

# A NIGHT OF LAUGHTER FOR JEWISH SOCIALIST

## WITH TOP STAND UP COMEDIANS

8pm on Sunday 11 February,  
at the Red Rose Club,  
129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7  
Advance tickets £8.50/7.50  
from JSG, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX. Email  
js@bardrose.dircon.co.uk  
On the door £10/£8

## JOIN THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

The JSG is a campaigning organisation which is active on issues directly affecting the Jewish community, other minorities and oppressed groups, and the wider labour movement.

The group works and campaigns with other organisations sharing some or all of our aims and always welcomes new members who support our political principles. All members receive a regular 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' Group, BM3725, London WC1N 3XX  
js@dircon.co.uk  
www.jewish-socialist.org

The Jewish Socialists' Group presents a dayschool on **LEARNING FROM THE HOLOCAUST** with guest speakers leading discussions/workshops on the Holocaust and its relation to other genocides; acknowledging all the victims; promoting solidarity rather than competition between victims of oppression  
Sunday 21 January 2001  
at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue  
28 St John's Wood Road, London NW8  
All welcome.

Further details including cost from: JSG BM 3725  
London WC1N 3XX. Email js@bardrose.dircon.co.uk

## Volunteer opportunities in Guatemala

- Do you speak Spanish?
  - Do you have experience of working/volunteering in Latin America?
  - Are you committed to human rights?
- If you can answer 'yes' to these questions, we may have the opportunity you are looking for.

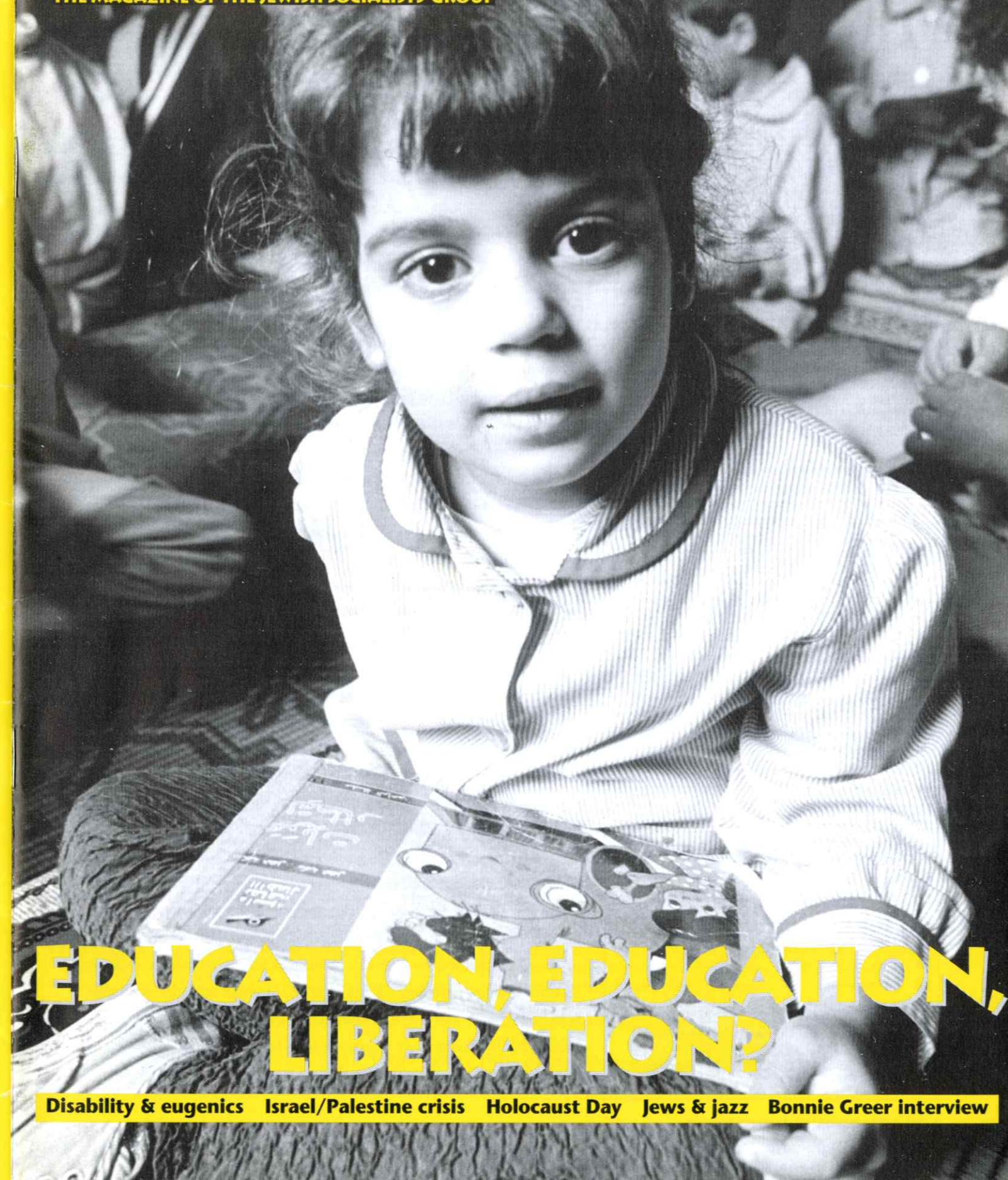
We are looking for human rights accompaniers for communities and individuals involved in bringing significant legal cases against high profile members of the Guatemalan regime of the early 1980's, for their part in human rights atrocities. Those involved in prosecuting and testifying in the cases are at risk of intimidation and violence. They have requested the presence of international observers to provide a feeling of physical security and denounce any threats against them.

The Guatemala Solidarity Network is co-ordinating with Guatemalan and international human rights groups to organise accompaniment in Guatemala.

If you would like to know more about accompaniment or GSN, please contact: Helen Pearson/GSN, c/o Leicester Masaya Link Group, 10a Bishop Street, Leicester LE1 6AF. Tel (0116) 223 0387. Email: gsn\_mail@yahoo.com

# JEWISH ★ SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP



# EDUCATION, EDUCATION, LIBERATION?

Disability & eugenics Israel/Palestine crisis Holocaust Day Jews & jazz Bonnie Greer interview



# JEWISH SOCIALIST

NO 43 WINTER 2000/2001

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Editorial committee: Julia Bard, Paul Collins, Ruth Lukom, Simon Lynn, Karen Merkel and David Rosenberg  
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**MANY** people will look at the 20th century as a century of democracy, when more countries gained independence and their people won the right to govern; when women won the vote and the black majority in South Africa won the vote. Yet the first year of the 21st century ends with the American presidential farce. As we go to press we still don't know which representative of which business corporations will mislead the world's most powerful nation. The real story of the election though is of disenfranchisement – those who wouldn't vote and couldn't vote. If democracy means equality and inclusion, the American model is very deficient.

'Inclusion' is one of the buzzwords governments use to justify their claims that they listen to and work in the interests of all, especially the most vulnerable. Earlier this century it was not only a matter of people excluded from voting. In many societies up until very recently, people with mental health problems, disabled people and people with learning difficulties were isolated from the rest of the population. This segregation, supported by the ideas of eugenicists, blighted the lives of so many. As Dave King shows, (page 7), some eugenic ideas are gaining a new lease of life and influencing a wider range of issues.

If inclusion has liberated people from institutionalisation, inclusion without support has provided new problems. Many homeless people suffer mental health problems and vice versa. People with learning difficulties face barriers and discrimination including in access to employment. Whether it is a loss of nerve or a lack of commitment in building the much-vaunted 'inclusive' society, under economic pressure, coercion and institutionalisation are re-emerging in place of support and choice. But campaigning groups among people with disabilities are organising to demand real equality.

The institutions of the Jewish community, whether in the political, religious or social services fields, have never been enthusiastic about choice, self-organisation or equality. Simon Lynn's picture (page 9) of the most prominent segregated Jewish institution for people with learning difficulties, raises serious questions about how our community relates to inclusion. People have generously supported charitable institutions without questioning their philosophy. It is time for such institutions to open up to new ideas and see whether there are inclusive alternatives by which people can be supported within their communities.

Issues of choice and support are also central to education. In our set of articles (p22-29), we examine how education, in America's black ghettos, in Lebanese refugee camps, and in schools at home, can empower and liberate children and broaden rather than narrow their experiences and prospects.

We could easily have devoted this entire issue to the current crisis in Israel/Palestine but it is important to retain our diasporist perspective and acknowledge that it is the Zionists who want all Jews to be focused exclusively on Israel. Our interventions in this area aim to promote solidarity with those fighting for peace and justice, and we support these principles everywhere. We believe that the platform we have given to radical Israelis and Palestinians in this issue (page 12) will strengthen all these struggles. Enjoy the magazine!

## TRUTH DISCLOSURES

Guatemalans are pressing for public recognition of the fate of family members slaughtered in Guatemala's brutal anti-insurgency war. Since 1997 126 exhumations of clandestine cemeteries have taken place. By excavating mass graves the true nature of the atrocities committed during the war years can be brought to light and steps taken towards seeking healing and justice.

Guatemala now has a nominally democratic government; peace accords were signed in December 1996. But naming and punishing the perpetrators of gross human violations is proving both difficult and dangerous.

The peace accords established a Truth Commission to investigate the slaughter and torture of the Guatemalan population, largely indigenous Mayan villagers. It blamed the Guatemalan state for 93 per cent of the human rights violations and concluded that a policy of genocide had been implemented against the Mayan population in several regions of the country.

The Truth Commission, though, could not 'name names'. Prosecutions must go through the Guatemalan courts. In a country which still has a militarised state apparatus, and whose justice system protects impunity, this is not easy.

The United Nations Verification Commission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) recently published a report pointing to the lack of political will by the government in progressing the exhumations. Requests for exhumations can take up to seven years to process. Ali Durbin of the US-based Guatemala Accompaniment Project describes witnessing the exhumation process in Santa Maria, one of the most brutalised regions of Guatemala.

'The exhumation of Vicenta's remains took place on Sunday, August 20. Her body was located in the centre of the community. Those who knew her said she was mentally unbalanced and did not realise she should run away when the soldiers stormed the community. Vicenta's brother-in-law came across her while pushing his pickaxe into the earth. His tool hit her skull. Community members, from elders to toddlers, watched in reverence and silence as Vicenta emerged piece by piece from within the earth. It was a time of immense relief and profound sadness. Relief because she was found, returned. Sadness because here was the truth and the proof of her death - the bones, bits of yarn from her clothing, her tiny figure in pieces against the dirt made it real all at once that she was completely, utterly gone from this world. After the anthropologists delicately uncovered her remains, a community catechist spoke a prayer, giving thanks for finding this woman and asking for peace.'

Now, more sinister methods are being used to deny justice. Recent months have witnessed a wave of intimidation against communities, organisations and activists involved in exhumations.

**Helen Pearson**

Volunteer as an accompanier in Guatemala. See back cover.



Guatemalan military on parade

Photo: Naomi Cohen

## Day of judgement

A libel trial is beginning in Israel against Teddy Katz, a researcher at Haifa University, who believes he has uncovered a massacre perpetrated on 23rd May 1948, by the Alexandroni Brigade of the newly created Israeli army, when it conquered the Palestinian village of Tantura. He has collected 135 eye witness testimonies from surviving villagers and former Alexandroni soldiers.

The Alexandroni Veterans' Association presented the libel after excerpts of Katz's research were published in Ma'ariv

newspaper. It is the first time that an Israeli historian has been put on trial for his academic work and campaigners are concerned that if he loses it will deter other historians from digging into the country's past.

They also believe that the current conflict cannot be ended without Israel facing up to the pain and dispossession that its creation caused the Palestinians.

Donations marked 'Teddy Katz Defence' can be sent to Gush Shalom POB 3322, Tel Aviv 61033, Israel.

## HEAR O ISRAEL

Jews in Britain have made it clear that they cannot be counted on to give uncritical support to Israel's continued repression in the Occupied Territories and the brutality it has shown towards Palestinian citizens in Israel. Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG) members joined weekly protests outside the Israeli embassy organised by a coalition of Palestinian groups. JSG members also took part in the 'Peace Seder' held for three days during Succot, organised mainly by Friends of Peace Now. Letters pages of many newspapers have published numerous letters by Jews protesting the murderous policies enacted in their name. Even the mainstream organ of the Jewish community - the Jewish Chronicle - has taken a critical line, well reflected not only by contributors to its letters pages but also by its regular columnists.

The JSG is currently helping to develop a network of critical and oppositional Jewish voices aiming to provide information of initiatives by peace forces in Israel, to deepen the debate within the Jewish community here and make public protests.

Candles for Peace: Chanukah vigil for a just peace between Israel and Palestine, Saturday 23rd December, from 6.30pm, at the Edith Cavell Statue north of Trafalgar Square.

Public meeting: 14th January, 'An Israeli-Palestinian Just Peace - what can we do?'

Further information from: JustPeaceUK@egroups.com

Much complaint, uttered disgust and e-mailed indignation followed the New York Times carrying a picture purporting to depict a blood-spattered Palestinian at the feet of an Israeli soldier. In fact, the victim was a Jewish boy, dragged from a taxi and beaten up by a mob of Palestinians. The soldier had been protecting him.

Although the wrongly captioned picture was a pretty awful glitch to make, the far greater crimes taking place in the Occupied Territories have provoked quite little response in the American Jewish establishment. When a Palestinian child is killed, the Israeli government pacifies the western conscience by labelling it a 'mistake' – regrettable incidents, the result of 'crossfire' – eliminating all culpability for the act.

Palestinian lynch mobs can never be pardoned. Bare hands cannot escape the guilt they bear through simple regret. Nor probably would they wish to do so. Yet, in the western media it is revealing to see that the killing of a young boy receives less attention than the column inches spent complaining about a wrongly captioned picture.

Looking at recent international media coverage on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a pattern begins to emerge which shows how consensus in the west for Israeli occupation remains.

In a typical example of pro-Israeli journalism, The Daily Telegraph's Daniel Johnson deplores the British government's role in supporting the UN Security Council emergency resolution which blamed Israel for the crisis. Charges of 'provocation' and 'excessive use of force' against Palestinian rioters, Johnson argues, are at variance with the known facts. However 'untactful', Ariel Sharon's visit to Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount (accompanied by a guard of honour comprising more than a thousand Israeli soldiers), was not intended to incite Palestinian rioting. Rather, Sharon's televised morning stroll was to mark his credentials (should anyone have forgotten) as the leader of Likud. 'To call this a provocation is, under any normal meaning of the term, a lie', complains Johnson.

True, Palestinians were not obliged to react. But what Johnson does not say is that no Israeli – and certainly no Palestinian – would have forgotten Sharon's 'credentials'. As the overseer of the Sabra and Chatila massacre, among other war crimes, his record is virtually unparalleled. Nonetheless, since Barak's approval rating rose after Sharon's visit, perhaps Sharon's escapade backfired. Threatened with a national unity government, wavering Israeli opinion and inter-Knesset wrangling has remained in Barak's favour.

Barak's threat of a coalition government, however, was intended to temper Palestinian rage, which it did not. Why it did not, and why Israel's Arab citizens made their own demonstrations – paying the consequences through the loss of several lives – can only be understood by analysing the reasons in the first place for, to put it very mildly, Palestinian discontent.

Instead of looking at the causes of the new intifada, many western journalists focus on the 'oriental despotism' of Arafat and his henchmen, the apparent bloodthirsty brutality of Palestinian lynch mobs, and how seemingly ordinary Palestinians martyr their children in the name of a cause which seems based on religious fundamentalism; in other words, fundamentally opposed to the mores of 'our

free world'. Put together, they form a set of racist stereotypes. Arabophobic and dehumanising, such an attitude declares that 'we' are civilised whilst 'they' are not, since 'we' (including the Israelis) use bombs, bullets and guided missiles, whilst 'they' kill in the way only savages kill. As an Israeli military spokesman said on 12 October, 'Force will be the only language they understand.'

Pragmatic realism? Well, if so, this kind of thought is dangerous for it justifies any means toward a given end. It explains how Barak managed to convince probably quite a large number of CNN viewers to consent to and ultimately approve Israeli military tactics.

Not once did the interviewer raise the question of the legitimacy of a nation, which claims 'purity of arms', to missile Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's headquarters, cut off Gaza's water and electricity supplies, fire at Palestinian ambulances, and to oppress a people it refrains from declaring their independent statehood.

The western media reported the destruction of the buildings – a tactic worked out by Israel's best military minds and psychological experts to 'restore order' – barely commenting that it was anything out of the ordinary. Nor was there an attempt to reflect on why Palestinian citizens are so willing to go through the metamorphosis that makes innocent people 'terrorists'. Had the question 'Why?' been asked, what would have been encountered is the fundamental issue of the 1948 dispossession of Palestinian land and property.

Instead, western media have contented their readers with distorted reports about Palestinian terrorists, Palestinian mob violence, brutality and the claim that Palestinians are laying siege to Israel. Reality is somewhat different: For, of course, it is the Palestinians who are occupied by Israeli military forces. Nonetheless, La Stampa, covered news of the escalation of violence in which more than 200 Palestinians were killed and several thousand injured (as a result of 'crossfire'), by showing on their front page a picture reminding its readers of the Israeli soldiers lost as a result of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Such propaganda has been employed by the Israeli media, including the most left-leaning newspaper Haaretz. To the paper's credit, it continues to carry some of the most critical and objective reports that appear anywhere. In an article 'Lies accompanied by bullets', Amira Hass sheds light on how the Israeli public is conditioned to respond in favour of Israeli policies through a constant barrage of reports emanating from 'official' media organs impressing the image that Israel is being 'attacked, besieged, victimised and humiliated'.

Hass's article is informative of how 'breaking news' reports can be constructed to fit in with both the Jewish-Israeli 'victim mentality' as well as feeding into a majority of news coverage in the non-Arab world. This mentality, inculcating a sense of bottomless insecurity mixed with the need for militaristic might, leaves little room for authentic left-wing government. Raising the climate of mutual intolerance, Sharon and the right have sought to prove that Palestinian sympathisers are on the wrong path.

As for Palestinians, they play to form: provoked often enough, the Palestinians will riot and brutally murder Israel's citizens and soldiers whilst a few Israeli flag-burners in Arab nations continue to stoke

evidence of an Arab unity when, of course, none really exists.

The facts on the ground of Israeli occupation for over thirty years, as well as the newly created facts on the land of Israeli expansion through settlement by Jewish religious fundamentalists as a buffer to protect their deeply hated secular brethren, display the level of hypocrisies, division and pervading sickness in present-day Israeli politics.

Without a proper recognition to Palestinian claims, through the cessation of settlement and return of

land occupied and settled on, there really is little need to wonder why Palestinian 'terrorists' have opted for such an 'uncivilised' means of insurrection. Similarly, there should not be any surprise that the United States is being targeted by those who consider it as unjustly threatening Arafat not to unilaterally declare a state.

