

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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

Through this forum we aim to:

- highlight the clash of political, economic and cultural interests in our community;
- encourage the democratisation of all aspects of Jewish life and publicise and support all democratic forces in the Jewish community;
- highlight the struggle for equality for women and gays and lesbians within and beyond our community;
- promote views that link the interests of Jewish people to the interests of other national and cultural minorities and oppressed groups, locally, nationally and internationally, and to a common socialist future;
- counter myths about the 'shrinking', 'dying' and 'assimilating' diaspora by affirming the vitality of Jewish communities across the world;
- counter Zionist ideology, which subordinates the needs of diaspora Jews to the demands of Israeli state nationalism, and justifies exclusivist, discriminatory and repressive practices towards the Palestinian people;
- promote ideas and perspectives that offer a progressive solution to conflicts involving the Jewish people such as the Israel/Palestine conflict;
- expose and oppose fundamentalist ideas and religious coercion within and beyond our community;
- reclaim a 'people's history' of the Jews which connects our historical experience to the struggles of other working people and the oppressed;
- highlight the problems facing minorities in society and within progressive movements and make these concerns central to discussions of socialist strategy here and now;
- support and promote radical progressive cultural initiatives within and beyond the Jewish community;
- promote views which link the struggle to build socialism with the struggle for a healthy and sustainable environment;
- promote a socialism that is culturally pluralist and fully democratic both in its ends and means.

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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.

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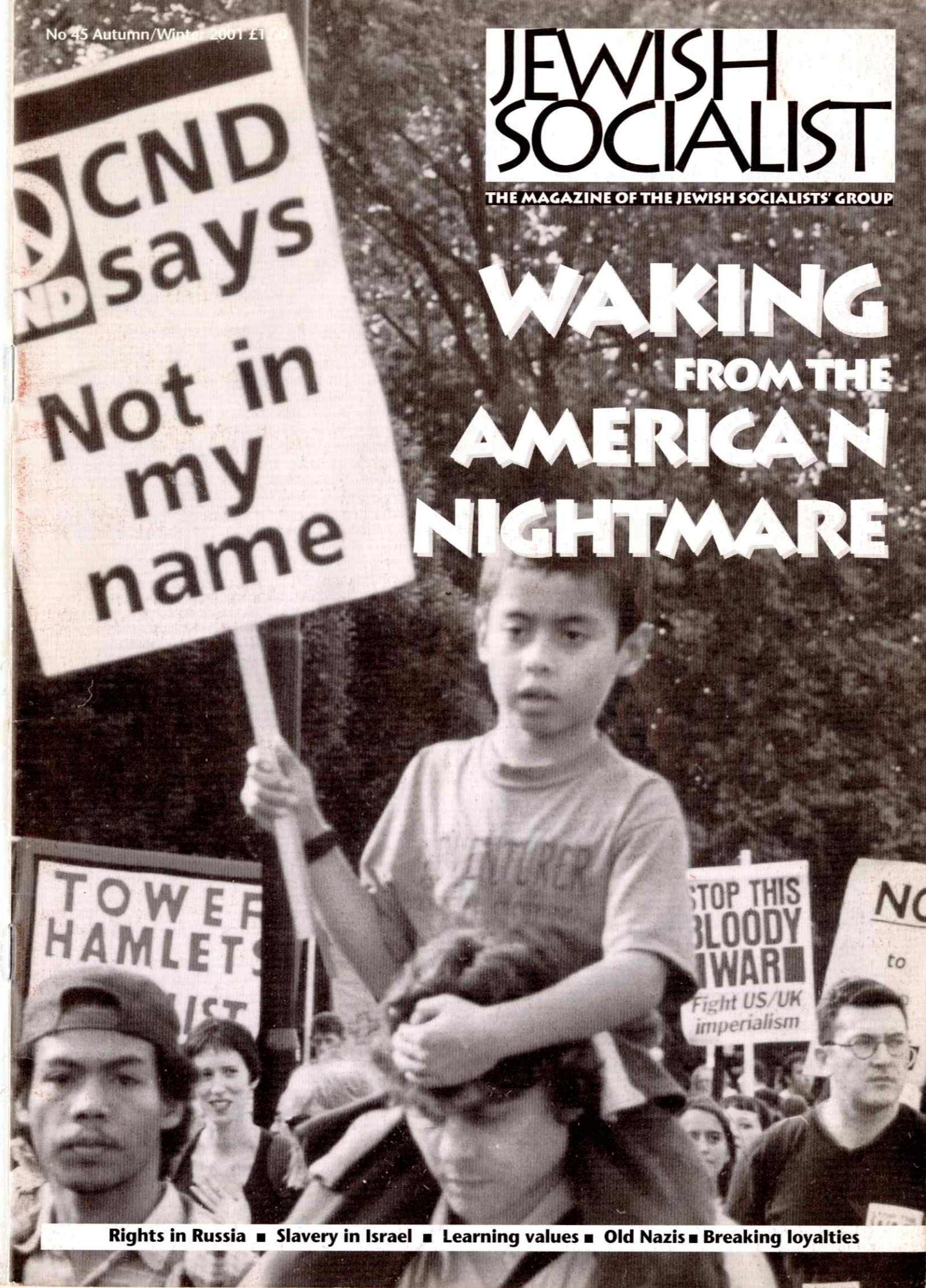
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JEWISH SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

