too. The road is a knife cutting off a big slice of territory from the future state of Palestine.

The same happens now all over the West Bank. This case is different only because of the beauty of the landscape. While Barak chatters endlessly about 'framework' and 'permanent status' agreements and while negotiators meet all the time, Barak conducts a resolute campaign to enlarge the 'settlement blocs'. The roads serve this purpose.

In this campaign of 'creating facts on the ground', not only are new injustices added to old ones, but also irreparable damage is being done to the landscape of this country. It's a new crime: the murder of the land. Perhaps it should be called 'terracing'.

Uri Avnery

(This article is reprinted from The Other Israel No. 93) otherisr@actcom.co.il

PEACE LINKS

Bat Shalom – Israeli women peace activists. POBox 8083 Jerusalem 91080 Israel. Website: www.batshalom.org Email: batshlo@netvision.il

The Alternative Information Centre Jerusalem-Bethlehem. Email: aicmail@trendline.co.il Website: <http://aic.netgate.net>

Hanthala Palestine – a new Palestinian human rights network. Website: <http://hanthala.virtualave.net>

Jerusalemmites – Palestinian experiences, debates and issues for Jerusalem. Website: www.jerusalemmites.org

Jewish Peace Fellowship – Supporting Israeli Conscientious Objectors. Presently campaigning in solidarity with Yinnon Hiller aged 18. Box 271 Nyack NY 10960. Website: www.jewishpeacefellowship.org Email: jpf@forusa.org

The Committee Against Torture. Email: PCAT@netvision.net.il Active in Jerusalem on the recent UN International Day of Support for victims of Torture **Arab Association for Human Rights** PO Box 215 Nazareth 16101 Israel. Tel: (00 972) 6 656 1923. Email: hra@g-ol.com hra@q-ol.com Website: www.arabhra.org

Organised anarchy

Anyone interested in researching the Jewish anarchist movement in its original words and language will be aided by a very clear and well organised bibliography published by the Kate Sharpley Library in co-operation with the Anarchist Archives Project. Edited by John Patten, the Yiddish Anarchist Bibliography includes periodicals, books and pamphlets and details of libraries and archive collections where these publications can be found. Get your copy from the Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX, price £7.50.

DON'T BE A STRANGER – COME AND VISIT!

The Jewish Socialists' Group website was launched in April and it has been visited by people on both sides of the Atlantic. Recent updates include a potted history of the Group from the year dot (1974) to the present. Visit the JSJ website at www.jewish-socialist.org

Taking on the press gang

Against the wave of media hysteria surrounding the arrival in Britain of Roma asylum seekers, Guardian columnist **JEREMY HARDY** has been almost a lone voice in the press supporting their case and challenging xenophobia. David Rosenberg interviewed him about racism and the media

In an increasingly complex world people rely on the media for basic information, explanations and ideas. But in their reporting of Roma asylum seekers, Jeremy Hardy believes the media has largely been an institution propagating ignorance and fear.

'The minute they arrived in Dover from the Czech republic they were "the Bouncing Czechs", "the Giro Czechs". Then the media realised these people were actually Roma so they tagged this on. People don't realise who Gypsies are. They are a forgotten people. Their Holocaust is never spoken of. Their treatment by the state in Poland, Rumania or Hungary is never spoken of.'

This ignorance is fed by the longstanding misconception that being a Gypsy is merely about adopting a certain lifestyle.

'Because it is seen to be a lifestyle, people say: "They must have opted out and made themselves unpopular. If only they were prepared to assimilate and settle down and behave themselves people would leave them alone." The fact that the Roma are the predominant black minority in central and eastern Europe has escaped them. In eastern Europe people know who Gypsies are. In Romania they've been settled for hundreds of years. In Poland they are a much smaller minority but treated very badly and less assimilated. Many of them look much more Indian than say Gypsies in Hungary where they are more inter-married. The Polish Gypsies were itinerant but forced to settle by the communists. In Romania they were slaves until the 19th century which is why they are more marginal and agrarian than in the Czech Republic. In the Czech Republic Gypsies were black working class people. Here in Britain there is this mythical idea that they are strange eastern people, who never quite fit anywhere.'

Maybe it is the mythology and ignorance that prevents people making direct connections with the mistreatment of more settled minorities in

Britain. But there is also a reluctance to acknowledge how adaptable racism is.

'The people attacking Roma have got "White Power" T-shirts, and talk about "niggers". Racism flails around looking for a subject. When it becomes less and less sayable about an established community, it flips on to somebody else. If it wasn't for asylum seekers it would be directed at the existing travelling communities.'

And like racisms with which we are more familiar it is full of internal contradictions.

'They say these people take all our jobs and these people don't want to work. They say these people take all our homes then they say they live in overcrowded homes, four families in one room, or they don't want a home - they just travel around.'

And yet, compared with the 1970s and '80s when the reportage of black people in the media was almost entirely focused on black people as problems, there has surely been progress. Black people have gained more access as media workers. Their communities have become more established and found a voice within the mainstream.

'There isn't the racism that there was against Black and Asian people. That is following public and political trends. I don't think newspaper editors do good things because they are good people. You've got a 'Cotton Club' thing with the media. You've got Ainsley Harriott, the footballers and some Black politicians. There was almost a political decision made to elevate the Lawrence case. It bizarrely happened because the editor of the Mail recognised Neville Lawrence as the man who worked on his house. Before that they'd said these people should stop attacking the police. The press is now much harder on the extreme right but still there is a great battle to get noticed. Black people are killed, it is not a rare occurrence. Asylum seekers are beaten up. You don't read about that.'

Europe's Roma continue to be seen as fair game by the media.



Checking the colour of a Gypsy's eyes at the Race Hygiene Research Centre, set up by the Nazis in 1936

'It is remarkable the way you suddenly get this wave going right through the press. As soon as you say these people are Gypsies it pushes all those buttons to do with an ancient prejudice. It is easy to push buttons if people are fed up, if they've got gripes. People in grotty housing, who are unemployed, who are fearful, are susceptible. There is also a terrible lower-middle-class bigotry; the people whose parents dragged them out of the working class, who haven't really got anywhere. They haven't got a proper accent, they've got patio doors and a little bit of money in telecom shares. They're desperate to hang on to it. But then again, some of the worst prejudice comes from comfortable middle class media tarts, like Tony Parsons and Alison Pearson, who haven't got any excuse, living in their cloistered world..

It is this possibility of tapping into ancient prejudices that suggests very close links between anti-Gypsy racism and antisemitism.

'Both are slightly mythical people surrounded with all kinds of medieval fears. Some people look very clearly Roma, or very clearly Jewish, and others can pass. If you weren't one yourself you could never quite know whether someone is or not. Gypsies didn't choose to be this unwanted people, completely outside society. They've been kicked all around Europe, as the Jews have.'

He acknowledges a subtle connection in the linguistics of racism.

'When the media identified that a lot of the people in Dover were "Gypsies", a lower-case "g" was used. Gypsy with a lower case "g" relegates them from a people to a lifestyle or an idea. If you look at the word "Jew" in lower case it becomes "miser" or "usurer". With an upper-case "J" it says, person of Hebrew descent, person of the Jewish

faith. Gypsies are descendants of the people who came from Rajahstan 1,000 years ago. Lower-case they are itinerants, tramps and thieves. Part of fighting prejudice is to establish yourself as a valid existing group. Some people think the opposite, that the best way to fight prejudice is to say we are just the same as you. But to say that you have your own identity doesn't mean you are profoundly different or have nothing in common with white people. It is just to say you do actually have dignity.'

It is here that the theoretical weaknesses of the anti-racist movement reveal themselves, in its drive for simplicity that reduces all conflicts literally to black and white arguments.

'It is easier to see racism in black and white. There is a myth in this country that there is no longer antisemitism, which is false, although it is much more prevalent in the upper echelons in society. In America, you haven't arrived if you haven't had a nose job and changed your name. That prejudice clearly exists in Britain. A misunderstanding and an ignorance of Jews has grown as Jews have become more prosperous. They think the Jews have bought themselves out of it. The Left can be a bit basic at times. They are very uncomfortable about the idea of Asian Tory millionaires. After the war, the Left failed to address the issue of antisemitism properly. Everything in the '60s was reduced to black and white and Jews didn't fit into that, nor the Irish, Turks or Greeks, and what do we do with the Balkans where everyone hates each other and they're all white?

'We use a lot of arguments that make me nervous, like: "more people are leaving Britain than entering." But what if it changes? We clutch at these things for different audiences. If you say more people are leaving than arriving, it is true, but it is

INTERVIEW

also saying, it's all right, we are not going to be overcrowded. If you say, look there's plenty of work or look at what Asian people have done and look how they keep their shops open late at night and they've got some great sports people, there's great music - what about people that can't sing, aren't any good with fabric, can't cook? You have to be careful not to set up tiers of acceptability.'

He is aware of the tactical pitfalls as well.

'You can't go stomping round council estates calling people Nazis because they voted BNP. You can say this is what it leads to. This is what was done to the Gypsies. The anti-racist movement has got to approach people and say what are your needs? What are you frightened of? Let's do something about the fact that your central heating has not been fixed, that you're waiting to get rehoused, that you got married two years ago and you still haven't got anywhere to live.'

He believes that the arguments of racists can be

defeated and is optimistic about people facing serious problems in their own lives being able to empathise with the plight of others rather than fight with them

'When people say, well my granny has been waiting years to get re-housed, the answer is: "Why has she been waiting so long? Do you think it is because of these Kosovans who came over last year? Do you think it is because of these Gypsies who came over two years ago? Why wasn't she rehoused before? Do you think if you kicked all the asylum seekers out suddenly everyone would have good houses and good jobs? Where did your family come from?" Most people have some migrants in their ancestry. You have to say: "Don't blame the people in the refugee hostel. Don't blame people who are even more marginal than you." When the fascists started to do well in the Isle of Dogs, you just had to point to Canary Wharf and say to them, "Tell me it's the Bengalis' fault that you haven't got a nice council flat"'

'There's a lot more hope in the people who are hard up. They haven't got a passionate interest in the writings of Hitler. People aren't basically vicious and hateful, racist or bigoted. People living in desperate poverty can be persuaded to empathise with someone else. You can say to them "If you learn of a country where you can get something better for yourself, you'd want to go there." Appeal to the best in them.'

He's not holding his breath waiting for the Labour Party to deliver in power the anti-racist positions it held in opposition. Nor does he hold out hope for much of a lead coming from the newly elected Greater London Authority (GLA).

'I am stunned by what Labour Party members are tolerating. What are they waiting for? How many victories? They can't accuse the Tories of racism because they are promoting pretty much the same

thing. The way to deal with Ann Widdicombe is to show what a bigot she is, not to be a pale shadow of her. David Lammy, who has replaced Bernie Grant, never said a word about asylum seekers throughout his campaign. Labour's GLA members won't do anything because they are all hand-picked and none of them had anything to say about asylum seekers. Livingstone has a good track record on racism. He was one of the few who finally voted against the Asylum Bill. The fascist vote was very alarming both in the GLA elections and in the Midlands. Obviously we should put pressure on GLA members but the whole thrust of Livingstone's politics now is to get back into the Labour Party. The unions are very important. Bill Morris's intervention was important. The tide is turning on the asylum arguments. We are starting to make some headway.'

Ironically a factor in turning the tide is a growing recognition of labour shortages in this country and also the urge to incorporate parts of the old iron curtain within the new European Union.

'There is a labour shortage in this country and people realise that the EU is bringing in lots of temporary workers in service industries. When the Czech Republic becomes part of the EU the Roma will be able to come here anyway, so an adjustment is taking place whereby they say well, we can do with a certain number of economic migrants. So having used this disparaging term to almost abolish the idea that it can ever be valid for anyone to come to the country to get a job, work in a shop, they're now rethinking it. Although the danger is that you end up with a 'guestworker' situation, like the Turks in Germany, where you bring them in, then kick them out.'

In the meantime daily life for the asylum seekers remains a constant struggle.

'They're scattered all over the country now and it is very, very hard. In Kent they're under siege.

They're not safe on the streets. With dispersal it means that you haven't got a community centre and people around you speaking your language. One of the good things about the various meetings going on is that asylum seekers have been coming from all over the world, meeting other people and telling their stories. A lot of them hadn't linked up before. They are beginning to forge links with the Asian community, which is very enriching for them.'

If media pundits or ordinary people were still proclaiming ignorance of the sense of desperation that drives people to uproot themselves from their societies and place themselves in danger to seek asylum elsewhere, the tragedy at Dover where 58 young Chinese people died has forced a greater recognition of their plight.

'The government looked so clearly hypocritical. Barbara Roche was saying: "these are victims of gangsters." Straw was saying: "see what happens", in that menacing way. But the public thought 'Look at these people. They were young. They just wanted a better life. They just wanted a new chance.' It will stay in people's minds. It will help people in the same horrible way that it took the murder of Stephen Lawrence and a six-year campaign for it to be said that people shouldn't have to put up with this. Now we have a kind of two-tier approach where we don't really talk about economic migrants because that is seen as being about greed rather than persecution. A lot of people would like to come and work here because they are very poor. They should be able to come if they want; there are appalling things happening around the world - war, poverty, and terrible things happening to the Roma in Europe. We've got to say refugees are welcome here.'

It is time for other media workers to add their voices to Jeremy Hardy's, and spread information and enlightenment rather than ignorance and prejudice.

Gypsy slave labourers making rush mats at Ravensbrück concentration camp, 1940-41



The Daniel family: below, mother and daughter; facing page, father and son

Photos: Ann Frankel



Point of no return

The Daniels are a Czech Romany family seeking political asylum in the UK. They are Milan and Jana and their children Milan (17) and Jana (16). Milan snr's parents met in Auschwitz - two of only 600 Czech Roma to survive the Holocaust. The family first came to England in October 1997. Mr Daniel had worked as a driver for a large paper factory for 20 years. After privatisation the Roma drivers in the factory endured persistent insults and bullying from younger workers. Mr Daniel finally left when he was told that the solution to the problems of the Czech Gypsies was to gas them all. Young Milan shoulders many family responsibilities. At the age of six he underwent a 'psychological test' in which he failed to name the German currency. He was consigned to a school for educationally subnormal children for eight years. Czech Roma are 15 times more likely than others to be sent to such schools and 80 per cent of the children in such schools are Roma. These pupils are barred from secondary education. Milan is thriving at school here and hopes to become a lawyer.

Mrs Danielova has a Roma mother. Her white father left when she was young and her stepfather mistreated her and her mother. She has been greatly distressed by the family's many tribulations. Jana jr has also thrived at school here. But she has been diagnosed as having TB as has her father and like her mother she has a heart defect. In 1997 Milan jr was attacked by a gang of skinheads armed with knives and sticks. He was hit with a baseball bat. The police did nothing. Jana jr was also attacked that year. The family came to England after failing to obtain visas to Australia where Mr Daniel's brother heads a Romany organisation. They lived for two years in one room in a south London hostel. They were refused asylum in May 1998. During the appeal procedure they decided to return to the Czech Republic where Mrs Danielova's sister was very ill, while her 76 year old grandfather had been made homeless. The day after they returned Milan jr was attacked. His sister was hospitalised for a week with a head injury from which she still suffers

FRANK FISHER tells a story of one Roma family seeking asylum – there are many more like them

dizziness. The family feared reprisals from their assailants whom they had reported to the unresponsive police. They also were accused by neighbours of besmirching the name of the republic by previously emigrating.