Perhaps the time is right for the Palestinians to unilaterally declare their statehood. After all, it's their state, their right to declare it, and their freedom which is at stake.

Jack Fishbein

## THE NEWS FROM NOWHERE CLUB

In East London there has been a tradition of community culture – the Yiddish theatre, the Working Men's Institutes, Literary Institutes, Radical and Dialectic Clubs, as well as the celebrated neighbourliness and street life. By contrast modern life seems barren, trivial, one-dimensional and dominated by machines and the locked front door. Inspired by the utopia of William Morris (who spent some of his boyhood in Walthamstow), we set up the News from Nowhere Club. Its aim is to foster fellowship, enrich cultural life, raise political awareness, share a communal meal, discuss interesting topics and make new friends and contacts.

Entry is free as room hire is covered by local grants. People are asked to bring something for the buffet if they can. They don't need to book in advance – there is no formal membership. Between 15 and 40 people come each time.

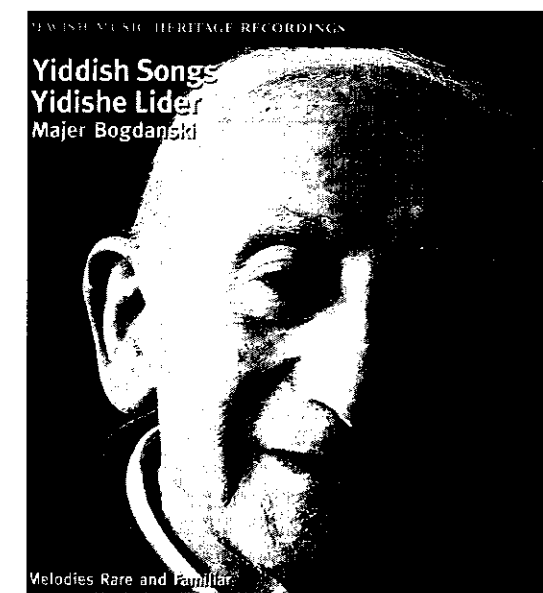
We often have a speaker. This year's topics have included Cuba, oral history, socialism (what went

wrong with it), Sylvia Pankhurst, traditional folk song (the voice of the people), peaceful green revolution, the NHS under Blair, balancing work and personal life, and the Internet for all. Speakers at the last two meetings of 2000 have been Dave Morris (of McLibel fame) on radical community action, and women from the Older Feminists Network and Growing Old Disgracefully.

As William Morris wrote, 'Fellowship is life, lack of fellowship is death'. In its small way, the club makes this bit of East London a better place to live. Coupled with other recent initiatives such as a local bookshop/café in Leytonstone and the performing arts centre in Stratford, we begin to feel that there is something of a public life of conviviality, that we need not feel so isolated, alienated, atomised.

News from Nowhere Club meets on the second Saturday of the month at the Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11; buffet from 8pm, talk at 8.30pm. For more details, phone 0208 555 5248.

Ros Kane



Veteran Jewish socialist Majer Bogdanski has released his first CD at the tender age of 88! Yidishe Lider is a collection of 19 unaccompanied songs emanating from the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe before the Second World War. The CD is accompanied by an excellent booklet, which includes an extensive interview with Majer as well as translations and transliterations of the songs.

Yidishe Lider is available from Jewish Music Heritage Recordings, PO Box 232, Harrow HA1 2NN, price £13 (plus £1 p&p).

## ARE YOU INDEX LINKED?

It is more than 15 years since Jewish Socialist first hit the bookstands. During that time it has accumulated hundreds of articles on all kinds of areas.

An index of all these articles has now been produced. It will be posted on to the Jewish

Socialists' Group website and available in printed form in the new year.

Visit the website on [www.jewish-socialist.org](http://www.jewish-socialist.org)

Printed copies of the index will be available for £1.50 including p&p from JS Index, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

# Don't look now

**JEREMY HARDY** describes loyalist murder, police collusion and a continuing denial of justice in the case of Robert Hamill

In Portadown, at about 1.30am on 27th April, 1997, Robert Hamill, a 25-year-old Catholic, was kicked to death by a group of about 30 Loyalists in full view of an RUC Land Rover, 200 yards from an RUC station. Four armed RUC officers remained in the Land Rover during the attack. They gave no first aid and made no arrests.

Robert had been to a dance at St Patricks Hall, a Catholic social club that stands in isolation in the centre of Portadown. It has since closed because of the danger to its patrons. To get home to their enclave around Garvaghy Road and Obins Street, Catholics leaving St Patricks had to travel down Thomas Street and across Market Street, where young Loyalists tend to hang around on Saturday nights. Local publicans had warned the RUC that the junction of Thomas Street and Market Street was becoming increasingly dangerous for Catholics.

Indeed, just a few minutes before the attack on Robert, another man managed to get past a hostile group of Loyalists and warn the officers in the Land Rover that more Catholics were on their way from St Patricks and would be in danger. The police took no preventative action and did not alert patrons at the hall until 30-40 minutes after the attack on Robert.

Robert was with three friends, Joanne, Siobhan and Gregory Girvan. They left the club at about 1.20am. Unable to raise a taxi, they walked cautiously toward Market Street. But as soon as Robert stepped onto Market Street he was beaten to the ground. Gregory ran to help and was also beaten down. The attack went on for several minutes. Gregory recovered but, after 12 days in a coma, Robert died.

Some 10 minutes after the attack, Constables Neill and Atkinson got out of the Land Rover; but the attackers loitered, apparently unconcerned, for about an hour before dispersing. When the ambulance arrived, it had to drive through the killers. The police had given no first aid. Reinforcements arrived: two officers in a Land Rover and another two in a car. One was Constable Clare Halley. She took one of the crowd, Wayne Lunt, who was running around holding an empty bottle, and put him in the Land Rover. She took his name and address, then let him go. Halley has testified that two men then approached her, one of them asking why she had released Lunt and telling her, 'He's one of the ones that did it.' She did not even take this man's name. No statements were taken from anyone and no evidence was gathered. The crime scene was not secured for another six hours.

On 8th May, Robert died from his head injuries. After this, Lunt and five others, Rory Robinson, Allister Hanvey, Dean Forbes, Stacey Bridgett and Paul Hobson, were arrested and charged with his murder. All asked to be held in Loyalist paramilitary wings at the Maze. By November 1997, charges against all but Hobson had been dropped. This prompted Colin Prunty, the witness who had approached Constable Halley, to complain to the Crown Prosecution Service that he had never been asked to attend an ID parade.

Paul Hobson finally came to trial in February 1999. Constable Neill testified that, approaching the scene,

he saw Robert lying unconscious and Hobson aiming a kick at his head, but couldn't tell if it connected. Lord Justice McCollum, presiding over a Diplock court (with no jury), convicted Hobson of unlawfully fighting and causing an affray but, ruling that Robert was probably already fatally injured by the time Neill approached, acquitted Hobson of murder.

The criminal investigation into accusations of neglect of duty by RUC personnel was carried out by officers from the same RUC station. No prosecution of officers followed. No decision has yet been made about disciplinary proceedings and no one has been suspended from duty. An inquest has been refused because the coroner argues that he cannot guarantee the safety of two key witnesses to the murder.

No charges have ever been brought in relation to the attack on Gregory Girvan. Such attacks are not uncommon in Portadown and are rarely prosecuted. In Robert's case, it appears that the RUC were forced to make arrests because Robert died and because of the determination of the family and their solicitor Rosemary Nelson. Rosemary herself was murdered in March 1999 while preparing a civil action against the suspects and the RUC.

To compound their grief, the Hamill family endures endless taunts and graffiti about Robert and Rosemary's deaths, especially during the annual Drumcree stand-off. A popular way of tormenting the family is to mime the kicking of Robert's head. Every floral tribute to Robert placed at the scene of his murder has been destroyed. The Hamill family has also become unpopular with the RUC since querying the handling of Robert's case. Robert's sister, Diane, cites many instances of intimidation, including a police car swerving in front of hers, forcing her to brake, and officers pointing their fingers at her in imitation of guns. On the morning of her wedding last November, she came out of the hairdressers to find her car blocked in by Land Rovers.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has new powers to order judicial inquiries in Northern Ireland. Much has been said about the need for a police force that has the confidence of the whole community in Northern Ireland, and it is hard to see how there can be progress without a complete airing of a case such as this. Peter Mandelson, however, has been refusing to call such an inquiry 'while there is a possibility of proceedings'. By that criterion, there would never have been an inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence.

The real reason for the stalling is that the Ulster Unionist Party has set its face against an inquiry because of the implications for the RUC. Mandelson has now met the family and Downing Street has also agreed to a meeting but it seems that louder expressions of public concern will be needed before an inquiry is called.

Anyone wanting to help the Hamill family, should write to their MP, to Peter Mandelson and also to the Prime Minister, who retains the power to call inquiries himself. Donations to the family's campaign fund are also very welcome.

Write to BM Hamill Campaign, London WC1N 3XX  
Cheques payable to Robert Hamill Campaign.

# Biological warfare

Every day brings new reports of the dramatic advances in human genetics research, and the ethical and social issues they raise. In the background is the spectre of eugenics. **DAVE KING** looks at how the impetus to 'tidy up' reproduction has been woven through capitalism from its earliest days

The association of eugenics with Nazism has made rational discussion difficult. Allegations that the use of genetic technologies is promoting a 'new' eugenics provoke violent defensive reactions from scientists and doctors who claim to have learned the lesson of the first half of the 20th century.

Both the critics and defenders of genetics assume that eugenics is an easily identifiable, reactionary/right-wing, fringe phenomenon, characterised by violence and coercion, which ended after the Second World War. In fact, eugenics is a more subtle and mainstream tendency which has continued throughout the 20th century.

Even the state-sponsored coercive forms have flourished in liberal capitalist democracies (the USA), social democracies (Scandinavia) and even nominally Communist countries (China) as well as under fascism. The supporters of eugenics, who have included many left-wing intellectuals (although never the broader working class movement) and feminists, have mostly seen themselves as the defenders of progress and the overall good of humanity.

Secondly, even before the Second World War there was a vigorous debate within the eugenics movement between the advocates of forced sterilisation and those who argued that eugenic goals should be achieved through education and persuasion. Francis Galton, the founder of the eugenics movement, who coined the term eugenics, fell very much in the latter camp.

Thirdly, eugenics was never merely a fringe obsession. In the first half of the 20th century, eugenics enjoyed broad support in most sections of society. The extremes were only possible because the basic idea – the rational control of reproduction – seems like common sense in our modern societies.

Since the 17th century, the key to the economic basis and vision of western societies has been the use of science and technology to control nature. This assumption is shared by the political left and right. Parallel to the creation of new knowledge has been a gradual process of rationalisation and increasing control over society in the form of scientific management, or bureaucracy. An example from the early 20th century is Taylorism, the attempt to apply scientific management to industrial processes. Taylor captured a crucial aspect to scientific modernism when he said: 'In the past, the man has been first. In the future, the System must be first.' It is no accident that Henry Ford was a key devotee of eugenics. Harry Laughlin, the lynchpin of the US eugenics movement, stated in the Birmingham Mail in 1913 that, 'Eugenics is

simply the application of big business methods in human reproduction.'

At its root eugenics is the urge to tidy up the accidents and mess (ie disabled people) that arise from human reproduction. What appals eugenicists is that human reproduction is left to chance and out of rational control. The 20th century eugenicists would often point out the contrast between the care we take over breeding of crops and domestic animals and our carelessness about human reproduction.

Eugenics can be seen as a form of technocracy – social management based on the knowledge of a technically-qualified elite. But such a top-down model fails to capture how it works. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes how, from the 17th century a 'bio-power' has developed, aimed at the regulation and management of human life through both the discipline of individual bodies and the regulation of the population. Reproduction, he says, lies at the intersection of the micro levels (medicine) and the macro levels (demography, economics and sociology). For the most part, bio-power operates in these fields not through coercion but by the creation of discourses that shape what can and cannot be said, and by the defining of norms. The aim of bio-power is the continuous correction and regulation of the body politic at micro and macro levels in order to achieve the smooth and efficient running of capitalism. This is what we normally call progress.

Such mechanisms cannot be imposed from above: they must always be consented to and become internalised as common sense by everyone. Any mother in western societies can testify to how women are continually bombarded with the common sense discourse of personal health as essential to the health of their baby. Once women become pregnant they quickly discover how medicalised the whole process of reproduction has become. They become enveloped in the medical discourse of normality, risk prevention and 'checking that everything is all right with the baby'. Women who resist the subtle promptings of medical common sense are exposed to less subtle pressures from their doctors, neighbours and family. This is in a society in which women do most of the childcare and which does not adequately support families with disabled children.

While eugenics is an inevitable and essential process within capitalist development, it has had its ups and downs. The popular movement of the early 20th century was a highly damaging false start for eugenics. A special set of political circumstances propelled it prematurely (given its

inadequate scientific grounding) into the light, and tempted its enthusiasts into coercive approaches, with disastrous consequences for its reputation. After the Second World War, eugenics did not disappear, it went underground. (In 1963, the British Eugenics Society passed a resolution adopting a policy of 'crypto-eugenics' – working for eugenics goals through other organisations.) In many countries, notably Sweden, sterilisation of people in mental institutions quietly continued. The main efforts of eugenics activists devoted their main efforts to curbing population growth in Third World countries: members of the eugenics societies were instrumental in founding and running UN and non-governmental population control agencies such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, long-term supporters of eugenics. The Foundation was also instrumental in funding basic research in the newly developing science of molecular biology. This research laid the groundwork for the discovery of the structure of DNA in 1953 and, ultimately, to the genetic engineering revolution of the 1970s and the Human Genome Project.

The role of eugenics as part of a regime of bio-power can be seen, disturbingly, in eugenicists' involvement in all the political and many of the technical developments in human reproduction, developments that are usually seen as progressive. Almost every organisation in Britain that has supported or provided birth control services for women was initially set up by eugenicists. Eugenicists were also key players in campaigns for

abortion rights that led up to the 1967 Act. In vitro fertilisation, the technology developed in the name of helping infertile women, but which provides the basic platform for a radically expanded eugenic future (see below), was developed by Robert Edwards, a long-time member of the Eugenics Society. Eugenics Society members have also been influential in the key medical and genetics organisations that were responsible for the antenatal screening programmes, introduced without any public debate, which are the most obvious practical manifestation of eugenics at present.

In stressing the involvement of certain individuals in the Eugenics Society, it should be clear that I am not suggesting the existence of some powerful conspiracy. Bio-power does not need conspiracies. I have merely used Eugenics Society membership as a reliable indicator that certain developments are part of the overall eugenics project. On the other hand, the Eugenics Society must not be allowed to masquerade as a respectable academic organisation. It was for this reason, and to draw attention to the continuing existence of eugenics, that, with the help of the Jewish Socialists' Group, I helped organise a protest that successfully shut down the Society's annual symposium last year.

Contrary to the conventional historical account, we continue to live in a basically eugenic society. In such a society, there is nothing new or surprising about the eugenic potential of technologies to select and genetically engineer embryos. However, the new technologies do give us a qualitatively new power, to separate sex from reproduction entirely, thereby turning reproduction into a production process, subject to both medical quality control supervision and consumer-driven 'enhancement'. In essence, we may see an extension of the normal capitalist process of commodification to human beings themselves. By turning us all into measured and graded objects, produced for a competitive labour market, this will destroy human dignity, the basis of human rights.

At least initially, a new phase of eugenics would most likely be laissez faire. The dominant concept now is consumer choice in reproduction, an idea unheard of in the 1930s. In the old days, people believed that the state could exert rational control. Now the only rationality we believe in is the 'invisible hand' of the market. Anyone who has witnessed the homogenisation of places and cultures in the global marketplace cannot doubt the narrowing of acceptable norms of appearance and behaviour that would take place under a market-driven eugenic regime. The availability of such expensive technologies on the basis of ability to pay may lead to social polarisation as the professional classes give their children added advantages in health and other characteristics.

Because commodification threatens our basic concepts of what it means to be a human being, we need a resurgent humanism that takes seriously the idea that all human beings are of equal value. Humanism is an unfashionable philosophy, partly because of well-founded criticisms of old-fashioned liberal humanism but mainly because the relentless onslaught of capitalism, as Taylor so simply expressed it,

always puts the system before the human being.

The best thinking on eugenics comes from those who are in the frontline: disabled people. Just as the working class and women's movements have given us new philosophies of human life, so the growing campaign for inclusion has come from the disabled people's movement. Starting from disabled people's experience of systematic exclusion from society and devaluation, the inclusion movement has given new and profound meaning to the idea that all human beings are of equal value. The inclusion movement has shown how eugenics is intrinsic to capitalism and, like the socialist, feminist and ecological movements provides a fundamental challenge to it. To fully include the most severely disabled people will require a humanist revolution that few of us can imagine.

But, with its slogan of People First, it is a revolution that socialists should have no trouble embracing.

At a political level, we will need a new alliance between all those who are directly targeted by eugenics: disabled people, Jews, black people and working-class people. This is an issue which cuts across traditional political lines, and we will need to make alliances with those whose views we may find uncongenial. For example, religious communities that retain a traditional sense of human dignity are a major centre of resistance to eugenics.

We will need to find ways of undermining the eugenic drive at all levels, including addressing the mechanisms of bio-power. This is not simply a matter of conventional political campaigning, but of addressing the operation of bio-power within ourselves and within all our social institutions.

THE LAST GHETTO?

Ravenswood Village is a service for 179 Jewish people with learning difficulties in the Berkshire countryside. It was founded in the 1950s 'by parents who were looking for a better way of life for their children than the long-stay mental handicap hospitals'. Rod Clay, the director, is not sure if its founders made a conscious decision to segregate people with learning difficulties – but this is what happened. Fifty years on, Ravenswood remains a relatively isolated place with access via a long, wooded drive.

Since the 1950s there has been a sea change in ideas, starting with a profound and devastating critique that nailed the long-stay mental handicap hospitals (though remnants of these hospitals persist) and a continuing struggle by people with learning difficulties and their allies against all institutional and segregative forms of care – for the right to live in real communities, and for the support necessary to do so.

Critiques have not only challenged the more obviously segregated places like Ravenswood village but also point to the continuation of oppressive, institutional and isolating processes in residential care homes and other services 'in' the community.

People with learning difficulties living in the community still face discrimination, barriers to access and a lack of support to be fully part of their communities. They have developed demands for services rooted in anti-institutional supported living, rather than in registered residential care. This being so, what is the point of Ravenswood Village?