WAKING FROM THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE



Rights in Russia ■ Slavery in Israel ■ Learning values ■ Old Nazis ■ Breaking loyalties

NEWS

- 3 Just Peace meeting; Writers' visit; Anti-war march
- 4 Kav la'oved – workers' hotline
- 6 Child benefit
- 7 Peacemakers' award

FEATURES

- 8 **Cold comfort**
Karen Merkel describes her visit to human rights organisations in Russia
- 12 **Never mind the values**
JAnne Krisman continues the debate on religious education, faith schools and current educational ethics
- 14 **Not in my name**
Abraham Weizfeld and Henry Noble report from a conference of dissenting Jews in Chicago; Cindy Levitt describes how the organisation that hosted the conference confronted the aftermath of 11th September. Michael Safier examines the attack on New York in the context of destructive acts against city populations and civil society in recent times; Bernard Misrahi looks at the immediate questions being raised by the war on Afghanistan
- 23 **Breaking free**
Paul Collins, Ruth Lukom and Ivor Dembina take a personal view of disengaging from old loyalties
- 26 **Room with a view**
Ivor Morgan describes his debates on history with an unusual landlady
- 28 **Alive and kicking**
Charlie Pottins investigates the post-war stories of how leading Nazis continued their work

POETRY/POETRY

- 22 Dzhankey – Yiddish folksong
- 33 Times of war and revolution by Roy Fuller

REVIEWS

- 32 IBM and the Holocaust
- 33 The Spanish Civil War: dreams and nightmares

REGULARS

- 5 Wisewords
- 6 Eye on Zion,
- 7 Change the world
- 22 From where I'm standing,
- 34 Letters
- 35 Dybbuk's diary

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

On 11th September 1973, Chile's presidential palace was attacked from the air and completely destroyed during the coup that brought a fascist government to power – a coup enthusiastically backed by the USA government, with crucial involvement of the CIA, that brought misery, torture and death to thousands of its citizens. Many Chilean people still remember that fateful day.

By a quirk of history, 11th September 2001 was the day other enemies of the American government, two continents away, chose to target the symbols of its economic and military power – the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon – and brought death to thousands of civilians, misery to their families and provoked the war that adds more civilian deaths every day. It is a war of collective punishment launched by the richest and most powerful nation on earth, that will inevitably increase the misery of the ordinary people of one of the world's poorest nations; people who face enough oppression from their own vicious theocratic regime. Some may ask, why invoke Chile in 1973? Why should events in New York be compared with others? It is not a comparison; rather it is a connection, a way of understanding the American Government's role in the world in recent decades that has generated such hatred that it will be attacked by any means deemed necessary by its opponents.

Ironically, when President Bush describes the horrific destruction as an 'attack on democracy' he helps provide a justification for those who would identify the American people with the American government – who would collectively blame and punish its people for their government's actions. As in Chile and in so many instances before and since, from Latin America to the Arab world, Africa and South East Asia, respect for democracy by US policymakers has been non-existent. Internally, both political power blocs in America are tools of large corporations and the people of New York, young, old, multi-ethnic, rich and poor, progressive and reactionary, have paid a terrible price for this myth of popular empowerment and participation.

Since the Second World War, successive American governments have trained and financed individuals and movements in various countries whose desires have, at least temporarily, coincided with those of US foreign policy. Once the US has achieved its strategic aims it leaves such individuals and movements in very powerful positions, like Frankenstein's monsters ready to wreak havoc and mayhem in their own backyard, far from the American people. Several have later utilised that power against new enemies, including weaker segments of their own societies and then turned on their original sponsors – the US Government.

Until now, the powerless masses in the US have been thankful that retaliatory attacks on US interests have generally happened overseas. They cannot maintain this assumption any longer.

But the day when every thinking US citizen has had to acknowledge their nation's vulnerability offers no cause for joy to progressives. Terror is not a cry of desperation: it is nihilism, both murderous and suicidal. Thoroughly indiscriminate in its victims, it provides a rationale for even more oppression, more attacks on civil rights than the powerful.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan is a ruthless dictatorship combining a defence of its own narrow capitalist interests with a social and political programme centred on religious fundamentalism. It is the enemy of women, minorities and those who value civil and human rights. On the backs of those whose continued poverty ensures the economic prosperity of America and many of its citizens, the Taliban, like Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran in the 1980s have commandeered the language of anti-imperialism, falsely presenting themselves as the vanguard of the world's oppressed, when they are part of the circle of oppression.