Mr Daniel and the children left for New Zealand in June 1999 to be closer to their Australian relative. Mrs Danielova followed a few weeks later after an Auckland church raised her fare money. They applied for asylum in New Zealand but received no response. During a routine medical examination Mr Daniel was found to be suffering from TB and advised that treatment would be prohibitively expensive. His wife was concerned about the health of her sister and her homeless grandfather who was now sleeping under a bridge. She applied for permission to return alone temporarily to the Czech Republic but was advised that if she did so she would not be allowed to return to New Zealand and that her family would not be permitted to stay.

She left with her son but when they arrived in their home town no accommodation was available.

They were told they would have to live off vouchers which did not include provision for rent; the children would have to be put in an institution. After four days they left for England arriving on 1st April 2000 and were followed by father and daughter a few days later.

When Mr Daniel arrived in the UK he was held at Harmondsworth detention centre and later in Haslar. Whilst he was in detention the family were told that they would be dispersed to Glasgow in two days. With assistance the dispersal order was withdrawn and Mr Daniel was released on bail on 7th April. The family now live together in a small house in North London.

On 13 June the family attended an appeal against dismissal of the parents' two applications for asylum. The previous decisions that their applications were 'manifestly unfounded' were upheld. What price justice and the English language? The adjudicator reserved the right to grant asylum on other grounds or 'exceptional leave to remain'.

INTERVIEW

WHO KILLED THE DOVER 58?

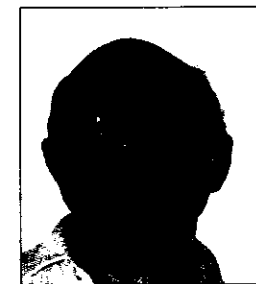
Not I, said Jack Straw
I just made the laws
Which closed firmly
the doors
By which they might
have come legally

Not I, said Ann Widdicombe
There just is not room
For that kind of tomb
They should have died
in China

Not I, said the smuggler
They wanted to run
So I got it done
For a substantial sum

Not I, said the Chinese Government
They just would not
learn how
To kowtow
To Stalin and Mao

Dave Landau



RIGHT OUT IN THE OPEN

The Austrian far right made a major breakthrough this year but, as **DAVID RENTON** and **ROMAN RAMMEISER** report, new coalitions have formed to oppose them

When the results of last year's elections in Austria were revealed, anti-racists were shocked into action. With the three major parties each obtaining around 30 per cent in the polls, a Conservative-Freedom Party coalition became the most likely outcome. On 4 February this year, such a government was formed. Perhaps more than any other far-right party in Europe, the Freedom Party (FPÖ) traces its lineage directly to the fascist organisations of the inter-war years. Jörg Haider's father joined the Hitler Youth as early as 1929, and helped to found one of Austria's post-war fascist organisations. Before Haider took over the FPÖ leadership in 1986, it was a liberal party with a small far-right wing. Since then, Haider has carefully brought the organisation into the electoral mainstream. Yet in a familiar pattern, Haider has taken one step forward, one step back. Publicly distancing himself from the party's past one week, he has gone out of his way to claim the fascist mantle the next. Blair's New Labour has less historic continuity with social democracy, less loyalty to tradition, than Haider has to his parents' fascism.

In power, the Freedom Party has continued where Haider's rhetoric left off. The women's ministry has been closed down and all funding cut for minority groups. The new government's first budget also meant cuts in women's pensions, privatisation, an austerity package for workers, and cuts in the Austrian welfare state. Not everyone has suffered. Haider's victory saw the promotion to high office of an unpleasant circle of antisemites and Holocaust deniers. They include one dapper Jewish businessman, Peter Sichrovsky. The Jewish

music scene.

How did anti-fascists respond to Haider's victory? On the night that the government was formed, protesters took to the streets. Five thousand people took over the centre of Vienna, condemning Chancellor Schüssel, and forcing his Conservative Party to criticise its new ally in public. Protesters occupied the Ministry of Social Security, preventing the Freedom Party minister from taking up his new post. The police set off water cannon, for the first time in Austrian history. On 11 and 18 February, contingents of school students struck and marched through Vienna. Demonstrations took place daily. By 19 February, the numbers taking part in protests had swollen to 300,000, making this the largest crowd in Austrian history, and indeed the largest protest in Europe since the extraordinary mass strikes which took place in France in December 1995. As late as 15 March, students at Vienna University (returning from their holidays) voted to occupy their university in protest against the Black-Blue government.

The forms of the protests show a continuity with the recent mass demonstrations in Seattle and Washington, as well as previous anti-fascist mobilisations, including the Anti-Nazi League in the 1970s and Rock Against Racism. Various groups have taken part: football fans, women's organisations, lesbian and gays against fascism. The best-known anti-racist organisation, SOS Mitmensch, takes its politics from the French group SOS-Racisme. A People's Dance committee has been formed (Volkstanz), bringing together 100 radical DJs against the government. Videos and records are dedicated to the street protests. The slogan 'we are the people' was taken from the East German protests of 1989 – as was the tactic of weekly marches, taking place this time on Thursdays. The weekly marches have been more like countryside rambles than conventional planned demonstrations; protesters walk where they want, at their own speed. One new site of agitation has been the internet. A web-ring made up of 200 anti-Haider websites has been formed, ranging from liberal to socialist and anarchist in their politics, and including pictorial, musical, and textual archives, some updated daily.

The anti-Haider movement has not just been radical. Like the recent anti-capitalist coalitions in Seattle and elsewhere, the movement has also involved large numbers of workers. At the most important protests organised workers have predominated. Renate Tchurgiz of the ÖGB trade

union federation addressed the huge demonstration of 19 February. The same protest included delegations from engineering unions, from workers at Siemens, from teaching unions, shop-workers' unions, white-collar workers, tram drivers, journalists and many others. Seven thousand private sector workers marched as a single contingent. The Internationale played from official loud-speaker vans. One trade unionist Wolfgang Katzian told the German newspaper Linksruck that in his workplace there was a demand for strikes, 'This government plans a mass of attacks. We must fight each of them in the factories and on the streets'. Meanwhile another part of the mass movement is a network of rank-and-file trade unionists opposed to the government. 'Sharp Sight' calls for a democratic offensive against racism, and against the reactionary family policy of the coalition. Its targets include the conservative trade union leaders, as well as Haider's party.

As police have kicked, punched and beaten anti-fascist demonstrators in full view of the international press, so the image of peaceful Austria has been shattered. In April this year, the impeccably-liberal Süddeutscher Zeitung reported that ten weeks after the coalition was formed, protests were continuing. This is a profound social conflict, 'something that Austria has never seen'. Protesters targeted the symbols of Austria's conservative past, with 10,000 picketing March's Opera Ball. One demonstrator dressed himself in Hitler moustache and Nazi uniform. Arriving in a white Rolls Royce, he was able to enter the ball before the police arrested him. International coverage of the event focussed both on the opulence of Austria's privileged classes, and also on the many invited guests, musicians, artists and actresses who refused to attend.

Today some of the energy has gone from the protests. The activists are still determined to make Austria ungovernable, but Haider's resignation from the leadership of his party at the end of February has taken away one important focus of the street

demonstrations. In many ways, his defeat is the victory of the movement. Jörg Haider dominates the Austrian far-right, he is its only well-known figure, the FPÖ is Haider's toy. Without the protests, Haider would still be in office. Yet doubts remain – it would not be the first time that Haider has 'resigned', only to re-appear in full public view. Haider's resignation has been exploited by the Austrian Socialists, to argue for an end to the protests. But the protesters can see that it was the failures of Austrian social democracy that opened the door to Haider in the first place. It would also be wrong to concentrate on the recent lull in the movement since the radical movement that has grown up is more exciting than anything the country has ever seen.

The politics of this new generation of activists are best conveyed in their own words. Established at the end of January, gegenschwarzblau.net was a free web site, bringing together video clips and sound images for an international audience. Because of a lack of funds, the site was closed down in March. Its final message records the optimism of those who took part – as well as offering its own potted history of the campaign waged in Austria against Haider:

'Whatever form it may take, the resistance to this government will probably continue just as long as it is in office. Beginning with the expected increase of distancing from parts of the ÖVP through the pent up unease in church circles, union and university strike measures through to the continuous demonstrations and spontaneous events on the street. Reactionary family policy mobilises Austria's women. General, unsocial saving measures at the cost of the workers, ridiculous legal sanctions against people from public life who have been critical of the government or the planned reactivation of "folk culture" are drawing large sections of youth culture permanently on to the side of the government's opponents.'

Long may the movement last.

Further information at <http://gegenschwarzblau.cjb.net>, www.papo.at/ or <http://webring.telnet.at/>

Austrians come out in force to protest against Haider



Chronicle in Britain printed Sichrovsky's defence of the FPÖ, but despite the veneer of respectability, Sichrovsky is a Holocaust Revisionist, whose politics have been documented by Karl Pfeiffer in recent issues of Searchlight. The new Finance Minister has authored a ban against employing foreigners on public building works. Another Haider confidant Elizabeth Sickl, the Minister for Social Security, is the mother of an activist on Austria's Nazi skinhead

IN THE HEART OF THE BEAST

About 35 years ago, as a callow schoolboy, I made my one and only visit to the Imperial War Museum and the memory of dull military hardware has remained with me. I therefore had considerable reservations about the Imperial War Museum as the site for a Holocaust exhibition and the portents for my visit were not good. It is, after all, a museum dedicated to war despite the assurances on its website that this is a museum 'about people'. The obscene gun placement in the forecourt has a touch of the ridiculous but the main hall is still crammed with boys' toys – lots of fighter planes and guns, impressive in their fitness for purpose, and there are lots of streamers about The Summer of

the Spitfire exhibition. Visits to the Holocaust Exhibition on the third floor are allocated set entrance times because of the large numbers of visitors. I waited my turn with two blokes who looked like England football fans and a group of young men in their late teens who had wandered upstairs to find out 'what the Holocaust's all about'. As I went in I wondered what kind of an impact this exhibition would have on people who knew relatively little about the Holocaust.

The Exhibition is arranged on two floors, the upper floor describes the period leading up to the War and the lower floor the War years. With the exceptions of the first and last rooms the walls are

As the controversy continues over the merits of creating more monuments to the Holocaust, the Imperial War Museum in London has opened a permanent Holocaust exhibition. **RALPH LEVINSON** gives his verdict

This page: the entrance to Auschwitz Birkenau where the deportation trains arrived.
Opposite page: two young women ghetto fighters



black and illuminated with spotlighting. You are immediately confronted with a variety of sounds, those of Nazi triumphalism and the accounts of survivors that follow you throughout the exhibition. The first room contained photographs and video footage of Jews of Europe in all their diversity representing European Jewry before the war. There is minimal text here. Within the main part of the exhibition there is more explanatory text with multimedia representations that set the context of antisemitism in Germany in the '20s and '30s. The Bolsheviks and the Nazis are described as 'extremist movements' generating political terror, and in the next display we learn that 'one' of the German Communist leaders was a Jew. Perceptions of democracy are regarded as unproblematic and there is no indication of qualitative and ideological distinctions between these 'extremist movements' of left and right.

From the start the exhibition describes the racialisation of attributes, the euthanasia programme, and the use of race science to demonise Jews and Gypsies. Here I recalled the recent publication of the first draft of the Human Genome and the dangers of a reductionist approach to science. There is an attempt to describe Christian antisemitism and how the images of the Jew as anti-Christ facilitated this demonisation. After this introduction the themes advance relentlessly to The Final Solution. The exhibits identify the complexity and ambivalence of people's responses to their emerging plights. Audio recordings and pictures recall humane Britons accepting refugees together with the experiences of internees and the sadism of their hosts. The reluctance of the Allied Powers to accept Jews is highlighted, hence the difficulties people found of both emigrating and entering. Again there is a focus for connections to contemporary refugees; the headlines of the Sun and the Daily Mail. Directly

after the vicious statements of Straw and Roche, the Romanian Gypsies disappeared overnight from our streets.

One of the strengths of the exhibition is the poignant detail of the artefacts; playing cards made by the anti-Nazi Margot Schloss in prison, spectacles, combs, key rings, empty bullet cases after massacres in Ponary; old suitcases; shoes retrieved from Auschwitz, some almost wearable. And the huge diorama of Auschwitz was impressive because for the first time I became aware of the scale of the camp, the journey from the ramp to the ovens, and how easy it was to eliminate the Hungarian Jews who arrived so tragically near to the end of the war. Zyklon B capsules, bluish-white and powdery are in a display cabinet, seemingly no more menacing than pain-killers but it is important to see their innocuous reality.

Although this exhibition is in a war museum, it avoids any facile link between the reasons for fighting the war and the destruction of Jews and Gypsies and between the plight of the Jews and the creation of Israel. Exhibits on possible escape routes to Palestine stand beside those detailing journeys to Shanghai and Australia for those who were fortunate enough to be able to make them.

One of the problems created by any exposition of the Holocaust is the overwhelming impression of the Jew as victim. If anything this was reinforced. Helplessness was tangible: the inevitability of the horror seemed inescapable. Yet there is a literature now detailing how resistance, sometimes in the very midst of the death camps, was actively taking place. This resistance was noted but seemed to me underplayed. Very little space is given over to the Warsaw Ghetto and other examples of partisan resistance. It is difficult to know how to strike a balance, choices of emphasis have to be made, but greater details of resistance episodes could have

demonstrated how these stood in relation to the relentless killings. And for a multi-media exhibition that was full of sounds the one sound that was lacking was the sound of Yiddish being spoken. Some of the installations were far too fussy and there was a sense of designers using technology for effect rather than feeling or instruction. The software near the end was inert and dull rather than interactive and informative.

Overall this exhibition appears to work. While I was there a very wide spectrum of people passed through. They moved slowly and reflectively. I tried to eavesdrop and capture comments but it was impossible, people were too immersed in what they saw and heard. So my reservations are dispelled. I cannot think of any other venue that could accommodate such an exhibition and attract such a variety of people. And, in the end, it is bound to have an impact on the way the museum is perceived.



MORAL MYOPIA?

Jewish involvement with universal issues of social justice seems to have diminished as activity for Holocaust memorialisation has grown. RABBI JEREMY ROSEN analyses how this has happened and how the community can change

The opening of Imperial War Museum's excellent Holocaust exhibition, with a heavily educational slant, is an appropriate opportunity to reassess attitudes within the Jewish community. All the more so since several critical reassessments of Jewish communities have recently appeared in the United States.

The main accusation levelled is that American Jewry has turned the Holocaust into a clichéd icon of Jewish suffering, a sort of moral halo that bequeaths both a sense of righteous indignation as well as a degree of moral myopia. Since the heady days of the Civil Rights Movement the Jewish community's involvement in social and ethical issues in America seems to have diminished in inverse proportion to the rise of interest in the Holocaust.