Ravenswood Village advertises itself to be a 'thriving community' but to the Director of Values into Action, Jean Collins, writing in Community Living (January/February 2000) 'A village community is not a community in the ordinary sense of the word – certainly not in the sense in which the rest of us experience living in the community ... its numbers, situation and focus underline its separation from mainstream life.' To Jean Collins the village community is more like a 'ghetto of people with learning difficulties'.

I visited Ravenswood Village on a number of occasions in 1999, and these visits threw up issues

that I felt needed debating more openly. This year I went back and talked to Rod Clay.

One thing that had struck me forcefully on my visits was the absence of Jewish staff. When I asked, I was told that there was perhaps one Jewish member of staff out of the 400 or so who worked there. This stunned me. It seemed emblematic of a place apart from where Jews in Britain live and work, but where Jewish people with learning difficulties are placed in the care of a Jewish organisation. Can the diverse experiences, histories, stories, often subtle and hidden, of Jewish people with learning difficulties who have been torn away from their own communities be shared by this staff group?

'To provide culturally appropriate services is our raison d'être, it is definitely the reason why local authorities use us.' At Ravenswood Village this seems a struggle, something bolted on, a formula of religion, ritual and culture, but empty of a real living dialogue between the people with learning difficulties who live there and the staff who work there. The director says: 'It is up to us to help our staff to appreciate and understand. I am not sure we can ever achieve that fully. Our staff are enormously respectful – they walk in fear and trepidation of making a mistake. We are really, really careful to be as observant as we can.' (There is guidance to staff at the village from a resident Jewish 'cultural advisor'.)

But what about the ability to not be so respectful, to enable argument, diversity and dissent? 'This is how it is: we have set a line in the sand, and there it lies, you don't cross it.' But Jews live all sorts of lives in the real world. 'If a supporter wished to go to a football match on a Saturday we would not facilitate them to do so, but that is part of the deal if you live here. That is your choice. These are rules by which you reside.' In fact the 'choice' to live at the village lies more with families, Norwood/Ravenswood and local authority or health authority professionals than with people with learning difficulties. Jews outside can live with contradictions – go to shul in the morning and to football in the afternoon (to West Ham, Arsenal, Spurs, Chelsea, Hendon, Barnet, Orient, Man City,

**Jewish people with learning difficulties have a right to live in mainstream communities, with the choices and risks that entails. It's time we moved on from segregated 'villages' like Ravenswood, argues SIMON LYNN**

**JEWISH SOCIALIST** would like to hear the views of people with learning difficulties, staff, family members and others on this article.

Simon Lynn is Co-ordinator of Participatory Research at The Elfrida Society and an Associate Lecturer in Community Care at The Open University. This article is written in a personal capacity.

Siren Arts, a theatre group of people with disabilities, turn their back on segregation and inequality







Hymie Aaronberg is a Hackney Jewish artist with learning difficulties. Above and right are two of his works. He says: 'I pick my colours first then the ideas come from everywhere – while I'm walking, or shopping – just about anywhere! My art is composed using different bold shapes, I especially like to use circles, squares and diamonds. I use many types of materials including charcoal pencil, colouring pens and acrylic paint. Sometimes I work using collage as well as lino printing. I select strong, vibrant colours to complement the shapes in my work. Shades of red, blue, black and green are just a few of my favourites. My art helps me to express myself to other people. I am an artist who is inspired by, and loves living in Hackney.'

Leeds, Charlton, Brighton...) but people with learning difficulties at Ravenswood Village are stuck with the rules – and have little choice but to accept it.

Not only are there almost no Jewish staff, but there are very few other ethnic minority or black staff. Recent research in the Jewish community (Institute for Jewish Policy Research) has emphasised that Jews have a strong sense of being a minority ethnic community. It would seem hard for the staff group to share this, to be perceptive to the experiences, histories and struggles of a minority ethnic community in Britain. 'I don't think they would have any understanding of that at all but I don't think that is an issue.' I do think it's an issue, and it would be for any black, Asian, Irish or other minority ethnic peoples stuck in similar circumstances.

Norwood/Ravenswood do run group homes in London for people with learning difficulties in which there still may be few Jewish residential workers, but there is the potential to be part of Jewish networks (or not) as well as having access to the diversity of city life. There is also perhaps a chance to negotiate different and more equal relationships with family members than is possible when you are stuck out at the village.

There are still issues of control in the lives of people who live in Norwood/Ravenswood's group homes and who use their day services in London. Crucially, disability consultant Simone Aspis, believes there is a lack of support for access to independent advocacy networks such as People First.

In my view the segregation of people with a learning difficulty in a village community, is exacerbated for a minority ethnic community. Jews in Britain are probably still predominately urban and suburban. We have not stamped our presence on Crowthorne, Bracknell and Wokingham. We are not just English people of the Jewish faith but are rooted in the various experiences of an immigrant minority ethnic people. There is an assimilatory dynamic to surviving out in a segregated village in the midst of Berkshire – a process that must emphasise Jews as 'white folks'. But Jews and people with learning

difficulties have challenged having to 'fit in' or assimilation (for Jews) and 'normalisation' (for people with learning difficulties). So why have we, and do we continue to rip Jewish people with learning difficulties out of our communities and place them in the middle of the rural and small-town home counties? To choose to move to the country is one thing; to be placed there by others is another.

As a social worker in Hackney I visited black and ethnic minority people who had been placed away out of London in residential homes in places where there were no Black or minority ethnic local communities or staff. It always jarred, and that was compounded by difficulties for them and their families in keeping in touch, I argued that this policy had to change. I feel the same about Ravenswood Village. It is not an easy journey for families from Hackney to the village, if you don't have the money or private transport and local authorities are increasingly mean about funding family contact.

Rod Clay says that village communities are seen by families as 'safe havens, a controlled environment, no cars speeding through, no muggers, rapists, robbers, nobody to harm your family member'. This may be so, and recent research (by Eric Emerson at the Hester Adrian Research Centre, University of Manchester) does highlight this aspect of 'safety' but the history of institutional abuse in isolated or relatively isolated long-stay hospitals, and residential care placements may mean that this is a perceived rather than actual benefit.

Rod Clay and managers I have met are clearly committed to striving for a good quality of life and service for the people who live there, but as Jean Collins says: 'People who live in institutions (including village communities) are inevitably denied (or protected from) the spontaneity and informality of real life experiences, as well as the risks and challenges they bring with them....' She says that these risks are integral in helping us grow and develop with dignity into full citizens.

People placed in segregated institutions experience losses, broken connections, and have to live with decisions taken willingly or not by families and others. The feelings of anger and loss experienced by people with learning difficulties placed in segregated residential care are beginning to be recorded – examples are *Forgotten Lives*, *Crossing Boundaries* and *Good Times Bad Times* (see Resources). Values into Action (VIA) are campaigning for an apology from the government for the experiences arising from this history of exclusion and segregation.

While Ravenswood village has tried to adapt the philosophy of 'an ordinary life' to its service – and Rod Clay says 50% people now go out and use community day facilities, rather than as in the past doing everything on the village site – there are still structural barriers. Mobility allowances (DLA) are pooled within each house for collective transport. This only makes sense from an institutional point of view – it would not make sense if people were living more individual supported lives in real communities. There are barriers in supporting people to go out of the village individually, and spontaneously. There is no easy access to public transport; it is difficult to walk out, so residents are forced to be dependent on the institution – for example on there being an available driver over the age of 25.

Can people with learning difficulties at the village be offered a genuine choice to move on? 'We have decided to look into having discussions with our residents about whether they would want to move. We are going to

embark upon a process of consultation because that will give us a clue whether we need to redevelop on the site or to create new opportunities off the site'.

Could they sustain a smaller community if people did want to move on? 'Yes I guess we could. We would need to look at our infrastructure costs – it has to be possible – but we couldn't ever think about closing the village. It is just not possible; we couldn't afford to do it. It may be an option in the much longer term but it is not an option now, nor something families would want. This is what they want.'

It would take a decisive attitude from Norwood/Ravenswood – of being determined to offer a process of choice to residents, being prepared to win over families to the possibility, setting up a dialogue with local authorities and ensuring independent advocacy for service-users – both individually, and collectively (for example, establishing an independently facilitated residents' group). It may be that some people would wish to stay, people who have been there a long while, who have got used to the place and like the life but this can only be a real choice if residents can know what else is possible. There needs to be a debate about whether Norwood/Ravenswood should continue to attract new residents to the village, including young people being placed in the residential school on the site.

Ravenswood Village managers have established a working relationship with the London Borough of Barnet to explore the possibility of people moving on there. This link could be established with other London learning difficulty teams. This could be done badly (bringing anxiety and distress and uncertainty into people's lives) or it could be done well, supporting people with learning difficulties to create and explore choices. There needs to be perception and respect for relationships so people could share accommodation with others of their choice. This means different local authorities being able to work together (a failure in long-stay hospital resettlement). What if three people funded by three different sources, Brent, Barnet and Hackney, want to share a house together, this needs to be possible.

A process of moving on needs committed and perceptive 'person-centred' planning and proper funding for each person's move by local authorities. It also needs a continuing commitment to fund support for the fullest expression of people's lives in real communities.

Ravenswood village is a charitable icon in the Jewish community but it is possible that charitable fundraising and donations just act to entrench this model village. Charity may tie down people with learning difficulties to that place. Instead, the residents of the village need to gain real choices in their lives – whether to live there or live where the rest of us Jews live, in lots of different settings. In real communities, people with learning difficulties face risks; they have to struggle for necessary support and against discrimination. But if full and equal citizenship is a declared aim, this can never be achieved in segregated places.

There are many barriers to grapple with. One is that local authorities do fund people in residential care homes outside their local area but can cut off this funding if people move on into ordinary houses with support. This can limit a person's choice to staying in institutional care or moving back to their borough of origin (or funding – a real barrier to developing anti-institutional services. Local authorities

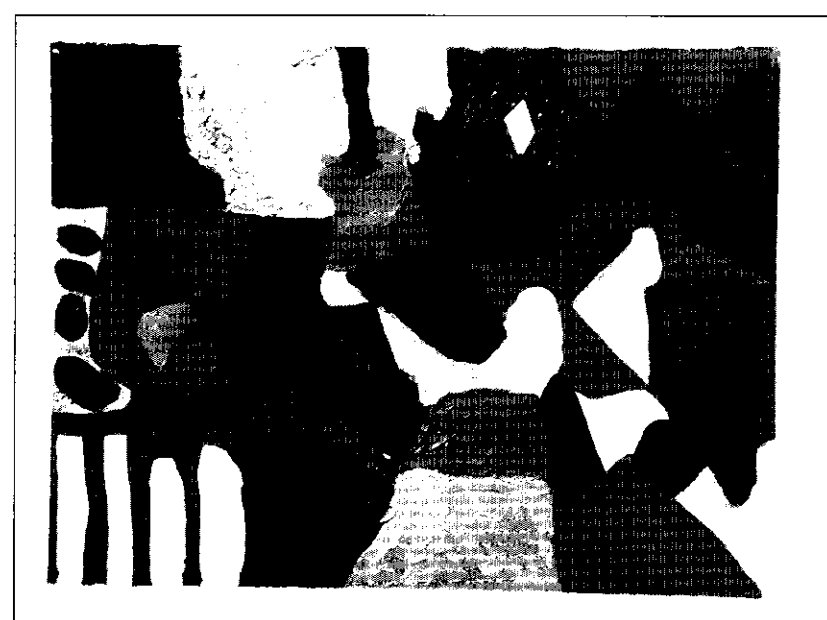


Photo: Beverly Hague

could develop protocols between them to resolve this. People with learning difficulties see access and rights to direct payments as a clear way forward (see Andrew Bright and Andrew Sadio in *Community Living*, July/August 2000).

Rod Clay and Norwood/Ravenswood do seem tentatively to be moving towards a process of consulting residents about whether they wish to stay at the village or move on but there may be real institutional and family resistance to this process.

People with learning difficulties and their allies (particularly from the founding of the People First Movement in 1984) have struggled to end segregation and exclusion. Those who live at Ravenswood Village have a right to be part of this process. A foundation for this participation is perhaps access to independent advocacy and links to the self-advocacy movement.

I am hoping to open a debate within the wider Jewish community and learning difficulty movement that can question a segregated model of provision for people with learning difficulties with roots in the 1950s and before. I would argue that this model has real flaws. Others may see it differently

## Resources

**Community Living** magazine and discussion forum: [www.community-living.net](http://www.community-living.net)

**People First:** [www.peoplefirst.org.uk](http://www.peoplefirst.org.uk)

Values into Action (VIA) The National Campaign with People who have Learning Difficulties: [www.demon.co.uk/via](http://www.demon.co.uk/via)

**Forgotten Lives** (1997), **Crossing Boundaries** (2000) and **Good Times, Bad Times: Women with learning difficulties telling their stories** (2000) are BILD publications ([www.bild.org.uk/](http://www.bild.org.uk/)) generated by the Social History of Learning Disability Research Group at The Open University.

**Ken Simons** work on Supported Living at the Norah Fry Research Centre: [www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry/](http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry/) **CHANGE** (London) and **CHANGE North** (Leeds) – an organisation for people with both a learning disability and a sensory impairment – first floor 69-85 Old Street, London EC1V 9HY

**The Elfrida Society** – Practical pioneering with people with learning difficulties: [www.elfrida.com](http://www.elfrida.com) **Institute of Jewish Policy Research** (jpr): [www.jpr.org.uk](http://www.jpr.org.uk)

Norwood/Ravenswood : [www.nwrw.org/](http://www.nwrw.org/)

See some of Hymie's art in colour on the Hidden Art of Hackney web site [www.hiddenart.com](http://www.hiddenart.com)

Or at Siren Arts [www.elfrida.com](http://www.elfrida.com)

Contact Hymie via Dimple Sthalekar Hackney Recruitment Partnership (HRP) Unit D2, 3 Bradbury Street, Dalston, London N16 8JN tel: 020 7241 5588 fax 020 7249 3455 e-mail: [ekrasins@gw.hackney.gov.uk](mailto:ekrasins@gw.hackney.gov.uk)

Thank you to Paul Adeline who has done a version of these captions in easy words. This is available free to people with learning difficulties from Simon Lynn at Jewish Socialist BM 3725 WC1N 3XX.

# CRITICAL POINTS

Just a few months ago the long sought after peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians seemed tantalisingly within reach. The weariness of continuing the occupation was clearly starting to tell on the Israelis. Previously taboo subjects – the future of Jerusalem, the return of refugees – were coming on to the agenda. Israel's Jewish public, it seemed, were being prepared for an historic compromise.

On the Palestinian side, Arafat's leadership had survived years of war and exile, and policy twists and turns that had led him into a controversial peace process. He, too, was preparing to carry the Palestinian people with him to a stable settlement based on Palestinian statehood within most of the Occupied Territories. But now the 'Peace process' is now in tatters.

**DAVID ROSENBERG** spoke to **ISSAM MAKHOUL**, a Palestinian Member of Israel's Parliament, representing the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, and to **MOSHE MACHOVER**, a founder member of the Israeli socialist organisation, Matzpen, to analyse the latest crisis and assess future prospects and hazards.

How quickly the potential for peace unravelled. Within hours of Ariel Sharon's Temple Mount jaunt at the end of September, the shootings began. Weeks later, more than 200 Palestinians have been murdered as have a small but growing number of Israeli soldiers and citizens. A new Intifada is spreading, mimicking the 1987 war of stones, but guns are part of the arsenal now. Not that they can match tanks blockading Palestinian villages and the explosive firepower of helicopter gunships. In contrast with 1987, though, Palestinian citizens within Israel have held strikes and demonstrations and paid a price for their militancy. Thirteen of the early fatalities were theirs, while hundreds remain in detention.

Participants and commentators quickly apportioned blame. The Israeli government cast itself as victim and the occupied Palestinians as the aggressor. Leading Israeli peace movement figures berated Palestinians for betraying them and sacrificing the chance of peace. Liberal Israeli commentators argued that the Palestinians had rejected the most generous offer since 1948. The Palestinians, though, denied the substance of this offer, comparing it to getting a house, being told it is theirs, then finding the hallways patrolled by hostile neighbours. They cited the continued growth of settlements and settlers as evidence of Israel's bad faith. Clearly, there is a massive gulf in perceptions. When Israel asked the Diaspora for support it received a muted response. Even hardened Zionists recoiled from seeing a 12 year old Palestinian boy gunned down as his unarmed father tried desperately to shield him.

The 'peace process' begun in Oslo in 1993 has taken a battering. It has even been pronounced

dead by several major players, yet Issam Makhoul, genuinely felt it had a chance. 'The Palestinians signed the Oslo agreement with a clear logic – a solution based on United Nations resolutions. They thought it could only lead to the end of the occupation. They knew they had to find compromises on how to deal with the question of refugees. They didn't imagine that Israel would deny its responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem.'

For Makhoul, the main weakness in Oslo was the 'interim period', which Israel used to delay the process and diminish the content of the final settlement. He derides Israeli claims about Barak's openness and generosity. 'Before Camp David Barak tried to create an image of being brave and generous. But what is more important is whether he is committed to the peace process and fulfills the agreements he signed. The Palestinians feel that Israel is trying to escape its commitments.'

The western media portray Barak as a practical, modern leader but he has a consistently hawkish past. 'When Barak was Chief of Staff he didn't agree with Oslo. When he was a minister in Rabin's government he didn't vote for the Cairo agreements,' says Makhoul.

If Sharon's provocative visit to the Temple Mount lit the spark, Makhoul believes that Barak's government provided the fuel. 'Before Camp David he said, "These are our Red Lines: no withdrawal to the '67 borders; no to evacuating settlements; no to the issue of refugees and Israel's responsibility for them; no to Jerusalem being divided – Jerusalem would be united under sole Israeli sovereignty; the Jordan River will be Israel's security border. We will have an agreement on this basis or impose it by

force." This is the real reason behind the crisis. Sharon played with fire. He wanted the explosion for his own interests.'

Arafat foresaw the consequences and went to Barak's house to plead with him to forbid Sharon's visit. Barak not only went ahead, he provided Sharon with a massive military guard indicating both the friendship and shared attitudes between Barak and Sharon and Barak's insensitivity to the Palestinians.

Moshe Machover, an expatriate Israeli leftist and close observer of Israeli politics since the late 1950s believes that the current crisis must be traced back to Oslo. However, he argues that Oslo itself must be analysed within the context of the optimism of the Intifada and the fallout from the Gulf War, since this explains why the Palestinians went into Oslo in such a weakened state.