They promote themselves as the voice of Islam as surely as the US Government presents itself as the voice and leader of the Western world. The struggle must be against both. In the short term there must be a powerful anti-war movement to prevent more precious civilian lives being lost to the US Government's global political aims, its need to control global oil supplies and the economic needs of the armaments industry. In the longer term there must be a sustained democratic challenge from within to the American political system, and a strengthening of the movements among the poorest and most oppressed nations on earth that can combine economic struggle with progressive, secular political demands.



Jewish Socialists' Group members joined a march of more than 40,000 people through central London on 13th October calling for an end to the war on Afghanistan. The march was organised principally by CND, who had originally booked the date for an anti-Star Wars march. There was a large Palestinian contingent. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign had also previously booked a march that day but agreed to

subsume it within the anti-war march. There was also a substantial presence from the growing Stop the War Coalition who have organised a further march on 18th November. The coalition is attracting a broad range of support including from within the Labour Party, but is being criticised by some sections of the left for failing to condemn fundamentalism. Photo above and cover: Simon Lynn

British writers to visit Palestinian colleagues

More than 100 European writers and artists are embarking on a project to help Palestinian artists break out of the ghetto and communicate with their European counterparts.

The project is planned to last a year, and two English writers will be among a group of 10 making the initial groundbreaking visit starting on 30th November.

Liz Ryan and Doug Holton are both known primarily for

their work in the theatre and are also members of the National Executive Council of The Writers Guild of Great Britain. There are, however, travelling in a personal capacity so they need to raise their own funds.

Can you help? Please send donations to Doug Holton c/o Jewish Socialist BM3725 London WC1N 3XX.

Further information is available from Doug at the above address or email dougwrite@hotmail.com



Old friends reunited on the platform of a packed meeting organised by Just Peace UK in October. Adam Keller, spokesperson for Gush Shalom – the radical Israeli peace bloc – shared the platform with PLO representative Afif Safieh (above). They had known each other in Holland in the early 1980s when Afif had been the PLO representative there. Adam Keller has been jailed on three occasions in Israel for army service refusal. Also on the platform was Rabbi Michael Lerner, Editor of Tikkun magazine in America. The meeting was chaired by Julia Bard from the Jewish Socialist Editorial Committee. Just Peace's next event is a Chanukah vigil for peace at 6.30pm on Sunday 16 December at the Edith Cavell Statue just north of Trafalgar Square, to commemorate all those who have given their lives for a just peace during the current intifada. Further details from justpeaceuk@yahoo.com PO Box 37402 London N3 2XG. Tel: 07957 486379.

FREE OFFER

With rising concern among Muslim communities in Britain of a growing Islamophobia, prominent figures within these communities have been saying that they need a body like the Board of Deputies to represent them and influence the mainstream. They are talking about creating their own Board of Deputies. We, at Jewish Socialist, would like to help out by suggesting that they need not create their own Board, they can have ours for free!

NO BETTER THAN SLAVERY

With eyes focused on the 'peace process' the daily struggles of workers in Israel are rarely reported outside the country. **CHARLIE POTTINS** reports

When Hanna Zohar went to work at the Tel Aviv office of *Kav LaOved*, she expected the odd tussle with business. *Kav LaOved*, the Worker's Hotline, was set up to help workers fight dodgy employers. At first its clients were mostly Palestinian day labourers working for Israeli contractors, paying deductions but denied benefits. Then Russian and Ethiopian Jewish immigrants needed advice about their rights. But increasingly the Hotline has been assisting migrant workers brought from around the world to Israel, then ripped off and exploited.

One Wednesday morning this year *Kav LaOved* director Hanna realised she wasn't just facing a 'routine case'. 'I came to work in the morning and suddenly saw the whole street full of Chinese workers. There were hundreds of workers and I said to myself, so many, it is probably something serious. We asked all of them to come up to the office. They started talking about the hard work, about their living conditions and the non-payment of wages; and we were simply horrified. This was no better than slavery. In Tel Aviv, near us, with us, in our name. I felt ashamed.'

The workers, employed on a downtown Tel Aviv building site by contractor A Dori, had walked out on strike after enduring inhuman conditions and despairing of ever seeing their wages. They were joined by workers from another A Dori site in Netanya. But it became clear their battle was not just with the Israeli employers.

Workers told how, promised good working conditions and pay in Israel, they had borrowed money from relatives to pay a surety to the Chinese agency supplying them to Israeli companies. In Tel Aviv their passports were taken by the agency, and they were sent to the Toyota site, where they were expected to work 11 hours a day, and more, with few breaks. They had to sleep four to a room in container-like wooden huts, near the constant roar of a busy overpass.