This argument extends to world Jewry in general. It seems less concerned with social issues and the suffering of others and is focused almost exclusively on survival and internal politics. The number of young Jews involved in social activism, in membership of pro-active and socialist organisations is declining. There has always been a distinction between conformist and radical wings in diaspora life but the current dearth of radical Jews within established Jewish communities is potentially disastrous. Jewish communities seem to be losing their moral and social concern in their preoccupation with survival. With greater overall prosperity and less overt antisemitism, survival seems more assured than at any other time in history.

There are two responses to tragedy. One is to rationalise. In trying to understand what happened and why, it is possible to try to learn from history and to take steps to ensure that a tragedy is not repeated. This involves the painful process of analysis, introspection and where appropriate, self-criticism. Given the interconnectedness of human affairs it is impossible to see any situation in isolation without studying the wider perspectives and this leads to universalist responses. It is this that explains the disproportionate involvement of Jews in movements of social justice, such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and other areas of social and ecological concern, not to mention the socialist movement. Why, now, is our community so materialist, so concerned with internal rather than external affairs? Why do radical young Jews usually have to look outside the Jewish community to find a forum for their creativity and idealism?

There was another response to the Holocaust. This argued that the Jewish people must never again allow themselves to be helpless victims. From now on they should take whatever measures necessary to ensure their survival throughout the diaspora or with a state of their own as a place of refuge if antisemitism should ever endanger Jewish lives.

But probably the most widespread response has been sublimation; to try to forget; to imagine that nothing happened and to throw oneself into a material world of self-gratification and acquisitiveness that either suppresses the pain or refuses to face up to the implications of history.



Protest seder
outside South
Africa House, 1988

This is a natural response to disaster and a phenomenon much recorded amongst Holocaust survivors. Many refused to disclose even their Jewish identity to their children let alone describe their experiences.

This phenomenon also explains the other side of the South African picture, those Jews who colluded with and benefited from apartheid. This is also a perfectly understandable, if regrettable, response to guilt. As the facts become clearer with distance, the inevitable question asked of world Jewry is whether it did enough to pressurise its own governments to react, to take in refugees to try to ameliorate the situation. Many feel either the guilt of having been spared or the guilt of not having done enough.

In the aftermath of the Second World War world Jewry could focus positively on the creation of the Jewish State. Communal energy was directed towards Israel. Zionism became the new religion for the majority of Jews because it made only notional demands (Ben Gurion's requirement of Zionists that they actually settle in Israel was soon overruled by Zionist charities here). The idea of building a new state excited and animated most Jewish communities and provided an ethnic and a moral feeling of regeneration.

It also highlighted divisions within Jewry. The universalists saw the need to address universal and humanitarian issues. But these concerned those elements less committed to Jewry as such. The particularists saw survival as the only way to combat antisemitism and to assert Jewishness. They directed their energies either towards Israel or towards local community structures. The orthodox applied themselves to survival within their own protected communities by turning their backs on a secular world they saw as corrupt, hypocritical and antithetical towards them.

The 1967 war ensured that Israeli survival was no longer an issue. Indeed now that the oppressed were seen by many to be the oppressors, Zionism

lost its lustre both as a moral movement and as an alternative to Judaism. The Hippie generation proved to American Jewry that institutions they had nurtured were not enough to retain the loyalty of the younger generation and so a new ideology had to be created. McCarthyism and the Cold War, then the Hungarian Revolution and the invasion of Prague, all prevented socialism from becoming an accepted alternative, an outlet for social activism and moral authority in America. For a while the radical consumer campaigns of Ralph Nader looked as though they might offer an attractive counter ideology. Then Vietnam became the focal point of discontent and idealistic activism.

For Jews, the Holocaust offered itself as such an alternative. It enabled an outpouring of guilt, grief, agony and moral outrage. It became the rallying cry for survival, continuity and fundraising. It placed Jews in the moral foreground without their having to consider partners in suffering and discrimination. It was the perfect 'obligation free' dose of ethnic identity. It became a surrogate religion, a means of expressing Jewish identity without having to adopt either a specifically religious Jewish way of life or a socio-ethical one. The way to promote it was to turn it into a paradigm of inhumanity and then to use it as a putative means of educating humanity in general to avoid racism and hatred. Thanks in large measure to Stephen Spielberg, the Holocaust became a wider and a more public issue and this enabled the creation of Holocaust museums and other icons of educational entertainment.

But the real message seems to have been lost. For all the words and fine speeches (at \$25,000 a go) racism, inhumanity, torture, death and starvation continue. From Cambodia to Rwanda and Yugoslavia the world has not intervened in time to prevent mass murder by corrupt regimes or in significant measure to alleviate the resulting deprivation. The crocodile tears of United Nations sentimentality or of Congress or Parliament in a fit

of moral outrage have done little to wash away inhumanity. Visceral reaction has been to sanction spending millions on modern armaments but only thousands on reconstruction. Jewish communities seem remarkably parochial, inward looking and insensitive to human suffering beyond their gates. Israel has contributed more in personnel and funds than world Jewry combined and doubled.

One might have argued that Jewish survival and regeneration had to be a priority. Even if we accept this, Jewish survival is now assured. It is stronger, richer; more learned, with more vibrant religious, academic, social and cultural institutions than it has been at any time since the exile began. There is no excuse any more for pretending we are not citizens of the world with an obligation to work to improve it and to nurture it. Education has now become the touchstone for Jewish survival but it will be a mixed blessing if we do not ensure the social, ethical and universal dimension of Jewishness.

Ironically the ultra-orthodox world which probably suffered proportionately more than any other sector has been the least interested in making the Holocaust an area of study, concern or public commemoration. They have tended to see it as a culmination of the exile experience and antisemitism, as the technological application of medieval hatred and pogroms. They have used *Tisha B'Av*, the anniversary of the destruction of the temples, as the occasion to remember their massacred relatives rather than adopt the state religion of Israel or the rabbinate's suggested dates. Their suffering has been channelled into a single-

minded thrust for survival and the reconstruction of Eastern European scholarship and attitudes. The failure of their pre-war leadership to encourage escape for fear of ending up like fish out of religious water, in no way seems to have dimmed their quasi-divine authority. But most of the Haredi (orthodox) world has no interest in the outside world except in so far as it finances their life style. Universal ethical issues have been lost in the rush to build up their own little empires. They have succeeded. But at what cost? If the moral ethical message of Judaism that sees all of humanity as the creation of God, if the requirement of Deuteronomy 4 to see ourselves in relation to others, is ignored, the very selectivity that they accuse the non-orthodox of indulging in, is precisely the sin that they are guilty of.

Does this mean that we should not emphasise the Holocaust as a historical and educational icon, as lesson for humanity? Of course not. We should indeed. But we must redouble our efforts to be creative and positive in the emphasis that we in the Jewish community place on social humanitarian issues. At grass roots level not enough is being done in Jewish communities and in Jewish schools to emphasise the universalism that is part of our tradition. A ghetto in itself is not necessarily a bad thing. Aristocrats and academics often choose to live in one as much as Jews or other minorities. But the ghetto of the mind is the danger we must struggle against as Jews. Now that it has freed itself from both particularist dogma and from association with specific regimes, socialism has a vital role to play in this struggle.

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CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES

Modern interpretations of Wagner face up to German history and engage with the context in which the composer worked in order to challenge its Nazi connections, says MICHAEL HEISER

To say that Wagner was a Nazi is anachronistic and absurd. On the other hand that he was an antisemite is beyond question. And it is a historical fact that the Wagner family and Bayreuth enjoyed a particular relationship with the Third Reich. The most interesting question for me is, firstly, can any of Wagner's works be seen to be infused with the general ideas which were later to produce Nazi ideology? Secondly, how do modern Wagner productions face and overcome the history which has produced them?

Many have pointed out that characters in the operas can be read as antisemitic stereotypes which Wagner was taking from the antisemitic climate at the time. So, in the Ring cycle, Alberich and the other Nibelungs conform to the 'money-grubbing Jew' (the whole problematic of the Ring kicks off because Alberich is the one man who places love of gold above human love). Beckmesser, the town clerk in Meistersinger, can also be seen as a representation of what Wagner saw as a Jewish influence in the arts – focusing on the rules as opposed to the essential. In these two examples, though antisemitism may have inspired characters or even aspects of the problematic of the music, it is not central. The Ring is about a failed project and the reasons for its failure; Meistersinger is about how to effect peaceful changes within an established order.

Modern German productions of Meistersinger, like two I have seen in Berlin, by Gotz Friedrich (at the Deutsche Oper) and Harry Kupfer (at the Staatsoper) engage constructively with German history and the place of Meistersinger within it.

The story of Meistersinger is simple. In medieval Nuremberg, a knight, Walther von Stolzing, falls for Eva, the daughter of the goldsmith he is staying with and who has helped him sell his lands. To win her hand he must become a Master of the Nuremberg song school and perform a prize song before the assembled guilds and townspeople. His first efforts to become a master are laughed off because he breaks the rules. The town clerk, Sixtus Beckmesser, who hopes to win Eva himself, is particularly zealous in marking him down.

Walther and Eva make plans to elope but are thwarted by Hans Sachs, cobbler and man of the people, who helps Walther set down his dreams in

the form of a prize song, which he sings to the assembled company, thus winning Eva by the rules. At first he refuses to become a Master as well but is won over by Sachs who reminds him of the importance of the Meistersinger tradition in perpetuating German culture. This final monologue, written in the 1860s at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, can be seen as a restatement of German nationalism.

Meistersinger is thus about bringing about change within an established order. Wagner rejects a radical break (elopement) but also warns against letting the mob rule ('Wahn'). At the end of Friedrich's Deutsche Oper production, the stage darkens to show the skyline of Nuremberg in ruins in 1945. Friedrich is identifying the 'folly' with the Third Reich and counterposing it to the tradition of democratic cultural production, which the Meistersinger represent.

In Kupfer's Staatsoper production the key visual element is a structure in the middle of the stage with arches and portraits and a staircase going round it. It symbolises Nuremberg and, by extension German culture. In Act II the backdrop is glass and concrete skyscrapers, towering from all sides towards a hole in the centre. Kupfer says in the programme notes that he sees the German culture that Sachs is trying to protect as the tradition of democratic cultural production in the face of the 'Macdonaldisation' of society. Kupfer's reading, like Friedrich's, is a social democratic one, seeing Sachs as the representative of the best of German tradition, whose role is to protect and foster a popular culture.

Kupfer says: 'This conflict is not merely artistic but one of society, a conflict between young and old, between generations, between brilliance and tradition. Everywhere you find this conflict, there is Nuremberg. That could be in Main Street USA just as it could be in Munich or Berlin.' This can be counterposed to Graham Vick's Covent Garden production where Nuremberg is depicted by wooden models, like oversized dolls houses. Despite Haitink's conducting and John Tomlinson's unsurpassed portrayal of Sachs, at turns angry and tender, the production does not engage constructively with German history as both Berlin productions do.

The Ring, the story of the stealing of the



Rheingold, can be seen as a Marxist parable (Bernard Shaw was the most famous exponent of this view). The Rheingold is stolen by Alberich. He uses it to enslave the Nibelungs and and to produce the Tarnhelm and the Ring. Meanwhile Valhalla is built by the giants Fasolt and Fafner. They come to Wotan, the leader of the Gods, to ask their price. Wotan tries to trick them but ultimately the Ring (which he himself steals from Alberich) is the price he had to pay.

Various productions of Rheingold have brought out these themes. The famous Chereau centenary Ring set Rheingold in a power station and the Royal Opera House Jones/Lowery Ring used the device of proliferating shoes to show the production/overproduction process. In Kupfer's Staatsoper production in Berlin, at the start of Rheingold, before the music starts, Wotan comes on to implant his spear in the World Ash. This, according to the programme, means that the idea of the contract, which the spear symbolises, is at the centre of the production, a contract which is both uneven and binding. Wotan, who uses his power to impose contracts on others becomes the prisoner of them.

Visually, the World Ash, a gnarled serpentine excrescence with triffid-like tentacles, is at the centre of the production. The Rhinedaughters clamber over it to tease Alberich. When Wotan and Loge go down to Nibelheim to steal the Ring, the hole in the sulphur through which they descend is represented by a glass cylinder, which cuts through the World Ash.

In Walkure, the World Ash is still at the centre of the production, but now withered and split, penetrated by metal cylinders. After Wotan's great Act II monologue, with the menacing climax 'Das Ende', part of it crashes to earth. In Act III Wotan puts Brunnhilde to sleep on a gnarled trunk. Wotan, says Kupfer, has become the arch manipulator. He is playing games with the Siegmund and Sieglinde because he enjoys exercising power for its own sake. He has lost sight of his goal. In Kupfer's conception, Wotan is not just about power and he does not make openly political points. In contrast, Gotz Friedrich's Deutsche Oper production has models of ruined cities, including a panorama of 1945 Berlin, featuring the skyline of the Reichstag in ruins, to show what megalomaniac pursuit of power leads to.

Act I of Siegfried is set in Mime's forge. Productions have to provide for both the forge itself, and the battle of wits between Mime and Wotan, disguised as the Wanderer. In the Jones/Lowery Covent Garden Ring

Mime's forge was tiny, the size of a tea trolley. Illuminated by a single bare light bulb, it had a utilitarian, post-War, feel. In Berlin, with the technical possibilities offered by the drop stage of the Staatsoper, the forge covered the stage from top to bottom. Its centrepiece was a large propellor wheel. The pit of the stage is such that the whole thing can be submerged when required. It has an industrial feel because by this stage of the cycle we have reached industrial society. A branch of the World Ash is still dimly visible, but only in the background.

Kupfer's Gotterdammerung showed the strengths of his concept, particularly the use of light and colour and changing backdrops. A feature of all four operas was a grid of fluorescent lights, which sometimes acted as the grid for an image. For example, at the start of Gotterdammerung, when the Norns tell the story so far and foretell the approaching catastrophe, the backdrop was of an anonymous lighted city, to show that, having passed through the dawn of history (Rheingold) and the era of heavy industry (Mime's forge in Siegfried) we have now reached post-industrial times. When the Rhinedaughters enter at the beginning of Act III they are in faded petticoats and pop up and down out of holes made out of cement and corrugated steel, to make the point about the degradation of nature.

In his Covent Garden Ring, Richard Jones had the Norns as cleaning ladies, against a backdrop of crossed-out formulae, like a professorial blackboard. It reminded me of the feminist cartoon of cleaning ladies sweeping up words like 'hegemony' and 'patriarchy' and saying to each other: 'They wouldn't use those long words if they had to clean up afterwards'.

So much for Meistersinger and the Ring. The links with the Nazi period can be drawn much more clearly in the case of Parsifal where the idea of purity of blood is central. Wagner's frame of mind when he wrote it was much influenced by his 'Regeneration' writings. Choice samples of these are where he accuses Jews as being 'the plastic demon of man's downfall' and 'former cannibals now trained to be business agents of society, tainting the hero blood of the noblest races'. The idea of purity of blood was also central to the ideas of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Wagner's son-in-law, a race theorist who was one of the main influences on Nazi ideology. Parsifal remains for me the most problematic of Wagner's music dramas. It is about love, sacrifice and redemption, but there is a lot more to it. The idea of pollution of the blood has uncomfortable echoes of Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Parsifal as a work is not antisemitic but there are uncomfortable overtones which come across particularly starkly in concert performances.