'The situation around 1993 was conducive to some kind of arrangement. Until 1987 the Palestinians had been relatively easily controlled, subdued or disciplined by Israel. Then there was this fantastic popular uprising, not instigated by the leadership which had been exiled in Tunisia following Israel's invasion of Lebanon in '82. This grassroots explosion changed the balance of forces in favour of the Palestinians and made it clear to the Israeli authorities that policing and controlling the Palestinians was too costly in military, economic, social and moral terms. Israel was looking for some kind of accommodation. But in the Gulf War of 1991 Arafat made a catastrophic error by siding with Saddam Hussein. It was one evil against another – the evil of American imperialism confronting the evil of Saddam Hussein, butcher of the Iraqi people, and pretend friend of the Palestinians. I am not criticising the Palestinian masses who emotionally sided with Saddam Hussein but a political leadership must make more intelligent considerations. This weakened Arafat's position enormously.'

Much of the PLO's material support from the Gulf States was stopped overnight. With the Palestinians politically and financially weakened, argues Machover, Israel 'could hold back on delivering concessions and use the time to make more facts on the ground to limit any concessions ultimately made. The main thing Israel wanted from this agreement was for Arafat to police the Palestinians, to be their proxy. The Labour leadership were not against calling it a Palestinian state. In name it would be a Palestinian state, in substance it would be a Bantustan. Arafat compromised and weakened his position so much that he didn't even get what Israel promised in Oslo. They reneged on almost every item.'

For Machover, the seeds of the new intifada were also sown by Israel's longstanding, undeclared, economic war against the Palestinians. 'We must never forget the social dimension of the present discontent. The first Intifada had a very strong, decisive economic base. It was not just a national uprising, it was a social protest mainly of workers against their miserable position and direct and indirect exploitation by Israel. The situation has now become even worse – really unbearable. Israel was shutting the roads and preventing Palestinians from getting to work in Israel, while trying to replace Palestinian labour with migrant labour from all over



Israeli triumphalism is giving way to realism

the world. The situation was explosive. It only took a spark – Sharon's provocative visit to the Holy mount.'

Outside Israel, many people feel nothing has been achieved and any progress reversed. Yet, the fundamental nature of the conflict based on the colonisation of Palestine and the exclusion and repression of the Palestinian people, masked as an Arab-Jewish conflict, or by more liberal commentators as 'a conflict of two rights', becomes more apparent with each new development. Makhoul comments: 'The main problem is not two peoples who are clashing but the fact that there is an occupied people who need their sovereignty. Likud has lost the ideological battle. It is impossible to market the 'Greater Israel' idea. Even Sharon talks of the solution in terms of some sort of Palestinian state on 40-50% of the West Bank but Likud are looking for a solution that leaves the Palestinians dependent for everything on Israel and under the military fist of Israel.'

Repellent as Sharon's view is, it signifies a new stage of thinking within the Zionist consensus. In the '60s and early '70s that consensus denied the existence of a 'Palestinian' people. In the late '70s and 1980s, the right wing within that consensus fantasised about expelling occupied Palestinians to neighbouring Arab countries. Now it acknowledges that the Palestinians exist as a distinct and defiant national entity and their national self-determination can take place nowhere but on the land where they live. Those who used to demand

annexation of all of historic Palestine did so assuming that the Palestinians would be transferred elsewhere. That possibility no longer remains. Annexation now would entail containing a massive nationally conscious minority within 'Greater Israel' which could combine with Israel's existing Palestinian citizens. The latter's significance in the current conflict has been largely ignored or underplayed by the media and also by the left, who prefer to focus on the daily shootings in the West Bank and Gaza.

In the first days of the new conflict, the Palestinian citizens of Israel demonstrated and held strikes. Makhoul says: 'These demonstrations were met by shootings and killings. On the first day of the strike, there was a lot of anger but it wasn't going to be a revolution. The Israeli government decided to wage war against its Arab citizens.

'It treats Arab militancy as a 'security' issue, while regarding Jewish forces against the occupation merely as a political problem. We cannot live with the government waging war against its citizens. This is a new stage in the relations between the state and us.'

For Machover, the mobilisation of Israel's Arab citizens represents: 'the maturation and self-assurance of the Palestinians within Israel. In the '50s and much of the '60s they were kept under military rule, with virtually no civil rights except the right to vote, which was negated by enormous electoral corruption. Family chiefs and heads of clan would sell their village's votes to the highest bidder. But now, by their own efforts and by using whatever the state provided, they have been able to advance and are better able to press their electoral power in Israel.'

Despite the current collapse of the 'peace process' Israel knows that an accommodation resulting in some kind of self-determined Palestinian entity is inevitable. Given the economic and military imbalance they know this poses no real threat. Such claims are purely for internal consumption, keeping Jewish citizens in a 'security' mentality and supporters abroad locked into a siege mentality. Israel's political and military chiefs worry far more about the 'enemy within'.

Makhoul says: 'The most criminal thing that has been done in recent weeks is the attempt to cast the confrontation between Israel's Arab minority and the state as a confrontation between Arabs and Jews. They want to wage the war of '47 and say that we cannot live together.'

Makhoul is aware of increasingly significant voices in Israel highlighting the 'demographic' issue. 'To them,' he says, 'demography is more important than the question of land. They say there is a problem with the existence of an Arab national minority if this minority tries to influence the Israeli future, especially on the issue of peace and the Palestinian people; and that the citizenship of one million citizens should not be taken for granted. It is conditional upon their behaviour and attitude.'

In this context that Makhoul feels distinctly unsympathetic to Israeli doves who claim they have been betrayed by Palestinian militancy. 'The Israeli police were ready on the day of Sharon's visit. The next day the police attacked. Seven Palestinians were killed at the Al Aqsa mosque. The next day

more were killed in the West Bank and Gaza. We saw TV pictures of the child killed in the hands of his father who could not protect him. Why were other Israelis not on the streets demonstrating and shouting against this bloodbath? This was when the peace forces of Israel should have made their voice heard. They didn't. Many left-Zionist groups accepted the official story that it's a war of existence and only one side can continue to live here. These voices have moved to the right and I am not sure they will know the way back.'

Makhoul's party joined with Gush Shalom – the more radical part of the Israeli peace movement in organising a demonstration in Haifa of thousands of Jews and Arabs together. Similar demonstrations took place in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. Despite the stand-offish official policy of more mainstream peace forces – Peace Now and Meretz – some of their members participated. But Makhoul was not surprised that the mainstream peace forces were slow to react.

'For the first two weeks of the crisis the Israeli media was the voicebox of the defence ministry. We couldn't get on TV to tell the Israeli people what was going on. There was a media closure. Now you hear many voices in the media saying we must get rid of the occupation. People inside Israel know something is going wrong. They say it doesn't matter how much we withdraw, we must end this bloodbath. A situation where one side is shooting and the other gives blood cannot continue.'

Given that both Labour and Likud hierarchies and the army generals now share a recognition that there is no alternative to an accommodation with the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, the long-term focus will shift more and more to Palestinians within Israel's borders.

'The only way the Right can embarrass Barak and attack his legitimacy' says Makhoul, 'is to attack the legitimacy of the Arab citizens of Israel, and Arab Knesset members, because Barak was elected by 90% of our votes. Barak has been pulled by their attack to attack our legitimacy, from the day he was elected.'

Despite the advances that Palestinian citizens of Israel are making, the more that Israel treats social and political issues as 'security matters' the more it must exclude the Palestinians. According to Machover, 'Israel has always been a military democracy, for Jews. The Palestinian population is excluded from this. It is a democracy where there is an inter-penetration of the military and political leadership. Compared to other bourgeois democracies, there is an unparalleled number of military people at the head of the political establishment. This goes back to Moshe Dayan. I could count off 15 of the most important political leaders who have army backgrounds.'

Makhoul says: 'political power in Israel lies at the point of connection between the army and the politicians – the militarised political leadership. Barak is the very brutal expression of this. He had just finished his service as Chief of Staff when he was accepted by the Labour Party. Israel's political system has a massive attendance of militarised minds, trying to deal with every problem as a 'security' rather than a social or political problem.'

Machover believes that the structural problems of political power are compounded by individual

factors but he also perceives a trend: 'The political stature of Israeli generals is a diminishing quantity. This also applies to those who moved to the political part of the establishment. Dayan was a much more sophisticated politician than Barak. Before Dayan there was Yadin who was Chief of Staff, during the '48 war. He was an intellectual.'

But if there is a growing unity and self-confidence among Palestinians within Israel, there is a much more volatile internal political situation within the Occupied Territories.

'Arafat is not a well man' says Machover, 'but his political health is even weaker. He can be assassinated any day by people who with some justification regard him as a traitor to their cause. He is squeezed between his obligations to Israel to act as policeman on their behalf and his need to respond to grassroots Palestinian wishes and militancy. The Palestinian political regime is very oppressive and unjust. A lot of people are arrested, sometimes killed, often tortured. Now there is a grassroots resurgence including a limited resurgence of left wing leadership – people who go back to the Palestine Communist party or currents from that tradition. Unfortunately, the situation in this respect, is worse than it was in the first intifada because during the long drawn-out "peace process" the economic situation in the Bantustans/Occupied Territories has become catastrophic and Islamic fundamentalists have become much stronger. They were originally encouraged by Israel as a counterweight to secular Palestinian nationalism. The Americans made the same mistake with the Taliban in Afghanistan – similar short-term thinking that backfired. If the present confrontation leads to the collapse of Arafat's leadership, there would be a struggle in which some Islamic fundamentalist forces would bid for leadership. They have quite a strong following in Gaza and in the southern part of the West Bank. The north of the West Bank has always been more modern and secular and less traditionalist.'

The spectre of religious fundamentalism also threatens the Jewish body politic in Israel, although, in contrast to the Palestinian situation where economic catastrophe and hopelessness continually fuel fundamentalists, Jewish fundamentalism has provoked a massive reaction within Israeli society. Machover is more sanguine about the consequences.

'With the strengthening of the influence of Jewish religion on politics, there is a parallel and contrary process of secularisation. One of the stupidities committed by the Israeli political establishment was to change the electoral system. While parliament is still elected by strict proportionality, the Prime Minister is elected personally. They thought that would strengthen the Prime Minister's position and weaken the religious parties. The effect was the exact opposite. Shas is now the third largest party in the Israeli parliament, not much smaller than Likud. They play the role that used to be played by the National Religious Party before 1967 of being in the middle as far as national security is concerned. They can make a coalition either with Likud or Labour and use this position to extort financial concessions, money for schools and yeshivas and personally to line their



Israeli soldiers in a Palestinian refugee camp

pockets. Since the National Religious Party moved to the hawkish side of Israeli politics it can no longer play this role and has declined. Shas also draws on Oriental Jewish support, using ethnic rhetoric.'

Religion can be abused for political purposes. Sharon deliberately chose a holy site for his provocation. Machover says 'Sharon believes in God like he believes in the green devil. He is a complete atheist and pork-eater. his intention was to bid for the leadership of the Likud. It was sheer internal politicking.'

Despite the efforts of the fundamentalists, Machover believes that Israel is undergoing a long-term process of secularisation and modernisation that cannot be turned back. It is found partly in an increasing number of rulings by the Israeli supreme court improving civil rights.

'If the present conflict with the Palestinians becomes more subdued it will be seen that the internal conflict in Israeli society has become deeper and much more important. When I was in Israel a few years ago, the official slogan of the moderate Israeli left was two states for two peoples. But a lot of people used to say two states for three peoples – the Palestinians, the religious half of the Israeli Jews and the modern, secular part of Israel. This rift in Israeli society is very important. There is a *Kulturkampf* going on. The film Kadosh was made as a weapon in the cultural war.'

Currently, the focus is on the Occupied Territories where the death toll rises daily. As the military blockade of Palestinian areas continues, the general economic hardships are compounded by fears of starvation. Makhoul believes the Palestinians will stand firm: 'The Palestinians have no choice. They will fight, but it is a world responsibility to give the Palestinian people defence and the right to live, not to be under the auspices of the Israeli military'.

But perhaps an equally significant battle with an increasingly educated and confident Palestinian minority within Israel, that has improved and advanced its own position through its own efforts, and is aspiring towards true equality, is only just beginning.



# OUR MEMORIES, THEIR DAY

As Britain's first Holocaust Day arrives, **SUE LUKES** analyses the different agendas being played out

One evening in July I found myself queuing for a glass of wine in the Saatchi synagogue next to an acquaintance from the 1970s, the director of Verso books. He was there to promote their top seller this year, *The Holocaust Industry* by Norman G Finkelstein, recently serialised in *The Guardian*. With him was the marketing manager, whose press release about this 'extremely sensitive and controversial book' explains how the Jewish Claims Conference has 'ruthlessly extracted enormous compensation from Switzerland, Germany and other European governments ... to fill the coffers of major Jewish organisations'.

I was with my gang, women from a closed email group of daughters of survivors, who had gathered from all over the world to go to Remembering for the Future 2000 and get drunk in my garden. My friend asked if I attend regularly. I don't. It was my first and possibly last time in the Saatchi on a Friday night. One of the group engaged in the discussion with Finkelstein that evening.

The Finkelstein book is part of a debate on memorialising and dealing with the Holocaust in which, as children of survivors, he and I are assumed to have particular interests and rights. The book is driven by his evident fury at the Holocaust 'industry', at the self-serving American Jewish leadership, at how abused he feels that his parents' suffering can be used to bolster support for Zionism and make careers and huge payments for lawyers and politicians he was brought up to despise. His response is to deny the 'abnormality' of the Nazi Holocaust; to accuse those demanding reparations of being the 'main fomenters of antisemitism in Eastern Europe' and to characterise the efforts to memorialise or commemorate as at best deluded and at worst propaganda for the Israeli state and its US backers. He situates current interest in the Holocaust in the ebb and flow of support for Israel, regarding it as largely the creation of US imperialism and its development in the terms of a plot.

He draws heavily on the work of Peter Novick, who also sees a 'conscious strategy adopted by community leaders' to place the Holocaust at the centre of Jewish identity, facilitated by the growth of identity politics and the reaction to the 1967 war. Novick questions how memorials and museums fit either the facts or the needs of history and the community.

Much of this is lost on me. Like many survivors, my father found his 'identity' problematic. Arriving

in the UK on the Kindertransport, with no family or other points of reference, living life through his third language, he was brought up outside the Jewish community. He found the Holocaust unmentionable in most contexts, and those who cared for him believed that healing was best achieved by moving on. Like Finkelstein, I grew up believing that the Holocaust represented the extremes of racism and inhumanity and learned a subtle message that I was expected to make our survival count. I worked to set up memorials to the Chilean disappeared before I began to think about the memorials to my own family.

So I have come late to these debates and find, in meetings and workshops, that many of the second generation come as I do, unburdened by community links. Our parents' own needs are often the impetus, needs that are emerging as the extent of the damage done to them becomes more apparent. Groups all over the world are now making representations to Jewish 'leaderships' to ensure that reparations and other money goes first to needy survivors, Jews and others, before memorials and educational work.

Of particular concern are the extreme difficulties faced by those in Eastern Europe whose state entitlements have been wiped out. Finkelstein, on the other hand, characterises all efforts to get reparations, restitution, compensation, or even to secure the return of money held in banks, as a 'shakedown'.

His exaggerated concern for Swiss banks need not detain us, but the charge of fomenting antisemitism by making claims on the poorer countries needs un-picking. Jews are, after all, not the only people seeking restitution: the fall of the Berlin Wall allowed all those expropriated to do so. Most countries, under pressure from the West, welcomed the sons and daughters of aristocrats, businessmen and fascist sympathisers back into their homes and property. The claims of those who lost all their possessions before the iron curtain came down were to have been ignored; many of these were Jews.

Finkelstein makes no distinction between the dubious claims against governments (most of which can hardly be described as successors to the Nazis), the return of stolen property and money, or the cases against banks who simply refuse to release money to descendants. He is also hazy about antisemitism in Europe generally, though he doubts that it is a 'strictly irrational Gentile loathing

of Jews' because of 'the possibility that animus towards the Jews might be grounded in a real conflict of interest' - an odd argument for a socialist.

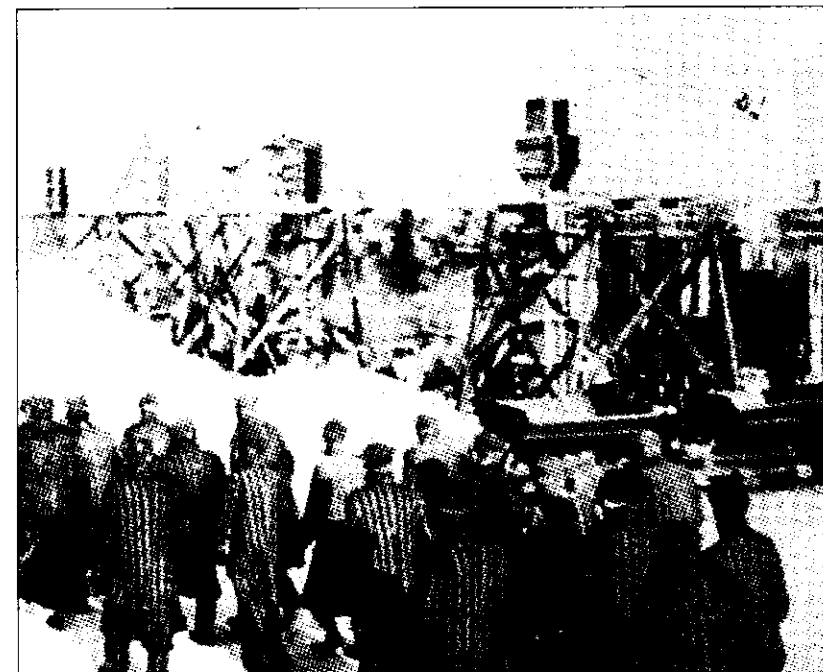
However, he does make a powerful case against the ways in which specific organisations set themselves up as representatives of survivors and their heirs; claim the unclaimed assets of those who perished, and try to monopolise remembrance to bolster their positions and that of many of the most reactionary factions in Israel. At the survivors and descendants' gathering this year, I felt the weight of this and also the extraordinary contradictions involved. Our families, in the hands of these people, become emblems of a form of Jewishness with which they had little connection at the same time as they are traduced. Orthodox rabbis are honoured speakers, but a tiny minority of those present actually subscribe to their temples.

Rabbi Meir Lau excelled himself. He told us that many more than six million had died because those who had lost their identity as observant Jews as a result of the Holocaust might as well be dead. They were, he said, like drowned people, with the body present but no spirit.

Writing in the conference brochure, he explained how we have to understand God's role in the Holocaust as like that of a tailor who takes a bolt of beautiful cloth and starts cutting into it, discarding scraps as he goes. The result will be a good suit but only he knows that. Our families are, of course, the discarded scraps. The good suit? Who knows? Israel maybe, or the settlements, or maybe the exalted rabbi's career. An honour indeed, to be discarded for that.