When they asked about their wages, they were told the agency was responsible for their upkeep and would pay them after their return to China. They got an allowance, 50 shekels a month, which might have been enough to live on in China, but in Tel Aviv would barely pay for a bag of sweets or a phone call home. They were fed cheap vegetables and scraps, such as chickens feet and necks. About once a month they took ill. There was not much medical care.

Some workers wanted to rebel. Others kept hoping that maybe next month, or the month after, they would be paid their wages and back-

pay. Besides, they feared the company might have them deported, and they would never see the deposits they had paid, nor the wages owed them. But eventually, they'd had enough. 'We worked hard and long. We started early in the morning and knocked off late in the evening. They kept telling us "hurry, hurry," because the contractor had been promised a bonus if the work was finished quickly. One of my mates asked the boss if we would also get part of the bonus for finishing the work ahead of time, but the boss got angry and told him he was cheeky. So we decided to go on strike. To work hard and get no pay is too much.'

Three days after the strike began, workers stopped coming to the *Kav LaOved* office. Hanna Zohar decided to go down to the site to meet them. As she came down the street she saw a smartly-dressed man addressing a group of workers. It was a Chinese Embassy official telling them to get back to work!

'I went up to him and signalled with my hands to the workers to go up to the office. The man from the embassy physically tried to block their way to the office, but later went away. On the following day he came to the office accompanied by another man from the embassy and officials of the intermediary Chinese company. He was very nice and told us that perhaps to us in Israel the conditions under which the workers were employed seem like slavery. But as far as the Chinese Embassy and government were concerned the workers were employed strictly according to Chinese laws, so that everything was right and proper.

'Then, an official of the embassy began threatening the workers: if they did not get back to the building site and resume work, they would be deported to China and lose their deposit. I then stood up, and perhaps I spoke a little rudely but I told the diplomat: "Dear sir, perhaps in China it is allowed to employ people in this way, totally ignoring their needs for medicine and food and not paying them even a minimum wage. But here in Israel both Chinese and Israeli workers are employed according to different, more humane laws. In Israel it is not acceptable for workers to do backbreaking work until dark and then get food fit for dogs. In Israel third-world norms are not acceptable."

A fortnight after the strike began the authorities in the Peoples Republic showed their hand on workers rights. Strikers and their families at home received letters signed by Public Security Bureau, the Prosecutor General and the law court in the town where the agency is based, telling them that

by walking off the job they had broken Chinese labour law, and could be sentenced to up to seven years in prison. The letters also threatened that the Chinese government would deduct the money from their wages to pay losses incurred by the contractor due to the strike. They promised that if strikers would denounce other strikers or atone for their deeds, their punishment might be commuted.

Front-ranking Israeli firms are exploiting migrant workers. A Dori was head of the Israeli contractors association. *Solel Boneh*, originally a Jewish workers co-operative and pillar of the Histadrut's *Chevrat HaOvdim* (Workers Society) public sector, and now an international company, has truly pioneered the way. It began importing guest workers in 1997, now employs several thousand, including 1,000 from China, and received a permit from the Israeli government this year to import 1,000 more. The company had won a \$40 million contract for three military bases which the US government is financing under the Wye peace agreement.

Solel Boneh was fined in the labour court on 19th November 2000 after being found guilty along with Chinese labour supplier Tsing Dao of infringements including confiscation of passports, minimum wage breaches, illegal deductions and withholding of social benefits.

The firms undertook not to repeat the offences, which had been going on for two years, according to *Kav LaOved*. This year hundreds of *Solel Boneh* workers approached *Kav LaOved* for help in getting wages they were owed. *Kav LaOved* contacted the American ambassador, who intervened with the contractors to make them pay up.

Eilat is popular for winter sunshine, but no holiday for migrant workers. Invited down by four workers on the Royal Gardens hotel site, who said they hadn't been paid, *Kav LaOved*'s Hanna Zohar and Dorit Kimchi found the hotel builders accommodation wouldn't rate any stars.

In Hadekel neighbourhood, 17 legally employed workers crowd in two rooms. The awful vision was unbearable. The workers live in filth, not suitable even for livestock. The mattresses, on which they sleep, after 300 monthly work hours, are infested with hundreds of roaches and vermin. The workers presented dozens of bug bites. The kitchen faucet is on, and the water has been running for months on end. The broken air-chiller is left unfixed, so they spend their few hours of rest in temperatures beyond 100 degrees Fahrenheit. This is not as bad as it gets. The apartment capacity can reach 35 workers at a time. Furthermore, the workers told us that their passports were taken from them (which is illegal), and that since March, they do not receive their salaries. They only get \$100 spending money; the rest they are supposed to get when they return to China. Twenty-five per cent of what they earn goes to the Chinese manpower agency.