I have seen one modern staging that tries to come to terms with these demons: the 1999 production by Nikolaus Lehnhoff at English National Opera. Lehnhoff, who is from the same school as Friedrich and Kupfer, provided a modern German interpretation of the work, playing down the specifically Christian redemptive angle in favour of a more universal message of learning through experience. His Act III setting, for example, had a definite post-war and post-Holocaust feel to it.

That interpretation engaged constructively with German history and the place of Wagner, and Parsifal in it. Wagner was certainly an antisemite and his works were used by the Nazis. These modern Wagner productions, though, are not antisemitic but reflect the society of the late 20th and early 21st century.

Richard Wagner – open to interpretation

I'M STANDING

FROM WHERE

'How can you leave Israel to live in England? They're the most anti-semitic people on earth.' My mother's strong view was not mitigated by the minor detail of her never having been in England. 'I've seen racism in the States, in Israel, in other places. I'm sure it will be no different in England,' I tried to reassure her. 'You may be a know-it-all with a college education, young lady, but you just mark my words.'

Is there anything worse than having had to mark those words ever since my arrival on this island? Yes, worse even than that is living life in the British subtext. This is a country where sentences in the passive voice are in the right voice, where the literal is considered impolite or aggressive and where feelings are repressed all day in anticipation of an evening knees-up for which the only objective is puking on the shoes of the passenger next to you on the last tube. This is then called (lubricated) interpersonal communication.

At work, no one would think of saying, 'I don't agree with you, Spike, I think that would be an ineffective approach.' Instead they say, 'Yes, that's a very interesting idea, and if I may expand on your suggestion,' and follow with a

completely contradictory recommendation. Everyone in the room is nodding and smiling and, even more mysteriously, understanding exactly what is going on.

The British non-profit sector, for one example, has a progressive attitude towards equal opportunities and diversity. But those inclusive policies are just the text. Reality lies in the subtext. I once asked a staff member during his appraisal how he found working with me. 'I quite enjoy it,' he smiled. 'I like working with Diversity.' Eh? My name isn't Diversity, I wanted to protest. If only I could get him to speak plainly, he would agree. He would probably say, 'No, your name is Foreign Jew-Dyke.'

Then there was the supervisor who asked me how a new staff member was getting on. 'She's a star, really doing well,' I was happy to report. 'She would do, wouldn't she,' he smirked, 'Everyone knows that all Jews are more clever than other people.'

Should I mention the time I was interviewing with a colleague to fill a new post? I found one of the candidates energetic, enthusiastic and full of ideas. My home counties colleague felt that while the applicant seemed highly

In Britain, bigotry is all in the subtext, says
SPIKE KATZ

qualified, she was also rather gross and over-emotional. I hired the woman, nonetheless, and later found out she was Jewish.

And it's not only at work. I once published an article on butch/femme issues in a lesbian magazine. The editor added her own biographical line for me, which read: 'Spike is a writer for Jewish magazines'. No, actually I'm a writer. The only Jewish magazine that would consider publishing me is Jewish Socialist. It didn't matter to the editor that I had written about queer ballroom dancing, about sumo wrestling, about travelling to Kenya, about managing bereavement. For her, it was all in the subtext: This writer is a Jew.

Racism in Israel is very transparent – it's the 'them and us' school. Racism in the USA is very open. There it's the Greatest-Land-On-Earth Christian Aryan school. Racism in Britain, however, is all in the subtext, is all a function of manners. Racism: not really very nice, indeed. Oppression: in the worst taste, really. Discrimination: common and low, admittedly. Mentioning real incidents of the aforementioned: pushy, crude, embarrassing, trouble-making, inconvenient. Just not done.

DI GRINE KUZINE (MY GREEN COUSIN)
was a song of immigrant life in America popularised through the Yiddish theatre in the 1920s. The text of this version was written by J Leiserowitz, with music by the bandleader Abe Schwartz. New immigrants were known as 'greeners'. Whether they had views on the environment, we don't know!

Es iz tsu mir gekumn a kuzine
Sheyn vi gold iz zi geven, di grine
Di bekhelekh vi royte pomerantsn
Fiselekh vos betn zikh tsum tantsn

Haynt az ikh bagegn mayn kuzine
Un ikh freg zi: vos zhe makhtstu, grine?
Entfert zi mit a krumer mine:
Az brenen zol Kolombuses medine!

Nisht gegangen iz zi, nor geshprungen
Nisht geredt hot zi, nor gezungen
Freylekh, lustik iz geven ir mine
Ot aza geven iz mayn kuzine

My beautiful cousin came to me (in America). Her cheeks were like red oranges. Her feet were begging to dance. She didn't walk, she skipped. She didn't talk, she sang. She was so happy and lively. That is how she was. I went to my next door neighbour who had a millinery store. I got my cousin a job. Praise the golden land! Many years passed and my cousin was exhausted and weary from her job. It took everything from her. Below her pretty blue eyes she now has black lines. Her cheeks which looked like red organges have lost their glow. Now, when I meet my cousin and ask her how she is, she answers bitterly, 'Columbus's land should burn!'

Ikh bin arayn tsu mayn 'nekst-dorke'
Vos zi hot a 'milineri-storke'
A 'dzhab' gekrogn hob ikh far mayn kuzine
Az lebn zol di goldene medine!

Avek zaynen fun demolt on shoyn yorn
Fun mayn kuzine iz a tel gevorn
'Peydes' hot zi yorn lang geklibn
Biz fun ir aleyn iz nisht geblibn

Unter ire bloye sheyne oygn
Shvartse pasn hobn zikh fartsoygn
Di bekelekh di royte pomerantsn
Hobn zikh shoyn oysgegrint in gantsn

MODERN YIDDISH USES No 1

Yiddish is a wonderfully expressive language that originated among European Jews around 1000 years ago. Today there are speakers in every continent, but thanks to murderous Nazism, repressive Stalinism and hegemonic Zionism, its number of speakers and their opportunities for using it are much reduced. It was also the language of the Jewish labour movement of eastern Europe in its heyday. It remains a language that testifies to Jewish diasporism, ethnicity and internationalism. Here is the first instalment of Noah Noodnik's helpful guide to some Yiddish words.

Shlemiel: a shlemiel is a simple person who continues to believe whatever they want to, despite all evidence to the contrary. For example, 'Don't be a shlemiel, Dobson, you've got more chance of being elected Chief Rabbi!'

Nokh: this is a delightful word to add on the end of sentences for that bit of ironic emphasis. It translates variously as 'yet', 'still', 'even', as in, 'She was so desperate to be accepted as English, she joined the Conservative Party, nokh.'

Ganef: a ganef is quite simply a thief; not someone who takes things because they're desperate but because they're greedy. Someone who borrows your copy of Jewish Socialist is a potential subscriber, but if, when you politely ask for it back, they say they swapped it for a bagel when they were feeling hungry, they're a ganef and quite a khutspedik ganef at that (work it out yourself!)

Gevalt: his is an expression of shock and horror and should be accompanied by at least three exclamation marks. You can use it straight away, but Yiddish speakers prefer to approach it in stages. For example, your child announces that they don't want to go to football any more on Saturdays because it's the sabbath. So you shrug and say 'oy'. When your child announces that they don't want to go to Cuba for the holiday, they would rather go to Israel, you slap your cheek and say 'oy, oy, oy (one exclamation mark is permitted here!) But the day they come to you and say 'I'm going to become an estate agent' then without any hesitation or shrugging, you scream 'Gevalt!!!'



PUTTING THE

SOCIALISM, AT THE TURN OF A NEW CENTURY, STILL SEEMS A DISTANT GOAL BUT MANY STRUGGLES FOR PROGRESS ARE ADVANCED IN THE NAME OF 'SOCIAL JUSTICE' AND 'RIGHTS'. BUT NOT ALL RIGHTS LEAD TO PROGRESS. SOMETIMES RIGHTS COME INTO CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER. IN THIS SECTION WE PRESENT A SUMMARY OF THE RIGHTS THAT ARE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNISED AND THE PROBLEMS THEY CONTAIN. THEN WE LOOK AT VARIETY OF SITUATIONS WHERE RIGHTS SEEM TO BE IN CONFLICT – IN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS, BETWEEN MAJORITIES AND MINORITIES, OVER LANGUAGE, AND IN THE CITY – THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

KAREN MERKEL and THRISE HALDAR present a guide to rights

Since its declaration just over 50 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has developed into a family of international treaties, mechanisms and institutions.

The Declaration is an expression of principles, and not a binding document. In order to give a binding force to the Declaration, two covenants were made, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The persistent violation of human rights around the world means there is an increasing need for individuals to know their own rights and understand issues that affect them directly. Human rights are the inalienable rights that every individual is entitled to. These rights are enshrined in the UDHR and the United Nations human rights treaties. All human rights are equally important and are universal, indivisible and inter-related. One set of rights cannot be denied in the apparent interests of others.

Human Rights consists of the following:

- Civil rights: right to freedom of opinion and expression developed with a view to protecting the individual from the arbitrary exercise of power by the state.

- Political rights: freedom of association, the right to vote and to participate in government
- Economic rights: the right to fair and equal wages, safe and healthy working conditions
- Social rights: the right to education and health care
- Cultural rights: for example, the right to speak your native language, etc.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is based on particular principles:

- inherent: human rights are birthrights of all human beings; people enjoy these rights simply by reasons of their humanity
- universal: human rights apply to all men and women regardless of their nationality, status, sex or race
- inalienable: rights can not be divided, people cannot agree to give them up or have them taken away from them
- interdependent: all rights are complementary and interdependent to each other

In addition to the UDHR and the Covenants there are the Conventions against Torture, Genocide, on the Rights of the Child, and on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

WORLD TO RIGHTS

THE 30 ARTICLES OF THE UDHR

All human rights are free and equal in dignity
 Freedom from discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, opinion, origin, property, birth, or residency
 Right to life, liberty and security
 Freedom from slavery
 Freedom from torture
 Right to recognition as a person before the law
 Right to equal protection of the law
 Right to effective remedy by competent tribunal
 Freedom from arbitrary arrest
 Right to fair public hearing by independent tribunal
 Right to presumption of innocence until proven guilty at public trial
 Right to privacy in home, family and correspondence
 Right to leave a country and to return to one's country
 Right to political asylum in other countries
 Right to nationality
 Right to marriage and family and to equal rights of men and women during and after marriage
 Right to own property

Freedom of thought and conscience and religion
 Freedom of opinion and expression and to seek, receive and impart information
 Freedom of non-compulsive association and assembly
 Right to take part in government and equal access to public service
 Right to social security
 Right to work, to equal pay for equal work and to form and join trade unions
 Right to reasonable hours of work and paid holidays
 Right to adequate living standard for self and family, including food, housing, clothing, medical care and social security
 Right to education
 Right to participate in cultural life and to protect intellectual property rights
 Right to social and international order permitting these freedoms to be realised
 Each person has responsibilities to the community and others as essential for a democratic society
 No state or person may use this declaration to destroy rights set forth in this declaration.

An expanded definition of universal individual human rights has evolved over the last 200 years from a productive mixture of competing political traditions. Elements of British liberalism, French republicanism, continental social democracy and trade unionism, prodded and provoked by democratic socialist critique have been drawn on, together with other sources of ethical inspiration, to establish an ever wider definition of the 'inalienable rights' of the individual human being. Starting with civil and constitutional rights to life, liberty, and freedom from various forms of oppression, the list has been progressively extended to encompass humanitarian, social, economic and cultural rights now encoded in both national and international constitutions, declarations, conventions, charters and institutions. It is still regarded as incomplete by many ongoing campaigns on different aspects of the human condition. The Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration have been seen as crucial but limited in their scope, especially with regard to democratic accountability, the 'rights' to a secure livelihood and to freedom of movement.

In the last 50 years a different, but potentially complementary expression of concern has emerged, not for human 'rights' but for human 'well-being'. 'Basic needs' have been added to 'human rights' as people have searched for a more progressive definition of the necessary foundations of a 'good life'. Basic needs is principally concerned with the search for greater equality and the abolition of privation without which individuals cannot practically achieve their 'inalienable' rights.

Billions of people in the world today are still suffering from absolute and relative poverty, hunger, disease, and a variety of exploitations which deprive them of the most basic conditions in which to achieve a fully realised humanity. The rhetoric far exceeds the realities for both human rights and basic needs. Discrimination, persecution, poverty and inequality are still the more normal condition of most of humanity for most of the time.

Human rights and needs have conventionally been sought for individuals but human beings have 'collective' conditions or affiliations. Whole groups of human beings 'make their own history, but not in conditions of their own choosing' (to borrow Marx's enlightening summary). Conflicts exist between the rights and needs of different groups. In dealing with group differences and group rights – the rights of women and men, old and young, different sexualities, the able and the disabled; different national, ethnic, religious, linguistic or communal groups; of majorities and minorities, of residents and newcomers, natives and immigrants, indigenous peoples and settlers, refugees and host communities – the major political traditions, whether liberal, democratic or socialist have all largely failed to articulate or inspire appropriate responses.

A great deal of new thinking has emerged concerning the 'social construction' of identity, the relation between individuals and group membership, the contemporary realities of multiple and hybrid identities, and conflicting interpretations of recognition of membership, of

MICHAEL SAFIER looks beyond the limitations of individual rights

legitimacy of leadership, of diversity of affiliation and interpretations of group identity. In the case of the Jewish people these issues have provoked intense controversy and conflict among ourselves, even over the very definition of 'who is a Jew' and the character of group identity - religious or ethnic, national or diasporic.

Into this vacuum have stepped other traditions of thought and action that have produced overwhelmingly reactionary and negative solutions to the conflict of group rights - patriarchy, racism, national chauvinism, fascism, imperialism, ethnic exclusivism and religious bigotry. Conflicts over 'group rights' have and still are being dealt with by the use of force and domination, depriving millions of people of their 'inalienable' rights through the practices ranging from hegemony to genocide.

The core questions of identity, autonomy and self-determination have been addressed, and currently more so than ever, through the prism of 'group rights' and 'identity politics'. These politics have become compromised by the failure of liberal, democratic and socialist programmes to deal effectively with group affiliation, resulting in a politics of intergroup exclusivism based on the acceptance of hierarchical ideas of difference; being different means being better or worse, more or less 'human'. On this basis it becomes not just possible but necessary to dominate, assimilate, discriminate, persecute, expel, and justify the killing of 'others', especially where the 'others' are

taken to be a threat to the unrestricted exercise of the 'rights' of one group to the enjoyment of its dominance or aspiration to dominance.

If we are to make progress in principle and an impact in practice on questions of intergroup relations, the recognition of collective rights must be complemented with that of collective group 'identity needs' based on an acknowledgement of equality or 'equivalence' in intergroup relations. This requires equality of recognition - as equivalent members of the wider human community; equality of respect - for the unique value of every group in its cultural particularity; a (proportional) equality in the material resources and opportunities available to the group; a (proportional) equality in the representation of the group in the wider - national, regional, global - society, and a (proportional) equality in the ability of the group to realise its identity in physical, locational and territorial terms.