At the gathering, I found the opposite - the man who chose to save my father and almost 700 children, by creating a fake committee, forging visas and bulldozing through the bureaucracy, facing down the Board of Deputies on the way. Nicholas Winton still finds it amusing that, when the Israeli government decided to include him in the list of righteous gentiles they withdrew the offer when they found his mother was of Jewish descent. He describes his motivation as human and political. He probably finds it even funnier that one of those children for whom 'about half' the visas were forged is now a government minister. He wears a ring 'like the one they gave to Schindler, engraved with "Save a life, save the world". He reminds us that the British government insisted on sponsorship and support for the fleeing children and so thousands of children on his lists were condemned to death. Holocaust historians agree that the final solution was not inevitable and that an important factor was the refusal by Britain and other countries to allow refugees to enter.

And now, the worthy successor to that government has declared 27th January 2001 as Britain's first Holocaust memorial day. Facing the possibility of remembering my grandparents in the company of those who deny refuge to Roma descendants of people who died with them in Auschwitz and the religious bigots who believe that only saving certain sorts of Jewish lives counts, one is tempted to agree with Finkelstein that 'the noblest gesture for those who perished is to preserve their memory, learn from their suffering and let them, finally, rest in peace'. But that



Slave labourers working for I G Farben Co at Auschwitz

individual option is to leave the collective memory in the hands of those who will only distort and abuse it and to let others write our history.

We need to be able to say something on 27th January. As socialists we know that to say that the Holocaust was not unique is as fatuous as saying that it was unique. We do not claim ownership and we do not need it to define our identity as human beings. We believe that others have a right, too, to be commemorated, especially those who died with our grandparents: the Roma; the disabled; the gay men and lesbians; the socialists and communists. We must not allow the politicians and bigots to mouth a Kaddish for a photo opportunity and walk away unchallenged.

*The Holocaust Industry* by Norman G Finkelstein is published by Verso, price £16.

# Jews

**Jews' infatuation with jazz began from its earliest days, and it has been claimed that they have contributed more to this quintessentially Afro-American music than any other predominantly non-black group. In the Third Reich jazz was verboten because of its association with both Black people and Jews. MIKE GERBER looks at the connections between Jews and jazz**

For Mezz Mezzrow, a poor Jew growing up in Chicago early in the 20th century, the effect of jazz was cataclysmic. He idolized the seminal New Orleans clarinetist Sidney Bechet and took up the instrument himself, going on to play professionally in the 1930s. So smitten was Mezzrow with black culture that when jailed for peddling marijuana, he insisted on being classified as a 'Negro' and was thrown in with the black inmates. This is recorded in Mezzrow's celebrated autobiography, *Really the Blues*. Among the artists he accompanied were Bechet himself, overwhelmingly the better musician, and the mighty blues singer Bessie Smith.

Another 'Jazz Age' Jew inflamed by the then revolutionary new idiom was George Gershwin. Although no jazz musician, it is Gershwin I would single out as the Jew who has had by far the most profound effect on the music itself. As a writer of popular songs alone, his place in jazz history would be secure. He was one of a generation of Tin Pan Alley songwriters whose imperishable melodies inspire interpretations by jazz musos till this day. Most of these songsmiths were born poor and Jewish. These include Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern whose compositions, though readily adapted by jazz musicians, were show-oriented. By contrast, Harold Arlen, the son of a synagogue cantor, started out as a jazz singer, pianist and big band



George Gershwin

arranger in New York and from the 1930s turned out some truly classic songs - Stormy weather, I've got a right to sing the blues, Blues in the night.

But Gershwin's tunes - alongside those of Duke Ellington - have probably been more covered by jazz artists than those of any other composer.

Although emphatically not a jazz musician, it was woven into the fabric of everything he wrote. As Edward Jablonski said in his book, *Gershwin Remembered*: 'What is ignored is the fascination Gershwin's songs had for the true jazzmen who often based their performances on the chord structures, the harmonies and rhythms of these little pieces. They were the basis for beautiful improvisations by eminent jazz musicians ranging from Pee Wee Russell, through Art Tatum, Coleman Hawkins and Charlie Parker.'

It is Gershwin's orchestral compositions, though, notably *Rhapsody in Blue*, *American in Paris*, *Piano Concerto in F* and the opera *Porgy and Bess*, that constitute his major contribution to the development of jazz. Like his show songs, they are imbued with the spirit of jazz and blues. What distinguishes them, from the 1920s jazz that inspired them, though, is their sheer ambition.

Much of the hot jazz from this pioneering period is simply wonderful, some of the most exultant popular music ever. Fortunately, the gramophone record took off then to capture the likes of Louis Armstrong in his prime. Some American whites, while not deaf to these glories, felt the urge to Europeanize jazz. Enter one danceband leader, Paul Whiteman, the self-styled 'King of Jazz'. That he was not but it was Whiteman who commissioned Gershwin to write what turned out to be the first of the latter's classical pieces, *Rhapsody in Blue*.

It is a tribute to Gershwin's genius that he took Whiteman's inauspicious brief and with *Rhapsody* and the orchestrations that followed, produced the most cinemascopically evocative urban music of the century. None of the more-schooled classical composers - some of whom dismissed, or patronised him - can claim as much, or can boast his melodic, harmonic and rhythmic gifts.

Gershwin's first biographer Isaac Goldberg wrote memorably in 1931: 'His real keyboard was the sidewalks - and, even more, the pavements - of New York.' Gershwin himself said: 'What I have done is what was in me: the combination of New York, where I was born, and the rising, exhilarating rhythm of it, with centuries of hereditary feeling back of me.' After the debut of *Rhapsody*, he explained: 'I needed to show that jazz is not merely a dance, it comprises bigger themes and purposes.'

While his orchestral work was wrongly dubbed 'symphonic jazz', it was an invitation to jazz musicians to break the bounds. Since Gershwin, a succession of jazz composers have sought to mix seat-of-the-pants improvisation with carefully orchestrated arrangements: from Ellington, to Lennie Tristano to Mingus to Carla Bley today.

Arranger Gil Evans and trumpeter Miles Davis collaborated on several superb works in this mode, including an instrumental interpretation of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* in which, to quote Davis's biographer Ian Carr: 'They do more than justice to Gershwin's great opera, transforming it, deepening it and uncovering roots of which even Gershwin was probably unaware.'

It is unthinkable that Ellington, another true genius of 20th century music, would somehow not have fulfilled his destiny as 'symphonic jazz's major apostle' - as he has been described - had Gershwin not preceded him. Ellington began to step outside the normal time limits with *Creole Rhapsody* in 1931 and there were black antecedents in compositions by ragtime innovator Scott Joplin and early jazz pianist James P Johnson. However it is surely significant that Ellington chose as his arranger Billy Strayhorn, who idolized Gershwin to the extent that an early Strayhorn effort, *Concerto for Piano and Percussion*, was heavily reminiscent of *Rhapsody in Blue*.

While it has been observed that Jews, along with Italians, were the ethnic group most prominent among white American jazz players in the music's formative years, a complementary phenomenon was the proliferation of jazz-influenced klezmer bands in large centres of Jewish population such as Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and particularly New York. Klezmer originated among the Yiddish *shtetls* of eastern Europe, but Jewish musicians emigrating to the United States brought the music with them readily adapting it, and finding it readily adaptable, to the hot new rhythms. Like most genuine folk music, klezmer had its own tradition of improvisation as a means of spontaneously expressing the joys and woes of the people. The US klezmer included risk-taking virtuosos such as the clarinetists Naftule Brandwein and Dave Tarras. These New World Jews were outsiders, distusted, despised and discriminated against by the WASP establishment, living on the edge and, like the urban blacks they lived in close proximity to, they found jazz and blues liberating. They were also open to new influences in the fields of art and culture.

When jazz evolved into swing in the 1930s, two of the most popular bands were led by Jews, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, outstanding clarinetists who rose from impoverished beginnings, and neither was shy of mixing klezmer inflections in their improvisations. The same was true of Jewish personnel in these bands, such as Goodman's star trumpeter Ziggy Ellman. Goodman and Shaw were giants in their time, but less significant in the music's development. They produced some of the best dance music of the 20th century, spiced up by outstanding improvisers in their bands. However - despite the hyping of Goodman as the King of Swing, a title he never himself claimed - all the outstanding innovators of the swing years, whose importance transcends their era, were black: Ellington, Basie, Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Fats Waller.

And yet, Goodman and Shaw, because they were the pop stars of their day, were crucial in spreading the jazz gospel. More important still, they were the white bandleaders who first employed black musicians in a big way. Given their high profile, and the fact that as Jews they were racial targets them-



Dizzy Gillespie

selves, their stance took guts, and punch-ups with white bigots occasionally broke out on band tours.

Outstanding black musicians given a leg up in these Jewish-led bands included Holiday, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, arranger Fletcher Henderson, pianist Teddy Wilson and vibist Lionel Hampton. Billie Holiday cut her first disc with Goodman in 1933, and in her autobiography was extremely complimentary about him and Shaw, whose band she moved on to.

With the 1940s came the development of bop, the first modern jazz style which was set to eclipse the big band era. Goodman, ironically, inadvertently had a hand in this through giving a platform to another young protégé, electric guitarist Charlie Christian. Some of the finest Goodman recordings are small group jams featuring Christian, whose solos in this swing context are said to have influenced the experiments of early bop musicians. Goodman tried to accommodate himself to bop without success while Artie Shaw, an outspoken critic of music's commercialisation, finally gave up in 1954.

The 1940s saw the blossoming of a plethora of US independent record labels established to serve the black community. According to music writer Donald Clarke in his book, *The Rise and Fall of Popular Music*, every one was set up by Jews. The history of popular music is littered with accounts of black artists being ripped off by white entrepreneurs, yet the relationship is not always cynical. The Jews who launched classic indie labels like Chess and Alladin had typically found no place in the mainstream music business with its genteel antisemitism. They lived in black neighbourhoods, knew and understood the music and, says Clarke, had they not taken the risks and done the work 'priceless jazz, to say nothing of scores of wonderful rhythm and blues hits, would not exist. And these independents were the first to record bebop'.

The most adventurous white jazz musicians soon followed the lead of the black bop pioneers. Several Jews featured in Woody Herman's Second Herd, a famous big band which incorporated boppish elements. Stan Getz was one of them, a





Ronnie Scott

**Continuing the theme in the next issue, Michael Billig writes about Jews and Rock music.**

these sharp-dressing, wisecracking, irreverent hipsters were Jews, pre-eminently Ronnie Scott, the seminal figure in breaking modern jazz in Britain. Scott, whose influences included Getz and Lester Young, was one of the first to make the leap and was soon acknowledged as a master of his instrument, the tenor sax. For years he dominated the best British jazz musician awards, and this August, three years after his death, Jazz Review picked him as 'the most important British jazz musician of all time'. But it is as the leading advocate of modern jazz in this country that Scott is best remembered.

In time, the British establishment would honour Scott with an OBE. First though, a long battle to establish the new music lay ahead. For years the BBC was hostile. Even as late as 1953, a Scott nine-piece was, in the words of his biographer, John Fordham, 'turned down flat' when the band auditioned for a BBC jazz show. Fordham observed: 'The fact was that the Corporation just didn't like modern jazz.' Neither did the trad-jazzers, who were in the opposing camp in the so-called 'jazz wars'. A notable exception was another Jew, Alexis Korner who, though associated with the tradders, also professed to a liking for bop. Korner's importance in the story of popular music is not in jazz, however. He went on to found Blues Incorporated and launched the British blues movement which inspired such bands as the Rolling Stones, Cream, the Animals, Manfred Mann, Fleetwood Mac and Led Zepellin, and numerous other rock outfits.

By the time rock 'n' roll erupted, Scott had opened his first jazz club. Club Eleven in London's Soho was the first establishment in Britain dedicated solely to modern jazz. The club was tiny, shabby and not much in the way of a business proposition, but as a sanctuary for the musicians and their 'misfit' fans, it was priceless. In those days the Scott band was run as a sort of co-operative. When baritone saxist Benny Green joined Scott fresh from the Bar Mitzvah and wedding circuit, he was later to recollect, the band 'smacked strongly of syncopated Marxism'.

Before long modern jazz grew in mainstream acceptability, and Scott and his business partner Pete King opened a far more ambitious establishment elsewhere in Soho, modelled on the clubs they had admired on trips to America. Scott and King were also instrumental in persuading the Musicians' Union to finally abolish its long-standing embargo on visits by US artists. Soon the cream of America was playing regularly at The Ronnie Scott's Club, attracted over by its ambience and musicians' first policy.

The club was now an international jazz venue, yet the owners continued to feature British musicians, and not just those now recognised as world class. In the 1970s, after the club had moved to even larger premises, Scott and King loaned it out on Sunday evenings to the London Musicians Co-operative free of charge. The title of one of Scott's rare compositions, 'Some of my best friends are blues' says it all. Of course, it is a wry perversion of one of the stock phrases of closet antisemites; but it is also the literal truth in that some of Jews' best friends— in a traumatic century, have been blues, the music which is at the root of jazz.

sublime tenorist who went on to have considerable impact on the bop-derived cool jazz movement of the 1950s, and who popularised bossa nova. Getz's many admirers included John Coltrane. Another Herman star was trumpeter Sonny Berman, of whom it was said: 'Listen to a good cantor, and then listen once again to his music.' Berman's was one of the first drug-related deaths in jazz

Across the Atlantic a generation of young musicians was growing up in London's war-bludgeoned East End with a zeal for bop. Many of

# I'M STANDING

## FROM WHERE

Even if you adore every member of your family, get togethers/simchas or functions are full of pitfalls for Jewish socialists. For those of us who believe in dismantling the state and throwing out all hierarchies it is disconcerting to find you've been placed within a hierarchy as rigidly structured as a medieval court which defines your status and how you are perceived within the wider family. It's called the seating plan. As you stroll into the reception area with your glass of champagne it's up on a board for all to see. Did you marry out? You're by the door which the caterers are using. You should be grateful they invited you. You can watch the caterers drop something and plonk it back on the plate. You hear someone call 'Vera – not enough petit fours on table 5'. Divorced? Separated? Do you mind going next to Jeffrey's Nana Rosenbloom? Still living in east London? You are by the amplifiers ready for Cliff Richard's 'Congratulations'. Face

it. Your family regard you as a joke, 'with all your socialistic politics'. You don't dress properly. You don't wear make-up (or perhaps you do and you're a man). And why don't you cut your hair? For years it was whispered you were a lesbian/gay. Then finally you begged and bribed your partner and he/she came with you. Or perhaps you are gay. If you've brought your partner to a function we at Jewish Socialist salute you. If you can't yet brazen that one out you are subjected to someone who sidles up to you and asks why you aren't married. 'Pretty girl like you. I'd go after you myself.' Or if you're a man, the someone is a woman who tells you to stop making your mother unhappy and settle down.

After dinner it's the speeches and then the loyal toast. In the year 2000 what the fuck is this about? Most people there are indifferent to the Royal Family. It's like a relative that everyone hates. And if you say 'but she's poisonous' or 'but he

smells', they agree but say you have to invite them. So do you stand or stay seated? Do neither. Work out who's doing the toast and as you see him rise and approach the head table go to the toilet; then stay put until the Hatikva is over as well.

The dancing shouldn't cause a problem so long as you like the Bee Gees. But sometimes you are invited to take part in Israeli dancing. This, I think, has changed since my teenage years on kibbutz. Now there's the 'Street Protest' dance. Half of you are the helicopter gun ships and all the 12-year-old boys have to run for cover. Then there's the 'Ashkenazi/Sephardim.' You divide up accordingly and the Ashkenazi party on while the Sephardim clear up after them. My favourite is 'Who is a Jew?'. I don't really understand the rules but at the end all the men have to pull their trousers down so all can be revealed. Please God by you!

**Ruth Lukom**

## REFLECTIONS

BY  
ISIDORE WALLMAN

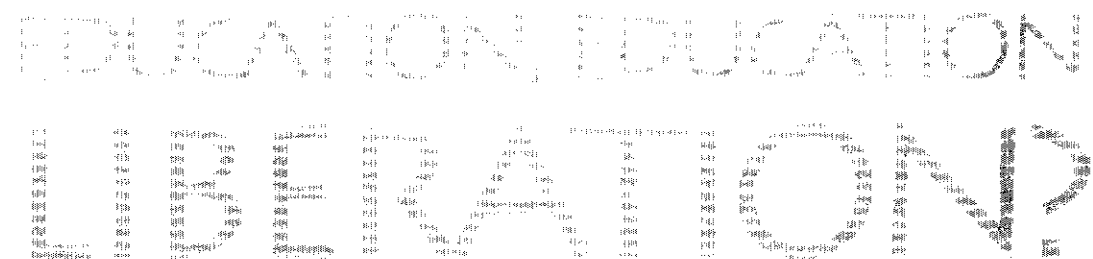
My world is a small world  
Bounded by the view from my window  
Ribbons of gleaming light  
Outline the hidden roads  
My feet will no more tread.  
The distant landscape  
Holds vistas I cannot share.

The windows of my mind  
Reveal the world that once I knew.  
With rucksack on my back  
My feet in clinkered boots  
I head towards the moors  
To freedom and fresh air.  
From factories and shops  
We form a happy band.

'On Kinder and on Bleaklow  
And down the Goyt we'll go  
And trespass on the hills  
And on the moors –  
For the mass trespass  
Is the only way for us  
To gain access to mountains  
And to moors.'  
Sung to the tune of a well-known  
Scottish air.  
We sang defiantly. We were young.

Heathrow and Heathlands open  
windows  
To different worlds.  
To the world outside and the world  
within.  
Here we are cared for and cosseted  
Bathed and bedded  
By our surrogate mothers.

We have entered our second childhood.



Across the world, education has been seen as the key to children's futures, providing them with the knowledge and the tools they need to take opportunities they will find. And yet school can be a dispiriting and coercive experience. In this section we look at education in various geographical contexts, from the inner cities of wealthy countries to refugee camps in Lebanon, and we examine attempts to make education an empowering element in children's lives



Photo: Peter Fryer/Save the Children

## WHERE THERES A WILL

Playwright, director and critic, **BONNIE GREER**, has used the treasures of theatre as a powerful educational tool. **KAREN MERKEL** spoke to her

Bonnie Greer was brought up in Chicago. Her father fought in the Second World War and was one of the first wave of black GIs to liberate the concentration camps. His experiences strongly influenced her early political identity and she was a vigorous activist in the civil rights movement. Then she moved to New York City and became immersed in the dynamic environment of fringe theatre, before moving to London, and becoming a British citizen. She is a broadcaster and arts critic and a prolific playwright and theatre director.

Serpent's Tail published *Hanging by her Teeth*, her first novel, in 1994. Greer is not a polemicist, and does not engage in theories of essentialism and Diaspora politics, rather she invites you to join in her exploration of how identities are formed and

constantly change. One of her favourite destinations is the world of the outsider, particularly those within defined communities who engage in the often fraught process of crossing the divide.