Sehia Egozi, Yediot Eilat, 29th May 2001

Workers are gaining confidence and organising. Chinese and Romanian migrant workers joined Israeli Jews and Arabs in May Day celebrations. A Palestinian delegation from the West Bank was held up by the military closure. In August a new group of *Solel Boneh* labourers succeeded with *Kav LaOved*'s help in obtaining their passports and bank books. The struggle took on a further dimension, with 21-year old Victoria Moldovnova's case against traffickers and pimps who brought her to Israel, and brutally exploited her. The struggle against global capitalism is producing new internationalism, but it is not all big demonstrations. It is mostly the day to day heroism of men and women insisting they are human beings.

Information supplied by Ehud ein-Gil, of *Kav LaOved*, and Moshe Machover)

Contact: Hanna Zohar, Director, *Kav LaOved* Workers Hotline, 17 Peretz St. POB 2319, Tel Aviv 61022, Israel. Website: www.kavlaoved.org.il

WISEWORDS

Anyone who seriously believes that Sharon and a Likud government will willingly cede an inch of Judea and Samaria, or be more forthcoming than Barak in curbing new settlement and implementing withdrawal from Palestinian land ... must also imagine that the present Pope is a Jew who will sanction birth control and married priests. Yet this is the Israeli government we are going to be asked to support in the difficult times ahead with Diaspora rallies of solidarity ... and other manifestations of worldwide Jewish unity.

'That is why, as never before, it will be a defining, a pivotal moment in Israel-Diaspora relations. Why? because all of us,

I hope, strongly defend Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognised borders. But we also know that Israel continues to be a colonial power on another people's land. She still occupies the land, but has long since vacated the moral high ground. That makes our support conditional and causes a crisis of conscience for many Jews. For some blood will always be thicker than water ... For other Jews, the gap between Israel's political actions and the Jewish ethical teachings will no longer be bridgeable.'

From the Kol Nidre sermon delivered by Rabbi David Goldberg at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London, 2001/5762



Have you read a quote that's got your goat or inspired you? Send it to us and we may share it with our readers. Our address is JS, BM3725, London WC1N 3XX.

YOUTH IN REVOLT

On 3rd September, a letter signed by 62 Israeli high school pupils was sent to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon:

'We, the undersigned, are about to be called to serve in the Israeli Defence Forces. We would like to lodge our protest to you at the aggressive and racist policy pursued by the government of Israel and the armed forces under its command, and to inform you that we do not intend to take part in the implementation of this policy. We are firmly opposed to the violation of human rights, expropriation of land, detentions, executions without trial, house demolitions, closures, tortures, and the denial of health care - which are but some of the crimes the State of Israel carries out in blunt violation of international conventions it has ratified. Such acts are not legitimate, nor do they achieve their stated goal - increasing the citizens' personal safety. Such safety will be achieved only through a just peace agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian people. Therefore we will obey our conscience and refuse to take part in acts of oppression against the Palestinian people, acts that should properly be called terrorist. We call upon everybody serving or liable to serve in the Israeli Defence Forces - our fellow youths, conscripts, reservists and the soldiers and officers of the regular army - to do the same.'

The youngsters, who also organised a press conference, got considerable media attention - time on both TV channels and a double-page spread, quite sympathetically written, in *Yediot Aharanot*, the country's largest mass-circulation paper. The publicity helped create new contacts, with additional dozens of youths adding their signatures. Members of the group, now numbering more than 100 have different plans for conscription day. Some intend to refuse service in the Occupied Territories or in combat units, while others plan to reject enlistment altogether; of the latter, some are going to insist on getting a Conscientious Objector status, even when such insistence could lead to prolonged imprisonment, while others would

accept 'discharge on psychiatric grounds' which is the army's normal way of getting rid of 'undesirables'. They are all pledged to respect each other's choices and offer solidarity to whoever will need it.

On 8th September, some of the youths were among the 150 people who climbed on the high hill overlooking Military Prison 6 at Atlit, to hold a vigil there in support of two reserve officers incarcerated at the prison below - Captain Dan Tamir who refused service in the Occupied Territories and Captain Sefi Sendik who refused military service altogether.

Activists chanted slogans and greetings to the two refusers, who were seen waving back from the prison yard, and later even managed a short phone call to one of the participants' cell phones. A message of support was read out on behalf of the PAJU group of Montreal, which has adopted Tamir and held a vigil of their own at the Israeli Consulate just hours before.

Also present on the hill was Yehuda - father of Avia Atai, the first woman soldier jailed for refusal. (She was being held at Military prison 400, which is reserved for women, and where she was singled out for particularly harsh treatment - body searches, censorship of reading materials and offensive name calling by officers). The action was organised jointly by *Yesh Gvul*, which sponsors selective refusal of military service, and New Profile which favours total refusal. Both organisations report a steady increase in the number of new refusers approaching them for support. For their part, members of the high school group accept inspiration and logistical help from both groups, but insist on independently formulating their own documents, press releases and action plans.