This approach focuses on the achievement of a socially and culturally 'just' resolution of conflicts in which rational calculation and negotiated agreements replace 'all or nothing' competitive claims. By acknowledging these basic needs we will concentrate attention on ways of satisfying them: and in doing so we will see that the conflicts of group rights, so often highlighted and aggravated in identity politics, are neither so comprehensive nor intractable as is often claimed by those most heavily engaged in such politics.

RIGHTS WITHIN THE LEFT

The fight for rights must go on within radical and revolutionary organisations if they are going to be effective in the wider world, says DAVID ROSENBERG

Socialists often articulate their demands on society in terms of rights: the right to work, the right to free education, free speech and free association. They assiduously expose the manipulations by those in power to deny people their rights, and are acutely aware of how people's rights can be reduced even within formal democracy. Socialists know that majorities are not always right, and 'mainstream' ideas often marginalise dissenting thoughts. Institutional practices can discriminate directly and indirectly against minorities, working class people, the poor and uneducated. But how well do socialists support the rights of minorities within their own organisations? Do they challenge discrimination or do they replicate the very practices which oppress people in the wider world? And what insights have been provided by Jewish socialist movements who have had to grapple with these realities?

Revolutionary organisations of the 20th century are justifiably proud of their record of courage, commitment and self-sacrifice but there is a parallel record of purges, expulsions and internecine warfare; of oppositional movements using the language of

liberation, only to impose dictatorial practices when they assume power. The signs were there. Leaders of movements aspiring towards the fullest expression of human freedom frequently derided pluralism and diversity as weakening the united struggle. The desire for unity in action has often been predicated on a uniformity of thought. Certainly the oppressive conditions in which revolutionary organisations have operated, in exile or under legal restrictions, have not been conducive to internal libertarianism, but with few exceptions, such as the ANC in South Africa, they have shown little desire to change, even in more favourable circumstances.

Communist parties in various countries have probably been most guilty of internal repression within the Left. At crucial times they lost idealistic and committed members who could not stomach the twists and turns of the party line dictated from Moscow, above all by Stalin, and the disastrous actions taken by the Soviet Union in the name of all communists. And yet, left wing organisations that saw themselves as true to the revolutionary spirit and bitterly denounced their 'Stalinist' rivals, often shared an uncritical adherence to

a Leninist organising principle of 'democratic centralism'. This principle, in practice, emphasised centralism far more than democracy and reduced the rights of minorities and dissenters within these organisations. But other organising principles emerged within the Left during the 20th century which may point towards more effective ways of engaging far wider sections of the community in struggle.

The thriving and growing radical movements in Britain today are mainly not those that organise around democratic centralism. 'Leaderless' direct action movements based on affinity groups, mass participation and flexible decision-making processes are flourishing. In contrast with the orthodox left, localised anti-nuclear campaigns, environmentalist movements like Earth First! or Reclaim the Streets and global action movements such as Jubilee 2000, have captured the imagination and participation of thousands of people. While the left is stuck in the moment when power was seized in Russia in 1917, the newer anti-capitalist movements look to the present and have grasped the connection with environmental demands. Workers continue being exploited by bosses but also live in globally warmed and polluted cities, have their lives shortened by unhealthy food marketed by multinationals, and vote for politicians who kneel before institutions of global capital such as the World Bank and the IMF and believe peace is maintained by a balance of nuclear terror.

Without a wider embracing party, turning protest into lasting achievements, these 'anti-capitalists' may drift away, but it would be foolish not to acknowledge the breadth of their analysis nor to learn from their methods of organisation. The orthodox left deride libertarian/anarchist movements for their individualism, lack of discipline and preference for stunts rather than consistent campaigning, yet their mobilising strength and the empowering nature of their activities are impressive.

Socialism's mass base in Britain has principally been expressed through the trades union movement and a Labour Party now colonised by 'modernisers' who have disposed of Clause 4 and given even more power to the centre. Many socialists despair of its future but lack confidence in the alternatives since most political organisations to Labour's left are smaller than they were 10 or 20 years ago. The one exception is the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), although we can't take its own claims about membership at face value.

Its lowest common denominator socialism is the antithesis of the over-elaborate programmatic agreement demanded of prospective members of the smaller left sects: On your first encounter with a Socialist Worker paper-seller, you are urged to join, (before even reading the paper!). But the SWP has a very large and quick turnover. If disillusionment with the Labour Party is currently the biggest force pushing people into the SWP's ambit, their commitment to rigid democratic centralism and their refusal to argue and debate, preferring to proclaim their positions and denounce those who disagree, does not help to keep people there.

In the late 1970s and early '80s, when the left was gaining in numbers and influence, and the SWP benefited from its central role in the Anti-Nazi League, the SWP's dogged commitment to centralism and its disdain for its members' experiences and their conceptions of their rights lost

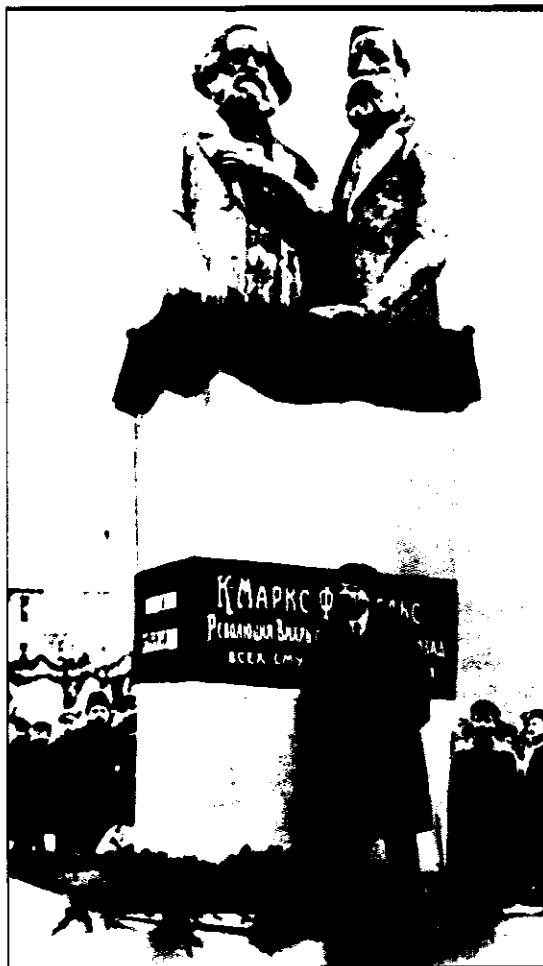


it many members. This period witnessed the first serious challenges to the culture of Leninism uncritically shared by a range of socialist organisations in Britain. Campaigns by feminist and gay/lesbian organisations challenged the priorities of the male/heterosexist Left and a huge conference following the publication of a book - Beyond the Fragments - by three socialist feminists, shook this dogma and gave strength to autonomous organisations forming among people experiencing particular forms of oppression under capitalism whose agendas were marginalised in the orthodox left organisations. These included women's groups, black groups, gay and lesbian groups, disabled groups, Jewish groups and others.

Some of these undoubtedly had separatist tendencies but most were open-minded groups who wanted their specific struggles to be recognised and addressed by the Left as a whole. By organising autonomously they gained strength, clarified their own situation and voiced their demands. Autonomy was not a dogma but a means to an end. Some prominent left figures cautiously welcomed this development, but most saw it as a 'diversion from the class struggle'. However, they couldn't stop it. For a short period the International Marxist Group tolerated different tendencies while the SWP spawned an autonomous women's group - Women's Voice, and an autonomous black group - Flame. Both increasingly challenged dominant views within the party and were hurriedly closed down. Some members were expelled and many left.

A young black man who came to a Jewish Socialists Group meeting around this time, asked me, 'What's a Bundist?'. 'The mass Jewish workers movement that had existed in Eastern Europe' I replied and asked where he had encountered them. He told me that Tony Cliff (SWP's undisputed leader) had just closed down Flame after denouncing them as 'Bundists', stating 'I'm Jewish and I know how bad the Bund was for the Jews'. But what did the late Tony Cliff know of the Bund? When the Bund became a powerful force in inter-war Poland, Cliff was in Palestine, initially supporting the Communist Party who saw the Bund as rivals for the allegiance of Poland's Jewish workers. He had no first-hand experience of the Bund but never questioned Lenin's viewpoint of his conflicts with it.

Yet he was right to make the connection. The disputes between autonomous organisations and a centralist party apparatus, followed by later battles over autonomous Black Sections in the Labour Party,



mirrored the disputes 80 years earlier between Bundists and Bolsheviks. They had no quarrel about the need for revolution; Tsarism could never be reformed. But they argued over how to organise most effectively for revolution, and particularly, about the Bund's right to organise autonomously amongst Jewish workers.

The Jewish working class then, was geographically concentrated in the 'Pale of Settlement', worked mainly for Jewish employers (discrimination excluded them from many spheres of employment), had experienced antisemitism from all classes in Russian society, including workers and peasants, and used Yiddish as their first language. When Leninists and Bundists came to blows, the Bund already had years of experience organising within and politicising this workforce. Lenin held a rigidly centralist view of party organisation and would not countenance this autonomy. His preferred Jews were 'internationalist' (read 'assimilated') and he never acknowledged his negative attitude towards Jewish culture. The Jews siding with Lenin against the Bund were mainly assimilated Jews who had grown up outside the traditional areas of Jewish settlement. In one famous exchange, when Trotsky was talking about 'Jewish workers', a Bundist delegate interjected: 'among whom you have never worked!'

The Bund's doubts about whether Leninists could recognise and react seriously to antisemitism seemed confirmed when Trotsky referred to the murderous Kishinev pogrom of 1903 as 'merely an expression of the unconsciousness of the masses'. Although the Bund was initially neutral about the long-term future of Jewish identity, it increasingly feared for the fate of Jewish culture after the revolution. More immediately, as an overwhelmingly working-class organisation, it had grave doubts about whether a centralist party like

the Bolsheviks, led by educated middle class professional revolutionaries, could ever become a democratic workers' party.

The Polish Bundist Victor Alter rejected Lenin's view that the working class must be led by the party and the party by professional revolutionaries. 'This very idea contains the seed of the dictatorship of the party over the proletariat and the dictatorship of the leaders - or, in the end, of the leader - over the party,' he wrote. Alter lived to see the degeneration of the revolution and Stalin's show trials of early Bolsheviks, before he himself was condemned to death by the Soviet authorities in 1941.

Along with other non-Bolshevik left-wing forces the Bund in Russia was closed down in 1921 as the one-party state was consolidated. Some of its activists returned to the prisons, under Lenin, that they had inhabited under the Tsar. Yiddish culture was initially supported in post-revolutionary Russia but only within approved party limits. It gradually became more suppressed. In the late 1920s the former Red Army leader, Leon Trotsky, expressed his shock at encountering antisemitism within the party. But if the Bund's experience with the Bolsheviks illustrates the relationship between issues of minority rights and autonomy within the party, and centralism, the later experience of the Bund, in inter-war Poland, when it swept the Jewish vote in local council elections and won massive support in Jewish community councils (kehillas) long dominated by religious groups, offers more positive models for socialists today.

Throughout the Bund's embattled Polish period, it contained two political tendencies. Its large minority tendency published its own journal (Kegn Shtrom - Against the Stream), sometimes defeated the majority tendency on specific matters, forced the party to hold special congresses on contested issues, but respected majority decisions it disagreed with. The party had a central committee, took daily tactical and strategic decisions, and published a daily paper reflecting the majority party view but never alienated the minority tendency. If this was democratic centralism it was a variant tilted overwhelmingly towards its democratic element. Bundists recall with affection the party's inner life, how unremote its leaders were, and how its democratic spirit pervaded all levels of the party, even down to its children's organisation. It is so hard to imagine left parties today, living in relatively more comfortable conditions and under far less direct repression, even considering such organisational practices. It does not mean being imprisoned by or beholden to the minority but listening to them and examining why certain ideas and policies might not command universal support within the party.

The brief interlude around 1980, when autonomous organisation became a prominent issue for the Left, ended as disputes with Thatcher's government forced the Left to focus on defensive strategies. Other issues became marginalised. At the same time, some who had taken the autonomous path turned into the cul-de-sac of self-indulgent identity politics, strengthening their identity but weakening their politics instead of harmonising both. Others took their autonomous politics into the radicalising area of local government but despite considerable gains, agendas around equality often became the battleground for competing hierarchies of oppression.

Left groups still abound with committed socialists, but remain overwhelmingly male and white.

Consciously or unconsciously, they still demand that new adherents reject their cultural background and assimilate into an amorphous 'international socialist culture' rather than help them engage critically with their cultural roots and reality. Occasional tokenistic support for minority arts and music cannot mask this continued assimilationism. The demand for adherence to Leninism today remains a demand for uniformity, against diversity, pluralism and democracy. We all know now what Stalin did, but when Blair's critics from the Left are perceptive enough to denounce his 'Leninism', and simultaneously examine their own leaderships, then we may see some positive changes in attitudes and practice among Left parties and a re-assessment of how to resolve conflicts of rights and interests within movements for change.

The current timely rise of socialist alliances – in Scotland, in London and other cities – reflects a mood for change, an unprecedented measure of self-criticism among socialists, a desire to put aside sectarian disputes, and an ambition to move beyond the Left's often self-imposed ghetto. But there is still a

large gulf between today's Left wing parties and alliances and the bulk of people, fed up to the teeth with 'Tory Blair', who would support a radical alternative if there was openness and democracy within the Left; if the papers of the Left were full of debate and clashes of opinion rather than a series of monologues, if ordinary people sensed that their voices would count and they felt that their issues, experiences and perceptions would be treated seriously; if they knew they would not just be a membership statistic. But left wing parties and groups would have to acknowledge areas of theoretical doubt and uncertainty, recognise that the world is more complex than in Marx's day, and that different groups in society experience and are affected by events differently. If we can truly build such a culture of openness and respect within our organisations and find ways to enable real conflicts, that positively reflect diverse views and perceptions to be expressed, we will be able to intervene more effectively against those in power who wish to continue to trample on the rights of everybody.

What are words worth?

In Britain's empire building stage English language was used as an instrument of domination. Today, in the era of globalism, while indigenous languages struggle to maintain themselves, people are now seeking access to English to establish their equal place in the world.

KAREN MERKEL discussed the conflicts and contradictions of language rights with **DAVID THOMAS**, Managing Editor for English Language Teaching for BBC Education Production.

David Thomas manages a team of producers with backgrounds as linguists and teachers who work together to produce English teaching radio programmes and on-line material tailored to the needs of audiences all over the world via the BBC World Service. He monitors closely the needs of language learners throughout the world and, as a broadcaster working in an increasingly competitive world, needs to assure himself that he is offering something that is both wanted and needed.

I asked him why people want to learn English and he described how young people see it as part of their linguistic repertoire, as a social badge - one that represents that they are part of an international world. Thomas is quite clear that it is the same global badge as the one that wearing Nike shoes provides. 'Young people in particular are buying into a concept. English gives them a global view and plugs them into the world. In Africa, many indigenous languages don't have easily used phrases to describe relationships. You'd be laughed at if you said you loved someone in one of the local languages. So, interestingly English is also a significant way for young people in particular to rebel against their elders.'