'One candle was burning and it was almost burned down. The light made her mother's shadow look like the biggest thing in the world. Bigger than the world itself. Lorraine did not move near it. It might swallow her up. Swallow her and make her stay in Chicago. Become her mother. Become like all of them. ... Elvira was quiet for a long time. There was no sound except the creak of the old chair, the wind blowing in the trees. When she did speak, her voice was dry and choked and small. 'Promise me this, Lorraine. That you won't leave home before your 30th birthday. Just like Jesus did when he went into

the desert to ask God's blessing for his ministry. Promise me. Promise you won't go until then.' Elvira's eyes were desperate. Lorraine had never seen her mother like that before. She put her arms around her. They hugged one another in the old rocking chair. How could she tell her mother that she had already gone? That she had left on an eastbound train and would never return? That no matter how long she stayed, she was not here. She was gone. .... And although it took everything in her to agree, she said yes. As she said it, she could feel the thing that she had tried to run away from close in on her. Envelop her as it was enveloping all her friends. Envelop her and never gorge her out. The Mantle of Respectability. But she could hold it as bay. She would do everything in her power to hold it at bay, not let it smother her, so that she could survive and leave for New York city.' (From *Hanging by her Teeth*)

Bonnie Greer's experiences in the civil rights movement live on in her work and she interprets the recent protests in Seattle and the City of London as coming from the same stable as the 'direct action' around race and feminism that she and her cohorts engaged in during the '60s and '70s. She is clearly driven by her need to explore the relationship between culture, oppression and struggle. However, it's impossible to pin her down, she is not interested in the world of 'writers', seeing herself as a 'student' of her surroundings. Greer is both modest and flamboyant. Her sense of drama makes itself felt in her everyday life, along with her writing.

Greer didn't set out to be a teacher, but it is no accident that she developed her educational work alongside her own personal artistic journey. She used Shakespeare to teach literacy to black and Hispanic kids in Harlem.

'I'd been a playwright and involved with theatre all my life - even as a child - and I discovered Shakespeare in the early '70s. I can remember the moment. I'd just lost two friends. It was the first time anyone close to me had died and I was quite shaken by it. I came over to visit my parents from university and my mother was asleep by the television, being the mother of seven children, the only time she had to be alone was at night, after we were all asleep. Lawrence Olivier was on the television doing the soliloquy from Hamlet, and I walked in just at the moment when he was doing 'To be or not to be' and I remember the lines about death; 'The undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns, puzzles the will' and I thought that's exactly how I feel. I sat down and I looked at this whole play and the second thing I asked myself was 'why hadn't anybody told me?'

'This play said everything that I had to ask about my friend, I got very passionate about it and wanted to teach it to people and somehow transmit that first sensation that I'd had to other people. Secondly I wanted to use Shakespeare as a way to teach black and Hispanic inner city kids how to read and write standard English without violating the language that they used at home, in the street and inside themselves. So that they could see English as a tool instead of the way that it's transmitted consciously and unconsciously to people: 'if you don't speak this way you aren't an educated human being'. I thought Shakespeare was the best way to do that because of the stories and because it's poetry.

'When I moved to New York I worked for Joseph

Papp, whose reputation was built around giving opportunities to black and Hispanic people in the theatre. He had a black Shakespeare company in which we did Shakespeare in our own way, in our language, and we did the verse. Joe's first language was Yiddish, and he learned to speak English through reading Shakespeare. So, I proposed to Joe that I develop this project that would use Shakespeare to teach literacy. Because of his own background he understood completely. My idea was to teach kids how to write their own versions of Shakespearean plays, to read Shakespeare undiluted and take the emotional and the literal context of the play and apply it to their own lives. In other words, discovering Hamlet in their house. And they did. Because they were able to emotionally connect with Hamlet or Romeo and Juliet, they were simply able to read it. It was very, very easy; they didn't have to be coached, they just picked it up and read it! And we performed it in New York. I taught teachers how to stand in front of classrooms and work with the assumption that this was easy, and that the students knew how to do it. They just had to find a way so that Shakespeare didn't become this big cultural icon that wasn't available to these people, that it was absolutely available.

'One of my best moments was in a classroom in Harlem. I wouldn't tell them that we were doing Shakespeare because they would immediately groan. I would just give them a storyline and we would start working, improvising. After they got into it emotionally, I just started feeding them the text. They'd take their emotional involvement and commitment and apply it to the text. Then of course they were able to read it. I was with this bunch of kids who had very poor reading skills, they were very disruptive and negative kids, and we were doing Romeo and Juliet. But they were totally into the story; of course it's a great story - what better story about young love across the divide? They ate it up! As I was getting ready to go and they said to me: 'What happens at the end?' I said 'You are the luckiest people in the world, do you realise there are very few people on this earth like you who don't know the end of Romeo and Juliet? Now you have to go and you have to read it!' They had no idea, 'But Bonnie what happens?' And they did go to the library and they read it - because they wanted to know.

'I decided to come to Britain because I wanted to become a writer. I'd been writing all my life but New York City at that time in the '80s was becoming very mercantile and I didn't want to be caught up in the sort of career trajectory that New York theatre was becoming. I thought that London would be a place where I could grow as an artist, as a creative person. Little did I know that I had entered into the high noon of Thatcherism and things were right on the turn from where I was expecting them to be. That was a big shock! But I was able to stay here and get my residency because I'd devised this education programme. I taught it in Gloucestershire, Lambeth, Brent, and in all those boroughs.

'I remember when I first approached the IEA, I didn't know anything about the political situation here. I walked into a room, started talking and got resistance from people who thought Shakespeare was not a suitable subject for working-class children. I was completely shocked. I didn't know what they were talking about, they were trying to say it to me in such





Bonnie Greer

a way so as not to say; 'We don't want you teaching black kids Shakespeare because it's irrelevant to them', but that's what they were saying. I couldn't understand it. I didn't know the struggles that were going on around Shakespeare in this country. But black teachers, on the other hand, absolutely encouraged me. Mainly because they had been educated in Africa and the Caribbean and they had done Shakespeare, they'd had superb educations. I got more resistance from the white left than I did from black people.'

She felt that her method succeeded

'The kids were writing and reading. They went to the plays, read the plays and were able to pass their exams. But English schools are just not set up for student-oriented teaching by which the student transmits the way she or he wants to be taught. That is why the method was successful. I established rapport. Within this rapport, the students will tell you how they should be taught in the most successful way. There was no system for teachers to be able to do that. I sit kids in circles so that they are equal, no front and back. Most of the time that kids are disruptive it's because they have a lot of energy and have things they want to accomplish. I let some of them teach the classes and help to maintain order, and they were perfect at it. They were kids who were shy but through this methodology were able to show sides of themselves that they weren't able to show through the classroom. All this education is a three-way system, between the teacher, the student and the person in charge of parenting. The environment has to be set up at home and in the school for anybody to be able to learn anything. Being American, I came out of a school ethos that said; 'Education is the right of everybody.' In the civil rights movement, we had fought for education, open access for all to education. To come into the British system

that had come out of the church, the poor, that saw giving education to working-class people as a kind of gift – as a way of being 'on the parish' – well, I didn't understand the difference.

The public school system is where you go to get an education here and the state school is to prepare you for work. So there isn't an idea – or there didn't used to be – that you actually had a mind, that you could be taught Aristotle, that you could read Shakespeare, because what were you going to do with that on the assembly line or down the mine? I had no idea that if you are from an ethnic minority here it's just assumed that you are going to be working class, and working class means you work, you don't need to know how to read and write. The idea of teaching them Shakespeare, well it just wasn't set up for that to happen. Although ethnic minority teachers, particularly those who were educated in the countries they came from, were taught exactly that, they were taught the classics. They had no problem and they wanted to have their kids taught this work because they knew it would expand their minds and lead them onto other things.

'I wanted to use Shakespeare as a way for people to be able to use their mind in a structure to critique what they saw in everyday life, like television for instance, or analysing situations – as a kind of grid, as opposed to the kinds of grids that most ethnic minority kids have, or had. It's much broader now, but in those days I had to stop and either be a writer or a teacher. I would have liked to continue, but there's a big Shakespeare industry in this country. There's a lot of the 'way it is done'. If it's done for the so-called masses, then it has to be controlled by the 'Masters of Shakespeare'. It goes against everything the Arts Council was set up to do – the idea that nothing was too good for the working man. Why don't working people, ethnic minority people go to the Royal Opera House? Because there ain't nothing there for them to go to see and we're fed up that we're not comfortable in those places. I'm outraged by the culture of these places. They're built on the money of people who go down to the shop once a week with their two quid to buy a lottery ticket but they can't afford to go there and they're not welcome. But if Shakespeare had not written for the ordinary person he would not have survived. He'd have been in some dusty academic library, he'd have been obsolete.'

She has considered doing this kind of work around other writers.

'I'd do it around Brecht. He is the author of the urban experience. He understands what it means to live and work within the city. I like his unsentimentality, his steely-eyed take on the ways the city works. He's utterly urban. He doesn't have the catholicity of Shakespeare, but if I was to work on a modern writer that I didn't have to bridge for the students, it would be Brecht because we could do it straight. And so I would teach Brecht, yes!

'I see education in a really broad spectrum – as a way to prepare to be a fully functioning and critical human being, one who is able to think for her or himself and also to look at, critique and change the society in which they are in.'

Her journey as a writer continues from her work in education.

'It's the journey towards freedom. In freedom there is authenticity, that's very important. Being black and being female, for me there's a constant battle to find

this authenticity. For anybody outside the majority in any way, there's a constant battle to find authenticity. I wouldn't go so far as to say celebrate it – that's another step – but the task is to find it and comb back and through the myriad of influences to find one's own voice without mediation. That's one of the reasons why I like Shakespeare; he spoke to me at that moment in my life when I was seeking some answers and said it quite simply. I was able to articulate what I could not articulate. I wanted to transmit that feeling and I also want people like me to feel that they can walk into these places and that they own them. It's your place and it belongs to you and you can ask, demand, that things be in there that you can relate to, because you want to take things out of the National Theatre that you can use in your life. It's really important to arm people with the tools to tell the truth, because more and more we live in a highly censored, narrow-focused world. And people are being squeezed off the map.

'It's the word that creates reality. Words create the state of being that we're in and we develop speech for the purpose of articulating states of being. Too

many people are silenced. If we are mute, we are invisible. For me, to be able to write, speak and to be able to help others to write and speak is crucial. I'm very nervous now because we're losing our ability to use language in a way that is translatable to those who are oppressing us and we must be able to make language that defines our reality, what we see, feel and experience. And in ways that they cannot escape from. You can be articulate but they must 'hear' you. We must learn how to use the language that we're born into in a way that transmits our reality. We also have to transmit that reality to those who are also trying to define our reality and play it back to us. We're becoming louder, more strident, more jargon infested, but the ability to be clear and to pinpoint the states that we're living in is becoming less and less so, that's what disturbs me. That's why I wanted to use Shakespeare because his use of language is so superb and it works on so many different levels, it's easy to learn and people can see how beautiful this language that we're born into can be. Then you can see how you can use language at its highest level to say not only lofty things but very simple things too.'

## WHAT WILL WE TELL THE CHILDREN?

One of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (reprinted in Jewish Socialist 42) is: 'The right to a Jewish education'. OK, so it doesn't exactly say that. But don't Jewish children have the right to a Jewish education (by Jewish child, I mean a child for whom Jewishness is part of their identity)? After all, at some time, Jewish children have to make sense of some very tricky issues. Jews and money? Jews and noses? The Holocaust? Jews and Israel? Do Jewish children, especially children in secular Jewish families, get the Jewish education they need?

Most Jewish children in Britain who have any kind of formalised Jewish education, learn in a synagogue *kheder*. To be part of a *kheder* is not for the faint-hearted. Having managed to press gang the children to the synagogue, the parents rapidly abandon ship, leaving the poor *kheder* teachers to the tender mercies of the children, and the poor children in the hands of the generally untrained *kheder* teachers. It's an ancient system, attempting to meet modern needs, baled out by a corps of underpaid, overstretched teachers and helpers (predominantly women in Progressive synagogues). Their basic curriculum includes, as a minimum, learning to read Hebrew, the Jewish festivals and Bible stories. But, for the children, the major benefit is presumably that they have the unusual experience of being in the company of a lot of other Jewish children.

Of course, the Supreme Being is necessarily at the core of the synagogue education system (though not necessarily at the centre of all synagogue life: many synagogues are community centres as well). But most British Jews are agnostics or atheists. If the parents/carers are uncomfortable with the idea of God, they keep it to themselves – after all, what is the alternative? Besides, God in

Christian clothes invades much of the British education system, anyway.

A limited alternative is a Jewish school. They are few in number and often rigidly regressive in their idea of 'who is a Jew.' In my school the Jewish studies curriculum was fairly chaotic, although it did make Jewish history so very simple. Jewish history began with Adam and Eve, finished in a meandering sort of way not long after Moses, and began again with the State of Israel (we never once discussed the Holocaust). As for the Supreme Being, the more I was told that God was everywhere, the more I doubted that God was anywhere. I left school having only a tenuous link with anything Jewish. It was no surprise to read, in the Jewish Policy Research survey of Jews in Britain, that Jewish schools produced a vanishingly small effect on the likelihood of subsequent involvement in Jewish community life.

My real Jewish education began when I joined the Jewish Socialists' Group, courtesy of Barry Smerin: Yiddish teacher, Bundist, student of Jewish history – and beautiful singer, but often of some of the most miserable Yiddish songs ever written. In the late '70s, it seemed everyone in the JSG was learning Yiddish, and Barry was far in advance of everyone else – though not always in his choice of singing material. So enthused was I with my little bit of knowledge that I even told the well-known Yiddish actor Anna Tzelniker, after one of her last full-length Yiddish theatre performances, that Yiddish would be revived. She, however, said she knew better.

No, I am not suggesting here that children should learn Yiddish. But there is an important lesson in almost any piece of Yiddish from any period: namely, how much knowledge of Jewish history and culture the writers took for granted.

**Jewish education through traditional kheders and Jewish schools cannot meet the needs of the more secular and progressive parts of the community. STEVE OGIN asks whether there is an alternative?**

This is not to say that all Yiddish-speaking Jews, secular and religious, knew all about Jewish culture through Yiddish, but the loss of Yiddish has hit secular descendants of Eastern European Jews hard. After all, Yiddish culture, and particularly Yiddish literature, was the ox-cart of Yiddishland. Secular Jewish continuity – poor muddled, bloodied Yiddish culture carried so much of it.

I was once, as ethnocentric as this sounds. But from stumbling on the richness of Eastern European Jewish culture, it's a small step to realise the multitude of other Jewish cultures, rich in history and traditions. Spain, Greece, North Africa, India,

Persia, Yemen... Fed up with bagels – what about something with couscous? Klezmer music not your style – try Judeo-Spanish rhythms. Folktales from Eastern Europe a bit boring – here are some stories from India, or Afghanistan, or Kurdistan.

Are we to be Jewish cultural tourists, then? Bussing our children around the exciting, interesting, but safe areas of Jewish culture? Avoiding the sexism, the racism, the homophobia? No. It is perfectly possible to create a progressive, secular curriculum for Jewish education. This, indeed, is what I think we have been edging towards in the Red Herring Children's Club.

## The Red Herring Club



Members of the Red Herring Club in the sukkah they have built

**Aim** To imbue children with a sense of Jewish history, culture, and ethnicity from a secular perspective and within a broad progressive, internationalist framework.

### Objectives

- 1 To introduce Jewish culture in its widest sense. This includes the history and geography of the Jewish world, legends, folk tales, music, food, visual art, languages, clothes, traditions. It also includes some of the ideas of Jewish religious culture in a sympathetic manner but wholly from a secular perspective.
- 2 To attempt to present material in an interesting and fun way, so that the activities of the Red Herring Club are age-appropriate and relevant to the children's lives.
- 3 To present Jewish culture in a progressive, pluralist, inclusive framework. For example, using the history of Jews all over the world to help to foster multiculturalism and anti-racism and ensuring that material does not have a gender bias.
- 4 To help children to relate to Jewishness in a way which ensures that they recognise that Jews are a unique people among many unique peoples.

## TRYING TO BE JEWISH 2

The second time I tried being Jewish was when Mr Adams the maths teacher came out. None of the experts on Jewishness had spotted him but he announced that he would run a Jewish assembly and Marshall, Serlin and Stoll went straightaway. Cheeps gave it a miss on ideological grounds. And I joined him. They didn't run assemblies for Jewish communists I'd heard about the conscience clause that said that schools had to lay on assemblies but no one has to go to them.

I went to see the severely depressed deputy head. I won't be going to assembly any more, I said. Is this so that you can come to school even later than usual? he said. No it's because I'm an atheist. There is another assembly, he said. I know, I said. But I'm not going to any assembly. Yes, I heard you say that, he said but there is another assembly, you know. Yes, I know, I said, I heard you say that but I'm an atheist. He wasn't impressed but said that I would have to bring a letter from home.

I told my father that I wasn't going to go into assemblies any more. He said, is this so that you can go to school even later than usual?

I said it was because I was an atheist and so was he and so was mum so it was fair enough. he said, kvatsh! he didn't believe a word of it, but he wrote the letter and I got out of assemblies. I had stood up for atheism. Then I became wild about Lynne. There was only one thing for it. Jewish assemblies. I went back to the severely depressed deputy head. I would like to go to Jewish assemblies, I said. I thought you did, he said. That's a much better idea.

So every day, I sat with Stoll, Marshall and Serlin and we said the Shema and I tried to get as near as possible to Lynne, but she always sat next to Rebecca Feinstein who it was rumoured had been having it off since she was thirteen (was this possible?) The breakthrough came just before Jesus Christ's birthday when a whole mob of us took part in that traditional Jewish custom, carol-singing. Sometime between We Three Kings and Oh Little Town of Bethlehem Me and Lynne swapped jumpers.

# SCHOOLS

Home based education is a growing grassroots movement. **LESLEY SAFRAN BARSON** writes about the families, like her own, who have chosen not to send their children to school.

Some families choose home based education for ideological reasons, while others have been thrust into it because of problems at school. Our family fell into home education. When my son was four I thought it was about time he learned to read. We sat down every morning with a Dick and Jane reader. He seemed to be struggling through. Oh no! Late reader, slow learner. On the fourth morning he said 'reading is boring.' We stopped there. I was in shock. Had I closed his emotional openness to this important ability? About six months later, I heard him reading aloud a Dr Suess book, Green Eggs and Ham. I watched him read this book to himself for himself.