From The Other Israel, PO Box 2542, Holon 58125, ISRAEL, Tel/fax: 00 972 3 556 5804. Email: otherisr@actcom.co.il

High School Group c/o Haggai Matar, 33 Bernstein Cohen St, Ramat Hasharon, 972-53-881213. Yesh Gvul, pb4620, Jerusalem 91046, cherryk@zahav.net.il, New profile, pb 48005, Tel Aviv 61480, 972-3-5494544

CHILD BENEFIT

Two radical Jewish children's groups - the East London Alternative Cheder and the Red Herring Club are uniting to organise a joint benefit at Chanukah, open to adults as well as children. Performers at the event include singer and storyteller, Barry Davies, and the Freylich Women's Klezmer band. There will also be dreidel

contests and juggling. Proceeds from the event will be shared by the Jerusalem Link, a Palestinian women's peace organisation, and The Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan, a political and social organisation of Afghan women striving for peace, freedom, democracy and women's rights in Afghanistan.

**THE BENEFIT WILL BE ON SUNDAY 9TH DECEMBER
FROM 4-6.30PM AT THE RED ROSE CLUB,
129 SEVEN SISTERS ROAD, LONDON N7.
TICKETS ARE £10/£5 (FREE FOR CHILDREN).**

TRIDENT PLOUGHSHARES



The Trident Ploughshares campaign, represented by Ulla Roder, Angie Zelter and Ellen Moxley, has just been awarded the Right Livelihood Prize for 2001 (also known as the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize), to be handed over in the Swedish parliament in December. The Award honours the campaign as 'a model of principled, transparent and non-violent direct action dedicated to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Their imaginative campaign highlights the illegality of these weapons.'

Apart from the encouragement we derive from the award there is additional pleasure from the contrast between that recognition and the ongoing occupational hazards of taking direct action against weapons of mass destruction in a nuclear weapons state like the UK - arrests, trials, imprisonment and deportation. Ulla Roder is beginning her three months' sentence in Scotland's Cornton Vale under a threat of deportation at the end of it, and Angie Zelter has handed herself in to her local police to begin prison time in England and Scotland. Since the campaign began in 1998 then there have been 1350 arrests of its activists, 1351 days have been spent in prison, there have been 171 trials and fines totaling £25,274 have been imposed by the courts. This catalogue is not put down to establish victim status. The contrast itself illustrates the effectiveness of a practical, legal and moral challenge which excites widespread and sometimes prestigious support and approval as well as official reproach.

And much more of the story is upbeat. In Manchester Crown Court Rosie James and Rachel Wenham were discharged after the jury could not reach a verdict. This came at the end of a thirty-month process that began when they got on board a Trident submarine in Barrow and damaged testing equipment on it, delaying the ship's entry into service by a month. Last February, with CND, we



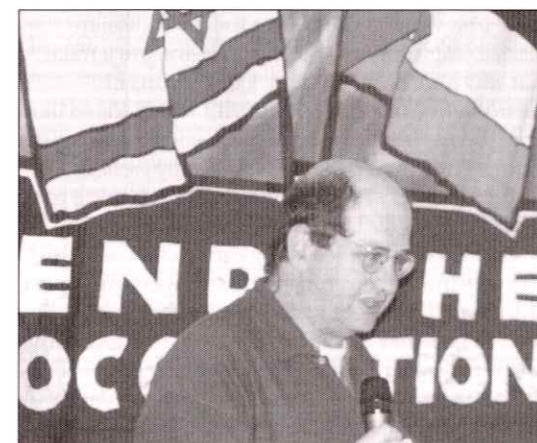
organised the hugely successful Big Blockade of Faslane Trident submarine base, when over 1000 activists came and 385 were arrested. The incessant parade of these people through the courts thereafter has been thrilling, with statement after diverse statement repeating the determination to continue to confront the planning of mass murder. This was followed by a System 3 poll showing that a majority of Scots supported our direct action at Faslane and a resolution by the Church of Scotland encouraging people to engage in peaceful civil resistance against Trident. We returned to Faslane on 22nd October, our message sharpened to highlight the contradiction between the stated 'war' against terrorism and the deliberate and continued threatening deployment of a weapon of mass terror, the smallest unit of which would reduce the whole of Manhattan to poisonous dust.

Trident Ploughshares: 0845 458 8366

Email: tp2000@gn.apc.org

Website: www.tridentploughshares.org

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS



The radical Israeli peace bloc, Gush Shalom, has been honoured for its courageous stands against Israeli state oppression and in solidarity with the Palestinian people by being awarded the alternative Nobel peace prize. The annual prize was established after the official Nobel Peace Prize became increasingly discredited by being presented to a succession of warmongers. Past winners of the official prize include Henry Kissinger and Menachem Begin.

Gush Shalom shares the award with the British-based group Trident Ploughshares who have undertaken a series of direct action initiatives to alert people to the existence of and threat from nuclear weapons (see above).