Thomas describes how this Global English is not the British English many of us understand it to be.

'English has mutated into something quite different from its former colonial function and you can't swap one for another. It's become a world language and like it or not, it is the main relationship that large amounts of the world have with each other. It is only the English language that currently takes on this role. There are very few monolingual countries in the world. Holland and parts of Scandinavia are now using English more as a second language, rather than simply a foreign language.

'French is no less French for using English loan words (i.e. bringing into the language words like Le Weekend). Loan words demonstrate a language's connection to the wider world. You can get wrapped up in an argument about purism, but right across the world people are comfortable in speaking different languages. They do this in order to be able to deal with most aspects of their current lives. For example, they will have one language for dealing with officials and formal structures, one for conversing with their elders and one less formal language for their friends. They will also interweave words from one to another language. Languages can be strengthened by loan words when they're relevant. If words are not relevant, they're simply not used. In Kenya, young people will use English as a way to increase their education and get work, but they still speak their own local languages. For many young

people, who are excluded because of all kinds of disadvantages, knowing how to speak English also creates a way to feel and be accepted.

'Clearly, there is the potential for a language to be lost. The example of Wales and its use of Welsh and English is very unusual. It is rare to have a minority language bolstered by central government. The message this gives to people is here's a language with very solid roots and traditions and customs that you can drop into. So you can have English to run your life and you can add to the richness of it with Welsh.'

I asked him if the tide of English speaking can be stopped, or indeed if it should be. David Thomas was sanguine, saying: 'It's used across the world but it doesn't necessarily mean it's the end of civilisation as we know it. In the UK there's more and more recognition and acceptance of other languages - there are 300 languages in London apart from English. You can argue that English stops the world being multilingual because of the bulldozer effect; actually, the world is more multi-lingual than that position allows for.'

'The problem is when there's no longer a culture of teaching other languages where English is interacting. For example, in rural Africa where languages aren't written down. The EU calls them 'lesser used' languages. But in this case it needs national governments to buy in to this idea which is expensive and needs to be pursued in an integrated

way. The Welsh argued that people should have the right to do business with government in their own language. In London languages such as Somali and Arabic are widely spoken in some communities, but how should the authorities respond to this? Should they encourage it? There's no simple answer. Every penny used to bolster someone to speak Somali throws up another question about resources.'

Thomas feels that ultimately 'it's all tied up with the view of oneself.' He's very clear that 'There's a different answer for different cultural backgrounds. For example, in parts of the Pacific Rim if you don't have Mandarin and/or Cantonese, you may eventually find it hard if not impossible to trade. But do you feel more fulfilled as a human being if your nation state and all the things that go with it work in one language or more than one? It's both a political and cultural issue. A language must be spoken to be living and interacting with the real world - if it's out of date it has no function.'

Interestingly David Thomas thinks that the internet may well be the saviour of many minority languages; 'The internet uses English as its principal language - all over the world. But alongside this, the net is about communities of interest and minority languages are also all about communities. This provides a powerful environment where people listen, record and learn each other's languages.'

THE RIGHT TO BE DIFFERENT

If you were to ask me today, must we help the Gypsies (or the Catalans, the Basques, the Bretons, the Native Americans, the Slovenes, the Jews or the Armenians etc.) to survive by perpetuating and deepening their differences, I would say, yes we must. It does not matter whether any such aggregation is a people, a nation, a tribe, an ethnic group, a class, a caste, a sect, a fossil or a survival, nor whether their obstinate will to live is in accordance with modish progressive thought. If a group exists, if it exerts itself to maintain, to renew and recreate its identity, and if it does so without being parasitic, that is enough for me. The will to live does not have to justify itself. It is the death wish and the will to destroy of which justification must now be demanded. We no longer know where history is going, if indeed it is going anywhere at all. Who can now affirm that it is progressive to level out ways of life, to abolish the habits and customs which express humanity's varied past and its present diversity? Who will be the mouthpiece for those cold-blooded monsters, the state bureaucracies who dream of organising the human race on the lines of a conveyor belt?

Any minority, ethnic, cultural or religious, should have the power to organise itself as it wishes, within the limits of what is politically possible. This is not an escape clause, a minority soon discovers for itself the limits of its possibilities. Sometimes they are wider than it thinks, sometimes they are narrower than it would wish. In any case, if it does not know just how far it can go, it puts in hazard what remains of its existence. One step of affirmation too far and it is lost, destroyed. But if it remains inside the limit of what is possible, if it does not assert itself, it is even

more completely lost, it forgets itself. Hence the many stratagems needed for survival, the masks, religious, nationalist, traditionalist or progressive, the vast expenditure of energy it devotes to these activities. It is surrounded and opposed by the majority, the state, its culture and technology, its wealth and its institutionalised violence, its bureaucracy and its police. The majority does not have to justify its existence, nor seek to define itself in order to exist. Nor does it have to make much of an effort in order to deprive a minority of meaningful existence. Ethnocide can to all appearances be committed absent-mindedly. It is implicit in the structures of majoritarian society, part of its secret of proclaimed intention, as painless as loss of memory, as inevitable and as indifferent as the passage of time. Everything is its licensed weapon; ideology, whether of the left or right, the prestige of its language, the educational system, getting on in the world, the mass media, toys, cars, official documents.

In this day and age, the majoritarian state does not very often have to resort to killing. Because it is mortal it has had to civilise itself. But knowing itself to be mortal it must therefore, more than ever, will the death of others, in order to root itself in the illusion of its own immortality. It plays the waiting game, and can afford to. The disappearance of the minority as natural as the invasion of fallow land by grass or trees. The dominant culture is the simple truth, the weed that grows, the wind that erodes. One has to be strangely perverse to resist it, such stubbornness is suspect, moribund. No wonder that the Jews, who have resisted for so long, are called a stiff-necked people.

This is an extract from an article by **RICHARD MARIENSTRAS** entitled 'The Jews of the Diaspora of the Vocation of a Minority', first published in **European Judaism** in 1975 and later brought out as a pamphlet by the **Medem Jewish Socialist Group** in New York.

CITY OF PIECES



Jerusalem has proved a major stumbling block towards creating a wider peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, but a shift in approach from rights to needs may offer the way forward, says **MICHAEL SAFIER**

Political pundits believe the time is ripe for a final push on the outstanding permanent status issues prolonging the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon and the prospects of a deal with Syria under its new leader, the latest round of back-channel talks point towards a settlement allowing the emergence of a Palestinian state on most of the territories now occupied by Israel, accepting the need for ensuring Israel's security needs, with accompanying arrangements for dealing with the twin dilemmas posed by the existence of Israeli settlers and Palestinian refugees. Despite the current impasse, Prime Minister Barak and Presidents Arafat and Clinton - or their most likely successors - are on message to conclude an accord, in which the city and region of Jerusalem, while remaining undivided, will become the capital of two states, respectively established in Yerushalayim and Al Quds, so bringing 100 years of conflict to an end in the 'city of peace'. This possibility is closely connected with the opening up of internal debate over the identity of Israel as a state and Israeli Jews as a nation, in which the conflict between democratic, Zionist and orthodox religious constructions are coming into sharper focus.

If it can be achieved, such a resolution should command our wholehearted support. The 'two state' solution has been a position held by socialists and progressives for some time now, with few dissenting and troubled voices raised to question it. Two states mandate two capitals and this will require Jerusalem to serve as the location of both. Many commentators believe that such a negotiated solution for the future of Jerusalem could be the major breakthrough, without which any overall two-state solution could not stand.

But the extreme simplification of the situation

contained in this scenario, blots out of account the real lived complexity of the conflicts between the multiple identity groups that share the city, whose needs must be met in any just and sustainable peace.

Two crucial contradictions stand in the way. The more immediate contradiction is between the political commentators' positive universal rhetoric and the negative realities conditioning the lives of Jerusalemites today. The second, more fundamental, contradiction exists between the negative political rhetoric of virtually all the different contending parties involved in the 'identity politics' of the city, and the positive practical possibilities of providing socially and culturally just solutions to real conflicts of collective group needs and interests.

Jerusalem is a more totally conflicted city than at any time in the last hundred years. The conflicts are ever more intractable, more diverse in their origins and more comprehensive in their impact. The city has been, and remains, under the national and religious hegemony of Israeli Jews, producing systematic social and cultural injustices against other national, religious, secular and ethnic groups. The city is currently divided between nations - principally Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs; religions - Islam, Judaism and Christianity; religious and secular groups - principally the varieties of orthodox Jewish sects and their secular Jewish adversaries; ethnic and socio-cultural communities - Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews and Israeli Palestinians; and territorial localities - East and West Jerusalem neighbourhoods, and the surrounding Jewish settlements and Palestinian refugee camps. These conflicts interpenetrate and reinforce each other to produce a mosaic of competition, contention and escalating tensions that mark every aspect of life in the city and impact negatively on every dimension of urban existence,

Above: conflict, concrete and corrugated iron - that's Jerusalem today. The graffiti says 'Death to Arabs'.

economic, social, political, cultural and environmental

Economically, Jerusalem is one of the poorest cities in Israel, lacking the high-tech, financial and other corporate sectors that flourish in Tel Aviv, Haifa and elsewhere. Inequalities of income and wealth between different communities are massive and worsening. Palestinians are the most impoverished group in the city, but for different reasons, large parts of the Haredi and Mizrahi communities are also relatively poor, and getting poorer in comparison with their wealthier neighbours.

The city is socially fragmented with many marginalised groups, while access to the basic services and amenities of urban living is drastically different for its diverse populations. The multiple deprivations of the Palestinians living within the municipal boundaries of the city can be measured by unemployment rates, infant mortality and educational achievement. But even they are better off than those living in nearby West Bank villages.

The city is governed by an electoral coalition which systematically discriminates against and oppresses large segments of its resident populations, and denies its inhabitants equal access to political decisions and administrative procedures. Jerusalem's



Palestinian population are excluded and disempowered to the greatest degree, but much of the current secular Jewish majority - is also deprived of an influential voice in municipal affairs. The city is riven by cultural cleavages based on excluding ways of life that produce a series of self-contained and often aggressively expansionist cultural communities competing to determine the cultural definition of the city after their own particularist preferences. Christian Palestinians and secular Jews - tiny minority and numerical majority - struggle to maintain themselves against both

Judaic and Islamic claims to the right of pre-emption over the future character of not just the holy places but the lifestyles of all Jerusalemites.

The city is spatially disintegrated by increasingly isolated and mutually hostile neighbourhoods, villages and settlements in which conflicting groups are located. Despite a formally 'united' administration and infrastructure, people cannot enjoy the basic advantages of living in a city with a variety of facilities and amenities, especially in the centre. Jerusalem's 'centre' is missing, a casualty of the conflicts generated from opposing points of the city's compass - the Israelis in the west, the Palestinians in the east, the ultra-orthodox in the north and the Mizrahi underclass in the south.

Lastly, the city is becoming environmentally degraded because of the intense determination of its constituent groups to colonise - legally or illegally - any piece of land on which they can stake a claim by

planning or building any kind of structures whether likely to be completed or occupied for any useful purpose or not. This land-grabbing - initiated on a massive scale by the Israeli authorities in 1967 and continuing today - threatens the essential ecological balances and the quality of environmental amenity on which the city depends for a sustainable future.

Not surprisingly, many who fear for their family's security, civil rights or equal opportunities, or who despair of seeing improved standards of living, social relations, levels of political participation, cultural openness and environmental quality in the city, are leaving. More and more it is those committed to pursuing unending conflict to its ultimate resolution who remain to fight over the impoverished remains of the city of peace. This is actualising the self-selecting prophecy of those committed to the 'demographic solution' to the future of Jerusalem, overwhelming and/or expelling the 'others', principally Palestinians and/or secular Jews. Since within the next 20 years there is likely to be an absolute majority made up of a combination of the Palestinians and the Haredi Jews, the future looks bleak indeed. Even now, without a full recognition of and adequate response to the conflicted situation, no possible peace agreement will solve Jerusalem's problems.

The chances of such recognition and response are, however, minimised by the fundamental contradiction between the exclusivist and competitive rhetoric of identity politics, and the search for socially and culturally just solutions to real conflicts of identity needs. From parts of the political leadership of all groups, there is a rhetoric of extreme antipathy towards other groups and a disturbing sense of an absolute adversarial politics, built on competitive claims for rights and interests whereby success for one group can only be achieved by the failure of others. This was powerfully symbolised when I visited and saw 'Independence Day' celebrated in West Jerusalem at the same time as East Jerusalem commemorated the *Naqba* (disaster).

A more insidious example is the uncompromising struggle over land and building. In one area, the expansion of the fast growing Haredi community takes place by colonising previously mixed religious and secular communities, whose lifestyles are absolutely unacceptable to the ultra-orthodox. The efforts of an expanding Palestinian population to provide better housing conditions for family life are regarded as an absolute threat to the future planned expansion of Jewish neighbourhoods. The response is house demolitions and the destruction of property. Any attempt to secure autonomous representation or create autonomous institutions by Palestinian Jerusalemites is seen as absolutely unacceptable because it threatens the absolute exercise of Israeli 'sovereignty' over the city; hence the attempt to abolish Orient House and other East Jerusalem offices of the Palestinian Government. Similarly, the legitimate rights of Jerusalem Palestinians to full citizenship status, and of all Palestinians to freedom of movement around the urban region is considered an absolute threat to Israeli 'security', so they are subject to arbitrary legal and military restriction. The legitimate claims of Palestinian Jerusalemite refugees to re-occupation or compensation for properties confiscated or annexed

in 1948 and 1967 is presented, by both Israeli and Palestinian politicians as mandating an absolute clash of interests that cannot be conceivably subject to modification in either direction, but only entirely conceded or entirely rejected.

The extremism in political rhetoric and public ideology on all sides encourages sentiments of national chauvinism, racism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic and class demonisation, and negative stereotyping reinforcing prejudices built up over a century of conflict, domination, discrimination and oppression. The achievement of individual, and even more, group rights and interests is presented as a 'zero-sum game' in which 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' or 'freedom from want, persecution or arbitrary force' for one group must be necessarily pursued against the interest and rights of other groups sharing the life of the city. The absence of trust at the most basic level between groups suggests that any attempt at negotiated settlement of conflicts will be widely contested and ineffective in practice. It seems that Israelis and Palestinians, Haredi and secular Jews, Ashkenazi, Mizrahi and Israeli Palestinians in Jerusalem will never agree how to live together, or even to tolerate the most basic collective identity rights being accorded equally to each other.

This image and perception of the intolerable and intractable conflict over group *rights* is contradicted by an assessment of future prospects for satisfying basic identity *needs*. Looked at in these terms, such intense inter-group conflicts can be reduced to a relatively few acutely problematic but negotiable confrontations. The majority of rights issues that so preoccupy people, political parties and official agencies of government, and on which so much adversarial rhetoric and policy positions are based, turn out to be, in terms of needs, matters on which all groups can be accommodated without denying the needs of others.