This was for me a very important lesson in letting the child learn what he needs when he needs it. It was this experience that gave me the confidence to try home-based education for what I thought might be for just a little while. But I still felt I would need to teach him things he would not come across in everyday life for him not to fall behind in the modern world. Not only was I worried about how to teach, I was not interested in learning about these topics which, I realised, would make the whole enterprise very hard for me.

Our first day I was so panicked I could not do anything. We went to the park. We did bark rubbings (art, biology). At the cafe my son bought the tea and got the change (maths and social skills) and then we went shopping (life skills, more maths) and went home and baked a cake (chemistry, more maths, and reading). It was dawning on me that he did not need a teacher with the relevant professional skills in each subject. He could attain much knowledge from the world in his daily activities by himself.

Having survived our first day I gained the confidence to set up an educational programme of our own. We did three academic subjects a morning as well as violin practice. In the afternoon we went on outings. But I still thought I had to put certain prescribed ideas into his head.

Violin practice was the worst time. It invariably came at the end of the morning and by the end of the practice I would be shouting and he would be crying. This was exactly what I was trying to avoid. I decided to try an experiment for a month remembering the experiences we had had with reading. I would not practice with him at all. If he chose to practise fine, if not, that would be fine too. I would wait and see what his violin teacher made of it. The violin teacher never noticed. My son progressed very quickly. I never practised with him again. He is now sixteen and a very good musician playing three instruments. He never needed to 'learn' about learner-led learning. We have carried on, trying to do as much 'real' work as possible, going out into the world

doing work wherever possible. For example, we have done voluntary-work running stalls at fairs, worked in the local library and helped out in the offices of a huge London charity.

In February 1993 I started a community centre for home educating families called The Otherwise Club (OC). It also has a loose structure – what happens there is chosen by the people that come – and it also offers workshops and group activities. Now, almost eight years on, OC is desperately looking for its own premises in order to expand and enhance what it can offer to the home-educating community.

There are many preconceptions about home based education. It is perfectly legal. Parents are responsible for their children's education 'either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'. (Education Act 1996, Parental Duties, Section 7). If a child is not registered at school there is no obligation to seek permission to educate 'otherwise', to take the initiative in informing the LEA, to have regular contact with the LEA, or to have specific qualifications. Home-educated children and young people have friends both in school and out. They can choose friends on the basis of conviviality and often have friends who are both older or younger or adults.

There is another aspect to home-based education that is not widely recognised. If children and adults can reclaim their learning abilities for themselves and can learn without professional educators then this must be true in many other areas of our lives such as childbirth, health, food, employment and the environment. This leads to a questioning of what our values are, what our definition of success is and what we want for our children and ourselves. New and different visions of the future emerge constantly. This aspect makes home-based education a very exciting movement to be part of.

### For more information contact:

Education Otherwise, Helpline 08700-7300074, [www.education-otherwise.org](http://www.education-otherwise.org)

Home Education Advisory Service, PO Box 98, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL86 AN, [www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/home\\_ed\\_advisory\\_srv](http://www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/home_ed_advisory_srv)

Choice in Education: an independent monthly newsletter for home based educator, [www.choiceineducation.co.uk](http://www.choiceineducation.co.uk)

The Otherwise Club, [www.choiceineducation.co.uk/OC](http://www.choiceineducation.co.uk/OC)

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**EDDIE THOMAS,**  
Advocacy  
Officer of Save  
the Children UK  
in Lebanon,  
spoke to a  
group of  
children who  
don't go to  
school, but  
attend an out-  
of-school club  
children run by  
a non-  
governmental  
organisation  
(NGO) working  
in a Palestinian  
refugee camp in  
Lebanon.

Rania, aged 11, sat with a bruised expression and said nothing. Her brother, Farid (7), was too shy even to look. But other children were chatty. I asked them about their dreams, and the boys excitedly exchanged dreams of kidnap and Kalashnikovs. The smallest, Khalil (8), was bright and giggly, and said that he put bread and salt under his pillow to stop bad dreams (a Palestinian superstition). The bread and salt were evidently ineffective, because Khalil dreams of guns and guts. Then I asked them what they would dream of being when they were my age (35). Girls wanted to be teachers and nurses, the boys kept on about fighting, but just about settled for medicine, mechanics and shopkeeping, if there was peace.

The children were out of school, but many of them wanted to go to school. Najda (10) told me that 'Schools teach you. You get something from it for yourself, it's better than being on the street'. Some didn't go to school because their lives and families were a mess. Others couldn't go to school because they didn't have the right identity papers. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, (the main provider of health, education and social services to Palestinian refugees in the Middle East), only provides services for people who left Palestine in 1948 and their descendants. Bassam (13) isn't registered with UNRWA, and works as a mechanic. He would like to go to school, 'because then you

Palestinian children, many of the teachers were local nationalist leaders, who saw learning as a way to win back their land. Every morning children would swear to remember and fight for Palestine. Schools in the 1950s and '60s created an exiled Palestinian identity. After the Arab defeat of 1967, and the rise of the PLO, Palestinian nationalists in Lebanon had an alternative route to national identity – joining up for the struggle. In Lebanon, PLO armed factions could tell you more about your national identity than a school class. The civil war in Lebanon began in the mid-70s, providing plenty of job opportunities for young men who wanted to fight. School education was no longer so important to the boys, and Palestinian women (once some of the best educated women in the Middle East) suddenly found a whole new set of family responsibilities that kept them from the classroom.

During Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, camps and schools were destroyed in massacres and bombing campaigns. UNRWA again became the institution maintaining and representing the interests of refugees. Post-war Lebanon has defined Palestinians as the losers. In Jordan and Syria, Palestinian refugees can get some or all of their civil rights, but in Lebanon they are still foreigners, barred from professional work. The Lebanese government wants them to leave. Ahmed (10) explained this collective unwantedness – 'the Palestinian doesn't get [his dreams] because he's Palestinian. They hate Palestinians'.

Given the complexities of life for refugee children and the different demands they face their right to education is constantly challenged. Palestinians' limited access to employment impoverishes and lowers aspiration. Economic conditions have a big impact on school dropouts. Palestinian children still want to learn – a 1997 study found that 66 per cent of them want to go to university – but drop-out rates in Lebanon are higher than any of the other countries where UNRWA works. Many parents say that they are forced to take their children out of school because they need them to go out and work, even though education is free for Palestinian refugees.

Education accounts for half of UNRWA's budget and two thirds of its staff. It concentrates on free basic education, for almost half a million pupils in its four countries of operation. But it is free, not compulsory, education. In the camps in Lebanon there are political parties that make up unelected popular committees which work on 'national', rather than 'social' issues. They sometimes call for boycotts of UNRWA services and provide the camps with utilities, but they don't try to influence the ways that people bring up their children, and can't influence the economic situation. Education is a decision for the family. In the past, Palestinian families clearly saw the value of education. Now it is not so clear – Bassam is too busy coping with a disempowered present and a confused future to go to school. He likes the club and he'll keep coming when he has time off work.

Photo: Peter Fryer/Save the Children



Kindergarten for  
Palestinian refugees in  
Lebanon

know how to read and if you go abroad and you can speak English, you know everything'. At 13, Bassam the mechanic is already planning for emigration to the Anglophone world. But he can't go to school because his family doesn't have the identity papers that make you an official Palestinian refugee.

In the 1950s, when UNRWA began teaching

# THE GREAT BURY GRAMMAR ELECTION OF 1962

A short story by  
**STEVE COHEN**

Lenny Bruce used to do a sketch where the world was divided into Jews and gentiles. It was irrelevant what someone was born into. It was what they became. By this criterion John Lennon, that good Catholic boy, was extremely Jewish. He had wit, politics and sex. On the other hand Paul McCartney was, is and always will be très gay. And the Chief Rabbi is a supreme gentile. Belief in God, Israel and assimilation are all anti-Jewish. Cities can also be Jewish or Gentile. Manchester is very Jewish. Not because it has many Jews but because it is cosmopolitan. It finds its roots in rootlessness. On the other hand, Tel Aviv is totally goyish. Constructed by Jews, it denies the Palestinians.

Bury is on the Tel Aviv side of this continuum. Today many thousands of Jews live in Bury but only because Bury has annexed that no man's land between itself and Manchester – namely Prestwich and Whitefield. These are the new Occupied Territories where the battle cry of the Jewish parent is: 'Next year in Bury Grammar School'.

I went to school in Bury in 1956. I can't remember meeting any other Jews there until the sea parted and a flood seemed to descend round about 1960. I was in a culture where no one else had even heard of the great modern Jewish satirists, Shelley Burman or Mort Sahl. I was the first Jew my schoolmates seemed ever to have met, which never stopped them whacking me for being Jewish: 'You're the first one we've ever seen for 2,000 years and you're going to be the last, you dirty Commie bastard!' Bury grammar was never hot on logic.

Maybe because of this isolation I never suffered from over-confidence at school. I wasn't one of those kids who appeared twice on the whole school photograph – at either end after a crouched dash of 100 yards. Nor was I one of those pre-beatniks who stood on a soapbox in the centre of Bury declaiming incomprehensible concrete poetry. Once or twice I made it to the audience. An audience of one.

During these years subversiveness was like a spring waiting to be released ... boing! The coil became tighter once other Jews began to descend on the institution. The first awareness I had of these parvenus was when I realised I wasn't the only one being whacked for being Jewish. The day the truth dawned, the sense of isolation broke down, and I grew. Academically, personally, sexually. Sexually was the best.

This growing confidence was seen most clearly on the military front. One of Bury grammar School's cruellest activities was its compulsory Combined Cadet Corps, the CCC, first established in 1906 to defend Bury against the Hun. I subsequently assumed (with more political

acumen) that it was designed to defend the grammar school from the kids at the local secondary modern. By the turn of the 1960s I began to engage in acts of sabotage against this war machine. At first this was secret – like removing the firing pins from all rifles the night before Lord Montgomery was to view a shooting competition with the boys from Manchester Grammar. By 1962 my rebellion was open. I managed to persuade the entire Lower 6th to goose-step through Bury on Remembrance Day in full military regalia, humming 'Deutschland über alles'.

On the political front, 1963 opened optimistically. I'd just pulled off my CCC stunt. Macmillan's Tory government was in a mess. The Beatles were in the charts. And Bury Grammar sanctioned its first school election.

There were four candidates: Tory, Labour, Communist and myself – an Anarchist. The Communist Party contestant presented no serious opposition since his position seemed to revolve around support for the five-year programme of grain production in the Ukraine and the rehabilitation of Josef Stalin. The Tories and Labourites campaigned around the slogans of their elders. 'You've never had it so good' or 'The white heat of technology' didn't have much appeal to hormonally active kids forced to study Virgil on a summer's day. The only way I would make any impression was to make my programme relevant to the electorate. In some ways this was straightforward. My demand to smash the CCC would have a clear impact on their lives. However, it was not so easy to convince them of the relevance of my call for the abolition of God and of all religion.

I was helped out by Sol Firmstein of the Lower 4th. He'd taken a poll of his friends, all Jewish, and had discovered that their main political orientation was the abolition of barmitzvahs. So I added 'Smash all barmitzvahs' to my demands and it turned out to be crucial. Firmstein started producing his own broadsheets: 'Barmitzvahs are no mitzvah', followed by 'Thirteen's an unlucky number'. He even suggested mounting a pageant – 'Down on the Old Bar Mitzvah' – but the campaign didn't have the resources.

Several Jewish parents expressed some alarm but this penetration of subversion into the family only helped our cause. Gentile parents also expressed some anxiety – apparently they had not realised they were already paying the school to get their kids barmitvahed. They were worried compulsory circumcision would be our next demand.

Come polling day Labour, inevitably, won.

However, advocacy for anarchy managed to accumulate 25% – 129 votes – the exact number of Jews in the school. Abolition of barnitzvahs had hit a defined, if confined, chord.

I left Bury grammar that summer, replacing my school cap for a red bandanna and Bakunin for Marx. I next met Firmstein in 1969. In Hyde Park at the free Rolling Stones Concert, with Jagger reciting Shelley and remembering Brian Jones. With the rest of us trying to forget him. I was attempting to sell Black Dwarf to 100,000 people whilst trying to win the Hells Angels guarding the stage over to Marxism. They accepted the full programme except that bit about throwing away your chains. Firmstein was also loaded with Black Dwarf. We recognised each other through our granny spectacles – the two of us who had 20:20 vision. We embraced like two crazy rabbis with our glowing kaftans and flowing beards. Firmstein told me that after I left school he graduated to leading a Trotskyist cell on the premises. In his final year there had been another election. His programme had reflected the times. It called for full support for the National Liberation Front of Vietnam. In the

course of the campaign he had achieved the impossible – the abolition of the Combined Cadet Corps. The teachers became terrified after discovering another one of Firmstein's leaflets in circulation advocating that the boy soldiers turn their rifles on their officers – at that time composed entirely of 6th form staff. Firmstein also told me that he had won 33% of the votes. I saw that as a real victory. He had broken through the ethnic ghetto.

I only ever saw Firmstein once again. It was 1979. I had become a refugee lawyer. Firmstein had taken the road to hell. He had become an anti-refugee lawyer representing the Home Office. We met in court. I was shocked and depressed. I threatened to denounce his past in court. We cut a deal. He promised to go easy on the case if I kept shtum about his past. My lips were sealed. On the way out of court, Firmstein told me that by the time he'd left school it was 33% Jewish. That depressed me even further. It meant that even the renegade Firmstein's election vote had not busted the ghetto (or 'gateau' as Aunt Sadie would have said if she had not died the previous year).

## Didn't they do well?

### WHITEHALL AND THE JEWS 1933-1948: BRITISH IMMIGRATION POLICY AND THE HOLOCAUST

Louise London

Cambridge University Press, £30

In recent months, a series of well-meaning, liberal-minded journalists have asked me to write or be quoted on the wonderful contribution made by refugees to British life. Having woken up to the fact that Britain has an ageing population and that there might not be enough people willing to look after the yuppies of today once they reach their dotage, some, inside and outside the government, have decided that maybe those bogus/abusive asylum seekers could actually be of some use to this country in the future. Journalists have wondered

if I, as an 'expert', could mention this possibility – in other words, mention the nuclear physicists of the past and the potential bottom-wipers of the future.

Drawing up a list of refugee achievements is not difficult but I've tried to convince the media that this is not the reason why Britain should be implementing

the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees: once the moral case for refugees is lost or forgotten, then, whether those seeking asylum are allowed entry becomes dependent on factors utterly unconnected to their need (refugees created Marks & Spencer – previously a plus factor. Should we now restrict entry of asylum seekers because the company is going through hard times?).

In practice, the needs of refugees have been subsumed to those of the receiving society – for example, some physically frail Holocaust survivors were only allowed to come to Britain after the war if they agreed to become domestic servants, an occupation with a huge excess of demand over supply.

At the launch of her book, Louise London, formerly a solicitor specialising in immigration, talked of the ritual engaged in by Labour and Conservative politicians of praising Britain's proud tradition of asylum before moving on to call for 'firm but fair' control of those presently seeking to enter the country. In the selective memory of politicians, Huguenots and Jews have become the idealised asylum seekers of the past, classic refugees, people genuinely in need and who returned the favour

by adding significantly to the British way of life. Such myth-making, it seems, is how we like our past record to be served up. We remember rescuers, the 'British Schindlers', who helped save Jews during the Nazi era and we develop amnesia concerning those inside and outside government who tried to keep them out. It is a picture of the heroic righteous at centre stage with the occasional villain, such as the wicked Oswald Mosley (the moustache is the giveaway) thrown in for balance. The reality is much messier. Yes there were some saints, and also some real baddies, but more often a complex ambivalence of responses that transcends such crudities of generosity and meanness.

It is this complexity that Louise London's superb account of British immigration policy during and just after the Nazi period draws out so convincingly. London's account is about both history and memory. Her book, it must be emphasised, is brilliantly contextualised in the intricacies of Whitehall because she has immersed herself so deeply and successfully in the Public Record Office. No other work on the liberal democracies comes close to

Tony Kushner is Director of the Parkes Centre, University of Southampton and co-author with Katharine Knox of *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives During the Twentieth Century* (Frank Cass, £22.50)

her understanding of the mechanisms of the state apparatus. London brings in many government departments never considered in earlier studies and she weaves their internal discussions and rivalries together into a compelling narrative. Indeed, considering the dry nature of the memorandums and minutes she utilises the book is remarkably readable because the author has a deep commitment to her subject matter, not just in relation to the Nazi era but also with regard to its significance to refugee questions today. And rather than act in opposition, the contextualisation and the commitment make it work as a piece of historical writing and as a warning against complacency.

The cover of *Whitehall and the Jews* depicts two Czech Jews being marched away by police at Croydon airport in March 1939. The next day they were deported. Louise London raises the question of whether these men and women were part of Britain's proud tradition. The two policeman in

the photograph are not the kindly souls so often depicted helping the *kindertransport* arrivals. They certainly are not smiling as they lead these adults into temporary detention.

Recently there have been proposals to turn Croydon airport into a heritage site – could this photograph have a place in such a museum? Until we confront the mix of self-interest, xenophobia, antisemitism and humanitarianism that made up British refugee policy in the Nazi era, its memory will be distorted and abused by contemporary politicians trying to justify the unjustifiable. As Louise London concludes, 'the British government did help and save persecuted Jews, but on its own terms'. She outlines the opportunities that were taken and lost both in the 1930s and the Second World War – her study is one of the first to cover the whole of the Nazi era and the years immediately following when survivors found the doors closed and the earlier refugees found the

route to citizenship tortuously slow and condescending. Hopefully, her book will move the debate on between those who will defend Britain's reputation at all costs and the polemicists who simply want to muckrake and denounce its record for the sake of it. For the politicians of today, however, the message of Whitehall and the Jews is clear: the Jewish refugees of the 1930s and the Second World War were rarely seen as desirable. Yes, some of them later became Nobel Prize winners and others successful entrepreneurs. But the justification for letting them in was because, like the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe today, they were persecuted in their homeland. We should look first not to the legacy that the refugees from Nazism provided, but to what would have happened to them, and did happen to others, had they not been allowed entry. Ultimately, the right to asylum has to be absolute and not conditional.

Tony Kushner

## Lost leader

### A WORLD TO WIN: LIFE OF A REVOLUTIONARY

Tony Cliff

Bookmarks, £11.99

Tony Cliff, born Ygael Gluckstein, was the founder and leader of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). He died shortly before his political autobiography was published, after being a 'Marxist, Leninist, Trotskyist for the last 66 years'. Cliff had built his political grouping from eight members of the Socialist Review Group, buried insignificantly in the Labour Party, to become the biggest organisation on the outside left. Within the SWP Cliff was a dominant, and domineering figure. His charm was only matched by his single-minded devotion to 'building the revolutionary party'.