Adam Keller,
spokesperson for
Gush Shalom
Photo: Simon Lynn

COLD COMFORT

The world looks away as post-Cold War Russians step towards a shaky future. **KAREN MERKEL** takes a journey through a land of dreams and nightmares

All photos: Karen Merkel



My journey really took off at the airport in Amsterdam. I was at the final gate waiting to board the plane for Moscow, when a wiry man, in his late '50s or early '60s, came and stood close beside me in the queue, between me and a group of noisy evangelical Americans, as we waited to go through yet more security. 'Are you going to Russia?' he said in a strong American accent. Resisting the obvious, I said I was. He pursued his inquisition vigorously. Did I work? Was I going alone? It became more personal – did I have friends? Family? how old was I? I work for the BBC World Service Trust and have been working on a human rights project that has entailed me travelling for a great deal of this year, mostly to Kenya and Nigeria and also to India. Consequently, I've become more and more used to this kind of direct questioning from complete strangers and understand that it may not always mean what I think it does. This time it did, of course. It transpired that my new would-be travelling companion was not a Russian who'd learned his English in the States as I'd conjectured to myself. He was an Alaskan fisherman in search of a wife – any wife would do – 'preferably' – he said as he scrutinised me for the last time, 'a beautiful Russian wife'. I recounted this small anecdote to the

horror of three business men from Sheffield who were en route to somewhere they couldn't pronounce to buy steel as we whiled away two hours trapped between customs and passport check at the airport in Moscow. My experiences became more and more Russian by the minute.

However, it began to look up. I was offered beer or champagne as I checked in at the hotel, and met my travelling companion and partner on the project – a dissident who is also a secular Jew. She left St Petersburg in despair during the mid '90s to come and work in the UK for the BBC Russian Service. We went out that evening and ate a meal that was pure comfort food. Confections of beetroot, herring and potato with what looked like string beans but turned out to be young garlic shoots. I began to realise that not only were the experiences very Russian, but they were going to be Jewish, too.

We walked for miles along the river bank in the City, late into the evening – the sun was bright until 11pm and it was very warm. She told me how it had been to have her ideals trashed, to be barred from St Petersburg University, the university of her choice, because she was Jewish, to be constantly scrabbling around for food, a pair of shoes that



were vaguely wearable and never, ever to be able to read a free press. We spent the next day doing BBC tasks in our bureau in Moscow and I remembered again from my previous visit how the bureau smells just like my older relatives' homes – the unmistakable smell of certain kinds of Jewish houses. Moscow seemed less depressed than two years ago – there weren't rows of elderly people begging out on the streets – it was summer of course and everyone wants to be outside to play, and hungry people have to retreat back into the shadows. I was struck by the appearance of some young women. They looked rather like very, very thin versions of the wonderful Ragga girls of East and West London, adorned with large jewels, elaborate hair and tiny items of clothing. I assumed they were all prostitutes – to be roundly disabused of this by my colleague. No, these girls were the special friends of the 'New Russians', they were not for sale – they had already been leased. Syphilis has reached epidemic proportions in Russia.

We spent our time in Moscow with a remarkable organisation, Memorial, one of the only human rights groups to have survived the turmoil of the last decade. Dripping with integrity – they fight for Chechnyans, for conscientious objectors – causes that would be difficult to sustain energy for in societies where there is no KGB (albeit with different initials these days). We planned our project together. The head of Memorial is an inspiring woman, who was breathtakingly creative, given that she was in the middle of organising a funeral for members who'd been killed in Chechnya

only the week before. We planned a series of public events about human rights designed for broadcast across Russia by the BBC – using a Question Time panel format with lots of participation from audiences and provocative debates on themes such as Russia's addiction to having enemies, patriotism and citizenship, and the prevailing fascism and xenophobia that has such a strong and frightening grip throughout Russia.

Moving on, we took a night flight across into the Urals to a city called Perm (pronounced Paim). Until very recently it had been a closed city. It was entirely different to Moscow, with apparently invisible shops and no restaurants. It had an alpine feel – very fresh and bright with lots of pretty wooden houses. Perm is fascinating because it is inhabited by hundreds of people who had been imprisoned in the Gulags. They were interned during Stalin's time, and never returned to their home towns and cities because the KGB would simply go after them again. This has led to Perm having a reputation for being one of the most progressive cities in Russia because there are so many dissidents and their families living there!