A primary need is for all collective cultural groups that share the city to be given equal recognition as citizens; to be included on an equal basis in society at large, so that the group and its members are secure in their position and their right to be there. This encompasses equality of treatment before the law; non-discrimination; equal protection in terms of public order and security; and equal access to and provision of common social services and support. In these respects the ultra-orthodox Israeli Jewish community is absolutely privileged, and the Palestinians absolutely deprived, with a hierarchy of needs satisfaction in between running from orthodox and secular Ashkenazi Jews, down to large sections of Mizrahi Jews and the Israeli Palestinian community.

Yet in each aspect of equality of recognition the rebalancing of needs so as to replace the hierarchy with an equivalence of position does not pose insurmountable difficulties. Equality of citizenship for Palestinians, orthodox and secular, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, can be brought about without prejudice to each other. What is required is the negotiation of a common status and common entitlements, the removal of official discrimination, and a concerted campaign of public education. None of this requires the needs for security of Israeli Jews and for autonomy or opportunity for Palestinians or any other group to be sacrificed. The

two instances of genuine difficulty remain the status of the ultra-orthodox Jewish communities who refuse the principle of common citizenship applying to them; and the status of Palestinian Israelis, who have to work out their status needs in relation to Israeli and Palestinian nationalities in a two-state accommodation.

A second basic 'collective identity' need is for respect, for all groups to be treated distinctively according to their cultural particularities, on an equivalent basis to all other cultural groups, whether majority or minority. This need encompasses appropriate variations and culturally sensitive modifications in public provision of basic services, amenities and welfare; acceptance of culturally specific forms of social organisation and provision; respect for different systems of beliefs and observances; and acknowledgement of different forms of cultural expression and celebration.

At present there exists a negative equality - mutual incomprehension and discomfort with the challenging diversity represented by others. Again, on closer examination of basic needs, their mutual satisfaction can be achieved without disparagement or unresolvable antagonism. Being careful to keep the need for 'respect' from overlapping with other categories of need, even the mutual acknowledgement of the distinctive Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities in the Old City, the distinctive Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab cultures in the wider urban area, the distinctive religious and secular traditions of Haredi, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi communities, do not require the loss of crucial components of any one collective identity. What is required is the abandonment of the spurious 'need' for 'Judaisation' of the city, the negotiation of a basis for better mutual understanding among religious and secular groups of Jews and Palestinians, and according equal acknowledgement of the different groups of Jews that make up the whole of the Jewish cultural landscape of Jerusalem. This involves complex modifications in education and institutional autonomy, but can be resolved on a case by case basis.

A third basic identity need is for resourcing; for collective cultural groups to mobilise resources within themselves and make proportional claims on the wider society's resources to support collective cultural provision. This need requires equivalent access to sources of support in the wider society for cultural development and equality of opportunity for members of different cultural communities; There needs to be proportional equity in the allocation of benefits and costs of public finances. At present the needs of the Haredi community, and to a great extent the majority secular Ashkenazi community are very well, and well met, while those of the Mizrahi underclass and more particularly the Palestinian community are almost entirely unmet. This arises from the massive inequality in income and wealth between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs - a factor of 10 to 1 on average - and, more particularly, the massive inequity in the proportional redistribution of municipal revenues. The Palestinian third of



Jerusalem's population receives below 5% of expenditure budgeted. The meeting of resource needs for underprivileged and marginalised communities can be quickly advanced without compromising those of the better resourced, partly by releasing multiple restrictions which prevent many Palestinians from participating in the economic opportunities available in both employment and business enterprise.

A fourth need is for representation; formal and informal participation in government, especially where decision-making and resource allocation are involved which affect the different collective cultural groups. This need includes a degree of proportional representation in executive, legislative, judicial and administrative branches of government, including security and policing; access to corrective countermeasures against the impositions of 'democratic' dictatorship by a cultural majority group; and equivalent avenues of access to decision-makers and opportunities to develop self-governing institutions for representation.

In these respects the ultra-orthodox Jewish community is heavily over-represented and other Israeli groups have quite substantial representational capacities both in relation to government and self-government. The Palestinians are critically under-represented. With the increasing likelihood of a two-state accord, the crucial conflict around representation is focussed around the governmental structures that will accommodate two capitals and nationalities in the one city. There are already sufficiently worked out models of shared sovereignty and municipal management showing how the representational needs of both Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem can be mutually satisfied.

The final basic need is for the possibility of realising cultural community life in the shared space of the city. This need includes access to residence free from restriction and insecurity for members of all collective cultural groups; provision and appreciation of group requirements for specific sites and areas; and equal access to all public facilities, amenities and public spaces. This is where the shift from rights to needs has the most decisive impact on the resolution of multiple conflicts over the physical space of the city. The Palestinians have by far the greatest unmet

needs in terms of extent and quality of residential requirements, basic infrastructure, business opportunities, and freedom of access to central city locations. The Mizrahi underclass in the south of the city need drastic improvement in the quality of its environment and its facilities. There is an acute need for future residential expansion among Palestinians and the Haredi communities in particular. The needs of two groups of newcomers will also have to be addressed - a proportion of the Palestinian Jerusalemite refugee community, and new Jewish immigrants. Given the existing distribution of neighbourhoods, Jewish settlements and Arab villages in the region, there are major conflicts over the need for land, accommodation and access that have to be acknowledged and resolved.

The arena and measures available for resolving multiple conflicts over land and access needs are far more favourable than appears from current confrontations over territory. Paradoxically the resolution is made easier by the separation of different cultural communities which need time and care in adjusting to a more integrated structure of living and working areas in the urban region. More significant still is the concerted impact of moves towards meeting other collective identity needs - for equal recognition, respect, resourcing and representation and the ability and willingness of the different cultural groups to share city space and facilities without fear of insecurity and exclusion. Various proposed schemes for the future of the Jerusalem region, suggest that the land available for accommodating the felt needs of its constituent cultural communities alongside the overall economic and social development of a potentially expanding urban region, is more than adequate.

Within a future Jerusalem metropolitan co-dominium stretching from just short of Ramallah in the north, and of Bethlehem in the south, and from Abu Dis and Har Homa in the east to Ein Kerem in the west, a future population of well over a million is perfectly conceivable. It will depend on negotiating a socially and culturally proportional and just distribution of opportunities available, where each cultural community realises its goals without nullifying the needs and aspirations of others sharing the same space.

Our Jerusalem a petition for peace

Jerusalem is ours, Israelis and Palestinians – Muslims, Christians and Jews.

Our Jerusalem is a mosaic of all the cultures, all the religions and all the periods that enriched the city, from the earliest antiquity to this very day – Canaanites and Jebusites and Israelites-Jews and Hellenes, Romans and Byzantines, Christians and Muslims, Arabs and Mamelukes, Othmanlis and Britons, Palestinians and Israelis. They and all the others who made their contribution to the city have a place in the spiritual and physical landscape of Jerusalem.

Our Jerusalem must be united, open to all and belonging to all its inhabitants, without borders and barbed wire in its midst.

Our Jerusalem must be the capital of the two states that will live side by side in this country – West Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel and East Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine.

Our Jerusalem must be the capital of peace. This petition was launched by Gush Shalom at a joint Israeli-Palestinian demonstration under the Old City Walls in May 1995.

DENYING THE HOLOCAUST

Deborah Lipstadt

Penguin, £8.99

Case history

After the trial was over, the media swarmed round David Irving examining his writing, his life story, his politics and associates. They gave little space to Deborah Lipstadt's book, *Denying the*

Holocaust, in which Irving claimed he had been libelled. The trial had taken three months at the end of which the judge ruled that Irving had not been libelled. Lipstadt was less of a media favourite, mainly because she would not debate with Irving or any other Holocaust denier, saying that to do so would be to assign spurious validity to his argument.

Like Searchlight, the anti-fascist magazine, Lipstadt tries to walk the fine line between exposing Holocaust deniers as liars and charlatans and giving them the publicity they crave. Denying the Holocaust has probably been read closely by fascists who will have been rewarded with intricate

detail about their biographies and careers. This book, with its welter of minute information is, undoubtedly a resource for historians in the field but, unless you are one of the cast, basking in its limelight, it is a struggle to read.

The most interesting aspect of the book is its analysis of the historical antecedents of Holocaust denial, a pro-Germanism which Lipstadt traces to the period after the First World War, which is, after all, where Hitler himself came from. Unfortunately, this analysis is buried in the book's relentlessly repetitive and unimaginative structure, most of which consists of lengthy descriptions of individual self-proclaimed experts who argue that the gas chambers never existed and that the Holocaust is a hoax dreamed up by international Jewry in order to squeeze reparations out of a helpless German state. Wading through the mundane detail, the spurious research and the bizarre claims of the Holocaust deniers, you quickly realise that most of these individuals are isolated, insignificant and, for the most part, uninteresting. A decent editor would have made her rewrite the book so that the characters were woven through the analysis instead of giving a whole chapter to each of them, with their ludicrous claims and

risible 'academic' institutions.

Lipstadt's research is prolific but her arguments lack rigour, and this undermines a perfectly solid case against Holocaust denial. For instance, she lumps the antifascist Jim Allen, author of the controversial play, *Perdition*, in with foaming-at-the-mouth fascists saying, 'Though the play did not deny the Holocaust, the result was the same: the perpetrators were absolved and the victims held responsible.' *Perdition* was undoubtedly problematic, mainly in its oversimplification of events and polemical tone, but it certainly didn't serve the Nazi purpose.

The answer to Holocaust denial is not to catch everything within its net but to isolate its specific arguments and their proponents. There are many aspects of the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis which are still being explored and many people are asking genuine questions about the philosophy, politics, rationale and methods that constituted the Holocaust. Serious debate does not play into the hands of deniers.

Someone who cannot distinguish between genocidal fantasies about Jews and legitimate, if aggressively expressed, criticism of Zionism, may not be the best person to point the finger at bad historians.

Julia Bard

Passing over

As a Jewish socialist who believes that the meaning of race in the USA is socially created, I was first intrigued by this book because of its title. Author Karen Brodtkin, a feminist academic, has written a dynamic volume that uses scholarly research and personal experience to support the view that working class Jews must reclaim our Jewishness. For Brodtkin, this means that Jews must come to the forefront in confronting racism (and, I would add, sexism) in order to bring about full equality and emancipation for everyone.

Brodtkin explains how the definitions of who is 'white' and who is not are creations of the profit-makers, used to keep the working class divided. Although Jews are still subjected to antisemitism, Brodtkin shows, we nonetheless have been permitted to move from the category of non-white to white without changing the shade of our skin! The same has been true for Italians, the Irish, and other ethnic groups. Brodtkin uses her own family as an example. Her parents and relatives of their generations identified primarily as Jewish, but she and

her siblings identify primarily as white. There always remain groups who are denied this transition, and are permanently marked as being 'of colour' and super-exploited on that basis. This is the case above all for African Americans. Until the Second World War, Brodtkin writes, Jews were discriminated against and ostracised in housing, education, and jobs. But after the war, the perception of Jews as non-white faded, and so did the degree of exclusion we faced. Ironically, though, even this transformation itself is the basis for

HOW JEWS BECAME WHITE FOLKS: AND WHAT THAT SAYS ABOUT RACE IN AMERICA

Karen Brodtkin

Rutgers University Press,
\$18

a racist myth - that Jews, supposedly aggressive, industrious, and intelligent, 'pulled ourselves up by our bootstraps.' In fact, Jews owe their post-war upward mobility in large measure to the GI Bill, which was only instituted in order to head off the kind of massive protests by unemployed ex-soldiers that exploded after the First World War. As Jews 'became white' and moved into unfamiliar neighbourhoods, schools, and work-places, much of what it had meant to be Jewish was lost, especially for women. Traditionally, immigrant Jewish mothers were respected authority figures. As their place in family and society altered, however, the phrase 'Jewish mother' came to be synonymous with 'domineering castrating bitch'. Brodtkin's grandmother greatly lost status when she moved to her daughter's suburban home, and eventually committed suicide. Young Jewish women also suffered. Noted in early US ghetto society for their spirit and political engagement, they later became stereotyped as

'Jewish American Princesses'. Brodtkin's antidote is for Jews to reclaim their Jewishness - a shared, optimistic vision that to do good works for a community larger than one's family and one's self is central to our humanity. To be Jewish, she believes, should mean to be a fighter against oppression. I was glad to discover an author who is a *mentsh*, who recognises that Jews are primarily working class and have an historical mission to combat racism. But at the same time, I also found the book disappointing. It appropriates Marxist ideas and method, but fails to credit them. On the one hand, Brodtkin hints that socialism could be a solution to inequality. She affirms that communist philosophy and organising were part of turn-of-the-century *Yiddishkayt*. Socialist values were attractive even to non-leftists in the community, who appreciated a world view that emphasised the commonalities, not the differences among diverse peoples. On the other hand, though, Brodtkin's book is built on a contradiction. Her work is based

on the Marxist recognition that capitalism created racism to justify the slave trade but she doesn't acknowledge Marx. She tars Marx, whose background was Jewish, as antisemitic, citing his early characterisation of Jews as symbolising the fledgling profit system. This description flowed from Marx's profound theory that economic function is the basis for how society takes shape - an idea key to How Jews Became White Folks. Orthodox Marxism explains that Jews were created as a people by their roles as traders and moneylenders under feudalism and emerging capitalism. Nevertheless, Brodtkin has given her readers a marvellous gift by exposing the system of production for private gain as the root of racism and by laying out the reasons that Jews turned white. It will be up to those of us who are proud of being Jewish Marxists to take it from there!

Adrienne Weller

This review originally appeared in Freedom Socialist published in Seattle, USA. Email: fsnews@mindspring.com. Website: <http://www.socialism.com>

Behind closed doors

KADOSH

Dir: Amos Gitai, 1999

Kadosh (Sacred) is about two women, Rivka and her sister Malka, in the ultra-religious community in Mea She'arim, a quarter of Jerusalem where Jews live as they did in Eastern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The film opens with Meir, Rivka's husband of 10 years, rising in the morning from the bed he shares with his much loved wife. He goes through his daily rituals: blessing his *tsitsit*, the fringed undergarment; *tephillin*, the black boxes bound round the forehead and the arm; the prayer for washing the hands and thanks for not being a woman. Soon he will be ordered to divorce her as she has borne him no children. Long before that, he stops having sex with her because, believing her to be infertile, sex

would constitute masturbation.

Malka is in love with a man she cannot marry and under pressure agrees to marry the fanatical Yossef. Their wedding is tragic as she is led in, veiled from head to toe, a parcel passed from father to husband, to be excitedly, and brutally, torn open after the guests have gone.

This is an extraordinary film, courageous in portraying an impoverished community where every detail of life is prescribed by God, relatives and the rabbi, and big human dramas are overshadowed by the drama of Jewish history. Amongst the ultra-orthodox, the greatest imaginable grief is not for the destruction of a human being but for the destruction of the temple. The community

is everything, the individual expendable. The Enlightenment has been blocked out.

The women's low value, though, gives them just enough freedom to glimpse other possibilities beyond the ghetto. This is a blessing and a curse. If they go as, in the end, Malka does, they go with nothing - no family, no education, no experience of the world. If they stay, they are constrained and powerless.

Gitai's film has the feel of a documentary. You can't help wondering what an ultra-orthodox Jew would make of it. But, of course, cinema, like television and radio, are off limits to those who live their life by the Book.