It is hard to imagine any of the people you come across shouting 'SO-shlist Worker' stripping down a machine gun. To Cliff though, the Russian Revolution was all. *A World to Win* starts with a chronology. In 1917 Tsarism was overthrown; Ygael Gluckstein was born; and the Bolsheviks took power in Russia. There is no suggestion that the

baby Gluckstein was unusually precocious but you imagine that the adult Cliff felt the weight of history on his shoulders.

For Cliff, all roads led back to the Bolsheviks. Socialist Worker is discussed in relation to Pravda. Cliff's notion of his readership seems to consist of revolutionary train-spotters like himself. Thus we find 'A 1922 Bolshevik Party census covering 22 gubernias and oblasts showed...' Gubernias? Oblasts? Ask your Socialist Worker seller. Cliff also loved the leaden phrase: 'As a disciple of Lenin I learnt well that strategy and tactics have to change according to the objective situation.' Or, 'I asked myself why I came to the conclusion more clearly and earlier than other comrades.'

Tony Cliff came from a wealthy, strongly Zionist family. Ben Gurion was a family friend. Cliff's father's business partner was one Chaim Weitzman. After a few years in left-Zionist groups in Palestine, Cliff

became a Trotskyist, struggling to influence Jewish workers 'trapped by Zionism', an Arab working class 'trapped in the camp of feudal reaction', and all under the boot of the occupying British. Cliff's activism landed him in prison where he met Meir Slonim, general secretary of the Palestinian Communist Party, right wing terrorist Avraham Stern and Moshe Dayan. Cliff's own Trotskyist grouping 'had no impact at all on the working class' and after the Second World War he left for Britain, despairing that political unity could be built between the Arab and Jewish working class.

Britain, at least, had the legacy of the once united Revolutionary Communist Party, though that would soon fall apart with different currents following Ted Grant, Gerry Healy and Cliff himself. Personalities aside, the major fault lines in world Trotskyism lay on exactly how to





analyse the Soviet Union's failure. Cliff's grouping adopted the 'state capitalist' theory that the bureaucracy had set itself up as a new ruling class, effectively owning the means of production. This theory had been first advanced by the small, but dogged, Socialist Party of Great Britain as far back as 1917.

The foundation conference of Cliff's Socialist Review Group took place in 1950, its first expulsion being one year later – Ellis Hillman – who became very well known in labour movement politics. Cliff's Socialist Review Group was, in London at least, mostly Jewish, many of whom were related. His party has been consistently anti-Zionist, calling for the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state but has done little practical work on the Middle East. The SWP has many Jewish members but remains assimilationist. Cliff had a major problem with cultural and other autonomy. Older feminists will recall his successful campaign to close down the SWP-linked Women's Voice. Not that Cliff ignored feminism, being good enough to write *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation for the sisters*. He also closed down the *Black paper Flame*.

For someone who'd scarcely done a day's manual labour in his life Cliff could, at times, be slavishly 'workerist'. He described how, in 1974 'The social composition of the

membership (of his group) also changed radically for the better'. This did not stop him, however, pushing out a large group of Birmingham engineers because they wouldn't obey his line in internal union elections. Such dogmatism belied earlier hopes that Cliff's project held out some libertarian promise, at least compared to more fundamentalist Trotskyist groups.

Some of Cliff's initiatives undoubtedly influenced organised labour. His Incomes Policy, Legislation and Shop Stewards and the Employers' Offensive: productivity deals and how to fight them, were widely used. That much of the latter book was lifted, unacknowledged, from an earlier work by Ken Coates and Tony Topham of the Institute of Workers Control is not, however, mentioned in *A World to Win*.

*A World to Win* details Cliff's obsessions with 'downturns' and 'upturns', which I suspect the SWP will now quietly forget. What should be remembered is that the early SWP slogan, adopted from elsewhere, 'Neither Washington Nor Moscow But International Socialism' helped to break significant parts of the left from defending the indefensible Soviet Bloc. The SWP's creation, the Anti-Nazi League had a devastating effect on the then powerful National Front. Its slogan 'The

National Front is a Nazi front' did much to shear away the everyday hanger and flogger, xenophobic Tory from the Nazis at the core of the NF. That too is to Cliff's credit. The SWP also runs an excellent, non-sectarian, left-wing bookshop and a good publishing house.

It is a hard life being a full-time revolutionary (or in Chanie Rosenberg's case, being the wife of one. She had to type one of Cliff's books seven times until he felt it was right.). In *A World to Win* Cliff wrote, 'Readers may be shocked by the narrowness of my own life story – I so concentrated on the political side of life that I neglected wider emotional and cultural elements. (Such) division of labour raises productivity, but, alas, makes a person half-human.' Admirable honesty, but perhaps we should aspire to being more fully human.

For a vanguard party the SWP is known for bringing up the rear. Famously they tail-ended the biggest mass protest we've seen in recent years, over the poll-tax. Currently they are tail-ending the carnivals against capitalism. Post-Cliff, the SWP are to be found setting up socialist alliances, standing for elections (an expellable notion until recently) and getting less votes than the far right on polling day. One wonders where the wind will blow them next.

Ross Bradshaw

## Beyond the groove

Smoked Salmon Salsa: a digestible mix or, as the teenage jazz fan I played this CD to commented, a bad idea well executed? I found about two thirds of the album worked – better than I feared. The title doesn't do justice to its range of influences: Latin rhythms, some complete or quoted klezmer melodies, Greek, Yiddish folksong, Arabic – a pretty much submerged influence on the second track – and above all open-minded jazz. The best tracks in this melange are also the most coherent, either completely single-minded or as straightforward as fusion gets, including all of Curtis' own compositions. The CD kicks off with a deliciously played and not over-arranged version of the Heyser Bulgar, renamed (why?) *A Pint of Cherry Brandy & a Packet of Crisps*. The title track, *Smoked Salmon Salsa*, turned out to be one of the successful fusion numbers, with the flavours of klezmer and salsa coming through separately loud and clear while the drums and bass also pulled it all

together. Oom-cha is wonderfully danceable. The quietly soulful playing of Song for Madeleine strikes a different mood, with a circular melody powered along by a percussion and bass line, both given plenty of room. The low spots are the tunes left in raw chunks, that seem to have got in here through trading on their rootsy connections alone, when every cook knows you should start with the best quality ingredients. Who is Mo-a-tsur for? It's an uninspired tune to start with, played here fairly plonkingly. Together with the flippant titles and facetious sleeve notes, this track had me suspecting this was a novelty album. Maybe there are people who prefer music that flags up its sentimental Jewish credentials over good material well played, but K-Groove doesn't need to pander to them – there are enough bands out there doing that already. Often *Bounce a Cheque* (a version of *Oyfn Pripetshik*) also starts out sounding like it belongs somewhere else. The slushy strings

introduction didn't work for me, but generally the band's arrangements are especially strong on intros – check the first few bars of tracks one, six and eight. The solo turns are excellent throughout. Sketches of Chrane grabs your attention with a snatch of Rumania on trumpet, and Eran Kendler's guitar playing is often outstanding. I first heard this band in the early '90s when they were called Klezmer Groove and played polished covers of Klezmerim and Klezmatics recordings. They changed their name 'to attract a more eclectic audience'. With their second CD they're forging a more individual sound, and it's time they left their identity crisis behind. It's a tough world and every band needs its unique selling point, but K-Groove should have more confidence in their excellent musicianship. So big up your musicians, Stewart, tell us more about them, give us fewer self-conscious jokes, and be just a little choosier with your material.

Dena Attar

**STEWART CURTIS K-GROOVE SMOKED SALMON SALSA**  
33jazz053  
£11.99



Stewart Curtis

## MODERN YIDDISH USES No 2

**Nebekh:** a pity or a great shame. For example, Bob Dylan, singer for the poor and powerless in the '60s is still kicking around. 'Money doesn't talk, it swears,' he once wrote. A great protest singer until he became a millionaire, *nebekh*.

**Meyvin:** an expert, often used ironically for someone recognised as an expert only by themselves. Imagine a young man who became a teacher in the days of smaller class sizes, when teachers were not receiving 1,000 directives a day from the government telling them what to do, how to do it and when, but never why. This teacher apparently finds it too hard, but he's such a *meyvin* that he gets a job telling other teachers how to do their job and takes the paltry annual salary of

£124,000 to do this crucial task. The common English term for such a person is, a 'Chris Woodhead'

**Kvetch:** a *kvetch* is something you hear. It's a small whine or moan and sometimes comes from unlikely people. For example when Tony Blair says he would happily have Liberal Democrats in his cabinet, the former shop steward and working class fighter John Prescott gives a *kvetch* and then sucks up to him again.

**Emes:** Translates pretty closely to 'Honest, guv', as in, 'Nobody's fiddled with the mileage. Although the car is 10 years old it has only done 5,000 miles. We pride ourselves on our service at Romford Straight Secondhand Motors. *Emes!*'

David Rosenberg

### Tattoo Jew: The On-Line Magazine for Jews with Attitude

[www.tattoojew.com/](http://www.tattoojew.com/)

In the current issue: Jewish sex-workers, is Toxic Avenger Jewish?, Nazi S&M fetishism, Jewish meditation and a kike theory manifesto. In the archive: Annie Sprinkle, Lenny Bruce, David Mamet, Jewish hip hop, the Klezmatics and queer yiddishkayt. What more need I say? But as well as the outrageous content, the writing in *Tattoo Jew* is of consistently high quality!

**The Patrin Web Journal: Romani Culture and History**  
[www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/](http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/)

With racist violence against the Roma increasing throughout Europe, and mounting violence against refugees and asylum-seekers in this country, and harsher state practices against

migrants being developed in the UK and across Europe – it is more important than ever for us to build practical solidarity with Romani peoples. This beautifully designed and illustrated site offers current news on the Roma, contacts for Romani and other traveller organizations across Europe, and a wealth of knowledge on Roma culture and history – from the Holocaust (Porrajmos, 'the Devouring', in Romani), music and film to birth and marriage customs.

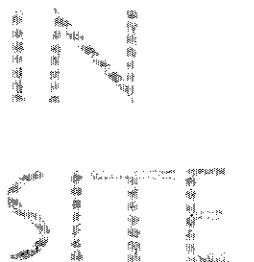
**Jews Not Zionists**  
[www.jewsnotzionists.org/](http://www.jewsnotzionists.org/)

This is the site of Neturei Karta, the Guardians of the City, whose devotion to Torah means they refuse to have anything to do with the blasphemous and heretical state of Israel. Followers of the hasidic Satmer rebbe, they participate in the Palestinian

delegation to the UN, meet with Farrakhan, refuse to pay taxes in Israel, and attack businesses that open on the Sabbath. On this site, you will find Talmudic scholarship against Zionism, reports on religious Jewish communities who refuse to leave Islamic countries and arguments that Zionism cost lives in the Holocaust.

**JewishGen's Shtetlinks**  
[www.jewishgen.org/Shtetlinks/index.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/Shtetlinks/index.html)

Links to Jewish communities all over the world, organised by region. Those I found the most interesting were in the Americas (the Jews of Cuba and Jamaica), the Middle East (the Last Jews of Libya) and the Sephardic world (the Babylonian Jewish heritage centre, the Crypto-Jews of the American South West, the Jews of Rhodes, the Syrian Jews of Brooklyn and the Web of Tunisian Jews).



**BEN GIDLEY'S**  
round-up of  
websites well  
worth a visit

# ON THE SHELF

## Books about Israel are top of the shelf for RAF SALKIE this chanukah

Writing about Jewish subjects is always a lot of fun: if the Middle East doesn't cheer you up, the Holocaust certainly will. Seriously, though, the "peace process" that started in Oslo in 1993 has collapsed in recent months, and Graham Usher's book *Dispatches from Palestine* (Pluto, 1999, £12.99) goes a long way towards explaining why. Containing articles and interviews written from 1994 onwards, Usher gives a good picture of the most common Israeli attitude towards the Palestinians, which he rightly calls 'supremacism'. Israeli policies since Oslo follow logically from this attitude: squeezing Palestinians into the least viable parts of the West Bank and Gaza, denying them adequate water, making their economic development completely dependent on Israel, and surrounding them with heavily armed settlements backed up by the Israeli army. Surprisingly enough a lot of Palestinians have not been ecstatically happy about this, and the result is the violence that flared up intermittently before becoming desperate in September.

One saving grace has been the few Israelis who have understood what was happening and spoken out against it. One of these is the historian Ilan Pappé, whose 1995 interview in the book describes the Oslo process as 'a train waiting to be derailed' because of the hopeless prospects that it offered the Palestinians. Another group of Israelis with a clear vision is B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. In calm prose, similar to Amnesty reports, their pamphlet *Thirsty for a Solution: the Water Crisis in the Occupied Territories* describes the shortages, lack of running water (over 200,000 Palestinians have no mains supply), and the poor quality of their water with its attendant health hazards. In August 1999 a strike by workers at Mekorot, the Israeli water authority, gave Israelis a brief taste of what life is like all the time for their neighbours: there was outrage and anger in the newspapers at the suffering and danger of pollution, all of which are routine in Gaza and the West Bank.

Meanwhile the colonisation process continues, particularly with the establishment of new Jewish areas like Ma'aleh Adumim round Jerusalem – another feature of Israeli policy since 1993. Nur Masalha's *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians* (Pluto, 2000, £15.99) concentrates on the fundamentalist groups in Israel who have spearheaded this expansionism, but also points to the closeness between the extremists and most mainstream Zionists in this and other respects. Strict separation of Jews and Palestinians continues to be the basic principle of most strands of opinion in Israel, the only differences being about how to present this principle to the outside world.

And, of course, it was a similar strict separation of Jews and non-Jews that was at the heart of Nazi ideology. My daughter recommended *Shadow of the Wall* by Christa Laird (Red Fox, 1999, £3.99), a gripping account of life inside the Warsaw Ghetto. The

central character is Misha, a 14-year-old who lives in what is now the famous orphanage of Janusz Korczak. The book gives a wonderful picture of this remarkable man, whose views on children's rights were way ahead of their time. His decision to accompany the children to Treblinka rather than take the opportunity to leave was absolutely in character. I don't like to wallow in Holocaust fiction, but I learnt a lot from this book.

On a more theoretical level, Moïse Postone's pamphlet *Anti-semitism and National Socialism* (Chronos, 2000, £2) is an illuminating Marxist analysis of the place of the Jews in Nazi Ideology. Under capitalism many people subscribe to the idea that hidden forces control our lives. A moment's thought reveals that it is business which pulls the strings, either directly if we work for a private company, or indirectly in the way the business community influences governments, the media, culture, education, and so much else; but the less rational among us like to blame aliens, Satan, immigrants or the European parliament. Adding Jews to this list, and thereby linking Jews to a vague anti-capitalist sentiment, was the key thing that distinguished Fascist antisemitism from the Christian hatred of Jews that had flourished for so many centuries before. This is a good analysis which helps in understanding modern antisemitism. I also learnt from the pamphlet that the East German government gave all Jews a higher pension in their role as 'anti-fascists' – funny that I never read about this in the Jewish Chronicle.

So not much to smile about this time. So often you hear people say, 'Never again', about the Holocaust, but how many of them consistently try to see all people as equally human? Until we all do this, all the time, there will be oppression and violence all around, not just in the Middle East. As socialists, we can't settle for anything less.



## FEEL SECURE?

When Ramsay Macdonald, Labour's first Prime Minister, heard that MI5 had a file on him, he asked if he could see it. Certainly not, Prime Minister! Within a year they'd helped remove him, anyway, with the forged 'Zinoviev letter'. Former MI5 agent David Shayler says his bosses kept a file on dangerous subversive Jack Straw since his days in the National Union of Students (boring from within? Excruciatingly!) Home Secretary Straw knows his duty. The whistleblower must be tried behind closed doors, so we don't get unduly alarmed about our protectors. And MI5 advised the KGB how to handle glasnost!

Just who, or what, is official secrecy protecting? Shayler alleges Britain's secret intelligence service, MI6, backed a bomb plot against Libya's Gaddafi, which killed innocent civilians. It's only 'terrorism' when the other side does it. He claims his colleagues in MI5 knew about plans to bomb the Israeli embassy in London, and Balfour House (Zionist offices) in 1994, but did nothing to stop them. The bombers got clean away. Two Palestinians, Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh, were jailed for 20 years for 'conspiracy'. No forensic evidence linked them to the bombings. Their appeal lawyers say MI5 should reveal what it knows.

I remember Samar Alami helping stage an exhibition of traditional Palestinian embroidery at the Museum of Mankind. It looks like her and Jawad were stitched-up. Would two highly educated

professionals, working constructively for their people's cause, blow everything with a stupid adventure in London? Some Jewish people may hesitate to side with Palestinian militants. But if two innocent people were jailed, while the real bombers escape justice, and only the appeal lawyers seem bothered to find the truth, we should ask what's been going on.

## POWER AND FIORE

No one died in the London bombings. A bomb at Bologna railway station in 1980 killed 85 people. Several young fascists, whom Italian authorities wanted to interview about this outrage, landed in Britain after a stopover with Falangists in Lebanon. One, Roberto Fiore, was never extradited. He moved into a smart SW1 flat, set up businesses, and impressed the Far Right's 'political soldiers' here. It's said MI6 liked hearing about his Middle East excursions. Fiore has led a charmed life. Successive Home Office ministers regretted they could do nothing about him. Italian magistrates investigated his links with violent neo-Nazi gangs. He seems to move around freely. Now the Charity Commissioners have probed Fiore's London 'charity shops', which raised funds for fascists to take over a Spanish village. In the United States, federal tax inspectors put Al Capone behind bars. Must we make do with an adverse report from the Charity Commissioners to hinder Roberto Fiore's activities?

## ENOUGH, ALREADY!

In Finchley, I spot Israeli ambassador Dror Zeigerman hurrying away from Balfour House. As the media call it 'Jewish charity' premises, I'm thinking maybe he's been up for a warm winter overcoat. But a meeting of the 'Emergency Co-ordinating Group' (co-ordinating spontaneous anger about 'anti-Israel media bias') had been interrupted by a bomb scare. Nearby roads and shops were closed while Balfour House security examined a suspect package, brought along for their attention by a woman attending the meeting.

When US servicemen in Saudi Arabia were advised to hide religious artefacts, I recalled the young man who smuggled contraceptives home to Dublin in his *tallit* bag. I've told how Professor Hyman Levy, admonished for publicising his pamphlet on the 'Jewish Question' without the approval of Communist Party leaders, asked if they tested the rubber goods advertised in the *Daily Worker*. I reported people asking if Rabbi Shmuley Boteach's *Kosher Sex* offered guidance on flavoured condoms. Readers must think I've got an obsession. But the packet that security-conscious person brought into Balfour House contained a key ring, and a sample of condoms. *Emes!*

## 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;
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- 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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