Julia Bard

RAF SALKIE reviews some not altogether happy stories of Jews and socialism

I know it's a cliché to say that the personal is political, but it happens to be true. A careful look at the four books under the microscope this time confirms it repeatedly. Each of the books is very personal, even self-centred: the authors show us what their part of the world looks like from their perspective. What they have in common is that the worlds which they describe were all ones in which socialism had recently suffered enormous setbacks. Joseph Roth (1894-1939) was a Jewish writer who served in the Austrian army in the First World War. Initially he wrote for left-wing papers in Vienna, but he soon realised how malignant Stalin's regime was, and with the rise of

the Nazis he moved steadily to the right during the course of his life. **Rebellion** (translated by Michael Hofmann, Granta, £12.99) was originally published in 1924 and is set in post-war Austria. The title is ironic, as the central figure, disabled war veteran Andreas Pum, is a victim from beginning to end. After a spell in prison during which he ages terribly, he ends up working as

a toilet attendant, collapsing on his seat next to the giant weighing machine. After his death his body is taken to the Anatomical Institute and dissected by medical students. There is little drama in the book, but the detached style somehow conveys the sadness of one person's life in a world where social change had been systematically crushed. Moving forward in time we come to the '50s and **Shalom Bomb** by Bernard Kops (Oberon, £15.99), his account of his life as a writer. Born in 1926, Kops wrote his first plays and novels at the height of the Cold War, marching each year to Aldermaston and mixing with London literati whom he dismisses as 'Sohocialists'. Much of the book is a painfully honest account of the

author's struggle with drug addiction: at one point he was taking 30 speed tablets and black bombers a day and came close to dying. What struck me even more strongly, though, is the way Kops has only negative feelings when he looks back at his own political commitment and that of his friends. The sneers irritated me: it would be nice for a change to read that an activist didn't regret a minute of it (and not just in the Morning Star obituaries, either). I suppose, though, that someone who lived through the war, lost most of his family in the Holocaust, and then experienced Britain in the '50s has good reason to feel disillusioned. We still have all those nuclear missiles, after all. Another part of the world where socialist ideals have taken a hammering is Israel, especially if you are not a member of the Ashkenazi elite. Jonathan Jacob, the author of **Israel: A Divided Promised Land** (Janus, £6.95), is an Indian Jew who served in the Israeli army for 23 years. The book is an impassioned attack on the oppressive actions of the Israeli ruling class, despite their socialist rhetoric. He writes on behalf of the 'Easterners' - the Sephardi Israelis who came from Yemen, Iraq, North Africa and Asia. In a world where the divisive tactics of the right were less effective, the Eastern Jews might have made common cause with the Palestinian Arabs, so that the Middle East would have looked very different. But we can only dream on...

Finally Victor Jeleniewski Seidler's personal exploration of his place in the world, **Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish identity and belonging** (Berg, £11.99). Inspired largely by recent trips to Poland, where Seidler traces what he can of his family origins, the book tries to examine what it means to be a Jewish intellectual in London, with the tragedy of European Jewry hanging over his whole life. Three of his uncles were killed in Poland, one of them hiding in Warsaw until 1943, when he heard a Nazi announcement that any remaining Jews would be given safe passage to a neutral country. He and the others who showed up were taken to the local prison and shot. Dwelling on such matters made Seidler unwelcome during much of his visit to Poland: non-Jewish Poles find the interest of Western Jews in the Holocaust difficult to deal with. Once again, a personal story that is inescapably tied in with political events, in this case the collapse of Soviet-style communism. The story of socialism in Europe is one of genuine gains but also massive defeat, betrayal and disappointment. It's a story with many Jewish participants, including those who built the state of Israel only to become tools of British and then American imperial ambitions. There isn't much in these books which encourages us to think that the story will one day have a happy ending - but the alternative is unthinkable, so we keep the story alive.



'That's another batch of Jewish Socialist subscriptions. Can we take a rest now?'

See page 35 for details of how to subscribe

Founding fathers

I was surprised by Ben Gidley's remark in JS 41 that revolutionary intellectuals 'such as Aaron Lieberman or Morris Winchevsky ... firmly rejected any Jewish identity'. Lieberman, addressing himself 'To my young Jewish brethren', founded the first Jewish socialist society, in Whitechapel, and with Winchevsky started a Jewish workers' benefit society, and the paper Der Polisher Yidl, in 1884. Winchevsky, as well-versed in the old Hebrew as the newest European literature, chose to write in Yiddish 'For you, my people, for you' ('To My Brethren', 1880s). He produced an Aleph-Beis of Trade Unionism, and translated Thomas Hood's Song of the Shirt into *mameloshn*.

No sectarian, Winchevsky admired William Morris and Gene Debs, and his friends included Eleanor Marx and the Italian anarchist Malatesta. But when he died in New York in 1932, the Left was bitterly divided. Communists marching through the Bronx to claim the *zeyde* as their own clashed with reformists handling the funeral. Mounted police forcing their way through the crowd outside the Workmen's Circle cemetery must have been bewildered by all these left-wing Jews trading blows and fiery Yiddish curses!

Charlie Pottins
Wembley, Middlesex

Wrong version

Unfortunately you published a bastardised version of 'Bastards, bastards and other bastards' in your last issue. The full version also dealt with the question of offering support for Orthodox women who have no real choice but to remain obediently within their communities. I argued that we shouldn't simply repeat the line that these women are 'trapped' and endorse what their communities are telling them, when we could instead recall that they do in fact have choices, even if those choices don't extend to forcing rabbis or ex-husbands to perform religious ceremonies for them. I also have to disown the reference to my children as wonderful Anglo-Jewish bastards, which was not part of my article and should not have appeared in print. Please publish this letter as an apology to my

children for any pain and embarrassment caused by calling them 'wonderful'.

Dena Attar
Peckham, London

Proud tradition

I've just read a copy of your magazine for the first time and I was impressed. I had expected something more parochial and insular but found it open, accessible, widely relevant and stimulating. There was an emphasis on constructive engagement and a generosity of spirit that followed in the best socialist traditions. It was excellent, also, to see you celebrating links with other minority groups and tending towards unity and solidarity rather than focusing too heavily on difference in the spurious vogue of identity politics. The Jewish tradition in socialism is fundamental. Some of our greatest theorists and exponents have emerged from your community. Long may this valuable seam continue to produce.

Tarsam Singh
Birmingham

Missing link

It is ironic that along with an appreciation of George Orwell (JS41) you also publish in the same issue an article by David Rosenberg on the first 25 years of the Jewish Socialists' Group in which he omits any mention of the JSG's origins, the first five years of its existence, and of its secretary and leading light, Aubrey Lewis.

According to the JSG pamphlet 'What's left in 78?', the group's role was to provide 'a defence ... in socialist terms of Israel's right to exist', to 'campaign inside the Left for a correct, balanced and more scientific attitude' to Jewish questions, and, in the Jewish community, to be 'standard bearers of socialism in opposition to the right-wing tendencies which were having a field day thanks to the errors of the Left'.

The 1978 pamphlet consists largely of a defence from a left perspective of Zionism (the 'Jewish National Movement') and of Israel.

It is presumably this original pro-Zionist stance that Rosenberg refers to as having been 'clarified' - an Orwellian word if ever there was one - when, in the early 1980s, the JSG was effectively

taken over by a group of neo-Bundists, including Rosenberg himself.

The pro-Zionist origins of the JSG may be an embarrassment but it is inexcusable to write Lewis out of JSG history in this way.

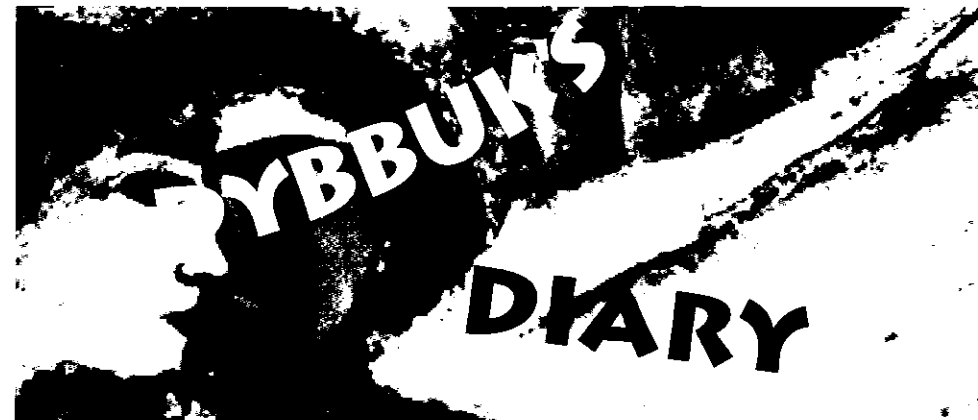
Ben Mestel
Crediton, Devon

It is not Jewish Socialist's policy to have responses to letters in the same issue but in the interests of clarification we have shown this letter to David Rosenberg who replies below.

The earliest positions taken by the JSG were close to those of Left Zionists but they were advanced by a group that never suggested to its members, supporters or anyone else in the Jewish community that they should fulfil the ideal of Zionism and move to Israel. Some members may have called themselves 'socialist-Zionists', but Aubrey Lewis, who was most influential in establishing these positions, certainly wouldn't, since he had spent most of his political life as a very active member of the consistently anti-Zionist Communist Party. It was several years after he left the JSG that he began to call himself a Zionist. He wrote a memoir called *Zig Zag to Zion* and joined Poale Zion.

Mestel claims that the JSG was 'taken over' by 'a group of neo-Bundists', implying an anti-democratic coup. This is rubbish. The group trebled in size between 1978-1980 and became more politically diverse. There was a growing demand for it to develop democratic structures, so that all its members' views could be represented. When these structures came into being it was evident that the 'neo-Bundist' perspective was the one shared most widely. The policies and public positions adopted by the group came to reflect that. Sadly, the JSG's founder, Aubrey Lewis, was eventually at odds with most of the members over the adoption of democratic structures. Nevertheless, I retain very warm personal memories of Aubrey Lewis who was a socialist who believed in doing what he thought was right, not sniping from the sidelines, and who inspired the commitment of Jew and non-Jew alike.

David Rosenberg

**AVADIM HAYINU...**

I trust all the *moshavim* and *kibbutzim* in Israel's northern Negev enjoyed the *Shavuot* harvest festival. 'Happy shalt thou be when thou eateth the labour of thy hands - or anyone else's? Netivot police chief Rehavia Umasi says many Jewish farm settlements are employing child labour, fetched from the Hebron area by Bedouin middlemen, and exploited 'like slaves'. They work all day in the fields, with little food or water, watched by overseers sitting in the shade. Sounds quite Biblical.

In a raid for Arabs working without permits, Israeli police arrested 25 youngsters aged between 10 and 14, questioned them, then drove them back to the occupied West Bank. Reports don't say whether anything happened to the employers. In Israel, as in Britain and the United States, police raids don't prevent 'illegal' labour, but they help ensure the exploited don't start asking for their rights. And at *Pesach*, when we sing *Avadim Hayinu* - Slaves Were We in Egypt - some can add 'But now we are Pharaohs!' Until some latter-day Moshe - or Musa - raises a hand against the taskmaster?

SHMUCK BACK IN ANGER?

Hold the front page! Government minister still believes something she said four years ago! Well that is news, I suppose. The Queen is angry, we are told, because Mo Mowlem thinks the Royals should quit Buckingham Palace for somewhere more modern. (I suggest moving

them into the Dome, thus using one costly but useless ornament to house some others). Having turned Mowlem's architectural criticisms into a beheading offence, the loyal Daily Mail follows-up with a cartoon - with the Dover tragedy still fresh in people's minds - depicting a truckload of illegal immigrants saying Mo Mowlem has promised them Buckingham Palace. Very tasteful, as we'd expect from the paper that backed Sir Oswald Mosley.

British newspapers seem incapable of reporting what anyone says, without telling us it has aroused a 'row' somewhere. If you merely say the words alleged seem mildly inappropriate, they'll put you down as incandescent with rage. Failing that, they'll invent something. Unfortunately, the Jewish community has become a favourite standby (except of course when we're seriously angry about something, like the treatment of asylum seekers, or racism in the media). We were supposedly furious when Ken Livingstone said world capitalism kills more people than Hitler. But the Nazi regime, backed by companies which still haven't paid their surviving slave labourers, was part of modern capitalism, so of course the whole continuing system kills more. Now the Independent, among others, reports our 'anger' at London's incoming mayor comparing the Treasury to the Nazis. Digging through the hype, I eventually find that what he really said was that local government in Britain nowadays had about as much independence as the

Vichy French regime. (Really, that much?) Had he expressed this less dramatically, would the papers have reported it? Livingstone knows the game. Trouble is, repeated evocation of 'Nazi' images risks making them as clichéd as the Pavlovian 'Jewish response'. But the Vichy triad of 'Travail, Patrie et Famille' might suit some current British politicians.

ASK THE MINISTER

Coming from a House of Commons meeting about Roma refugees, a friend asks a question that's been puzzling him. 'This government is determined to keep out Roma coming from the Czech Republic to seek asylum, right? It denies they are persecuted, and it favours admitting the Czech Republic to the European Union. But if the Czech Republic obtains EU membership, surely its citizens will be free to move anywhere, including Britain? Or is the government counting on the Czechs having stripped these people of their citizenship, so they lose their rights of entry?' What a cynical idea! Not feeling qualified to answer, I suggest such questions are addressed to a bright former Jews Free School headgirl helping Jack Straw. Write to the Minister for Immigration and Asylum affairs, Mrs Barbara Roche, MP, House of Commons, Westminster, SW1.

JEWISH SOCIALIST

is a quarterly magazine launched by the Jewish Socialists' Group in 1985 as a forum for radical ideas and opinions on issues directly affecting the Jewish community here and elsewhere and on questions vital to minorities and socialists everywhere.

Through this forum we aim to:

highlight the clash of political, economic and cultural interests in our community;

encourage the democratisation of all aspects of Jewish life and publicise and support all democratic forces in the Jewish community;

highlight the struggle for equality for women and gays and lesbians within and beyond our community;

promote views that link the interests of Jewish people to the interests of other national and cultural minorities and oppressed groups, locally, nationally and internationally, and to a common socialist future;

counter myths about the 'shrinking', 'dying' and 'assimilating' diaspora by affirming the vitality of Jewish communities across the world;

counter Zionist ideology, which subordinates the needs of diaspora Jews to the demands of Israeli state nationalism, and justifies exclusivist, discriminatory and repressive practices towards the Palestinian people;

promote ideas and perspectives that offer a progressive solution to conflicts involving the Jewish people such as the Israel/Palestine conflict;

expose and oppose fundamentalist ideas and religious coercion within and beyond our community;

reclaim a 'people's history' of the Jews which connects our historical experience to the struggles of other working people and the oppressed;

highlight the problems facing minorities in society and within progressive movements and make these concerns central to discussions of socialist strategy here and now;

support and promote radical progressive cultural initiatives within and beyond the Jewish community;

promote views which link the struggle to build socialism with the struggle for a healthy and sustainable environment;

promote a socialism that is culturally pluralist and fully democratic both in its ends and means.

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