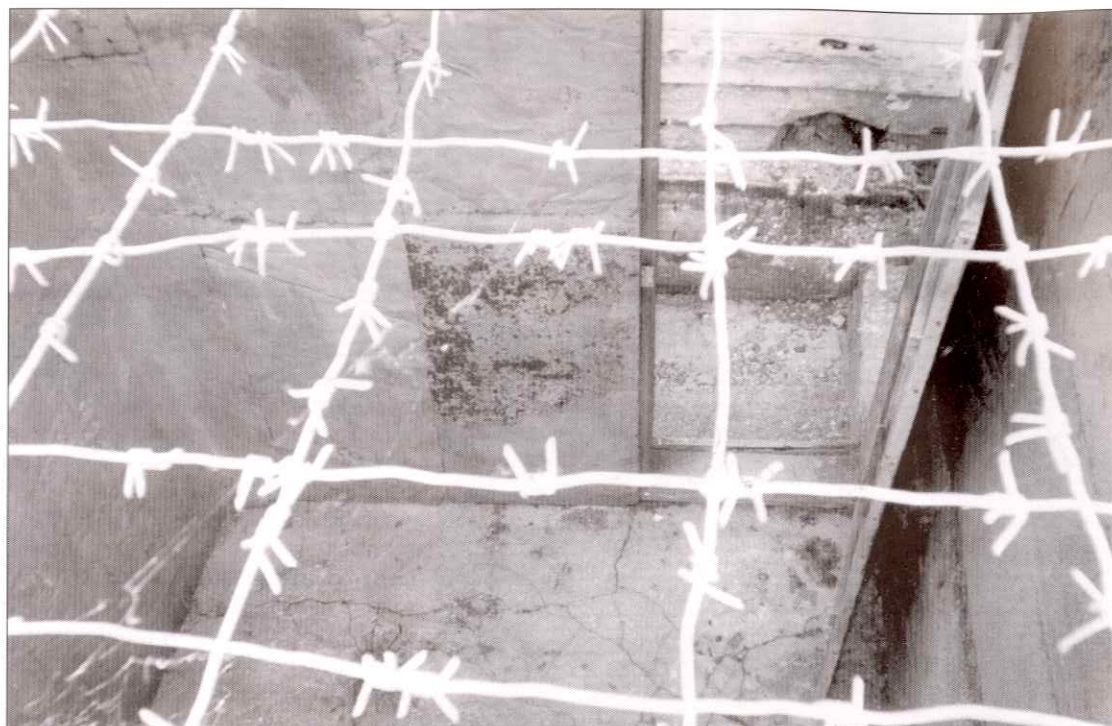
We'd had virtually no sleep during the short night flight because of the noise of the various dogs wandering up and down the aisle combined with literally being shaken by the Aeroflot staff

demanding we eat our smoked fish! We decided we'd be ok after a shower in our hotel in Perm, but of course there was no hot water in Perm because Putin was visiting the following week – should have guessed really! We were met by two people from another branch of Memorial – and piled into yet another ancient fume-ridden car to drive for four and a half hours up-country to the triangle of Gulags. The leader of this branch of Memorial is extremely charismatic. He is 60, very small and striking, has a chronic heart condition and chain smokes. A former journalist, he gave it up to do human rights work some years ago, just as soon as it felt vaguely possible to do so. He comes from Odessa but because he was Jewish was not allowed to go to university there, so he travelled to Perm where he studied and settled. He is a peace campaigner and a brilliant organiser – he is also wonderfully funny.

The drive was mesmerising and not just because of fatigue. We went through the most exquisite countryside – birch forests opening out into meadows full of beautiful and twinkling wild flowers. Interestingly, there was no livestock. I was told this was because there is no will to farm. People had so detested collective farming that they won't have anything to do with voluntarily working on the land in any way, I suspect there isn't too much going for a Green movement in Russia right now. We saw more testament to this, as the journey passed through a town that was almost concealed because of the bright orange cloud hanging over it – completely covering the area. It was due to an

Far left: entrance to the gulag.
Left: Sleeping slabs in the confinement cell

THE JOURNEY
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ancient factory belching out unbelievably toxic fumes and still being staffed by virtually the whole town, just like it always has been. The road continued but began to be less made up. We were travelling downhill and deeper into the country, with hardly any inhabitants except for a cluster of villages nestling against the beautiful, sparkling river. There is no work for these villagers; 'they're all drunk now, no more farms and Gulags to work in'. I began to feel uneasy.

We arrived at a pastoral scene, very close to the river and heavily wooded. There were about half a dozen outhouses and smallish buildings - rather like old-style hospitals or sanatoriums. Instantly we stepped out we were covered in mosquitoes, so many that I thought I was going to faint. This, the 'secure' Gulag (2nd in the hierarchy of controlled torture) had been carefully situated on marshland, amidst dense forestation to ensure all inmates

received relentless bites from mosquitoes. This grim monument is being preserved as a museum dedicated to peace by groups of volunteers - mostly from Memorial, but also history students and, significantly, small groups of conscientious objectors from the Russian Army. Memorial has created an astonishingly risky and innovative project. It is working with these young conscientious objectors to provide them support and 'Alternative Training'. In practice this means working on environmental schemes - such as preserving the Gulags, supporting senior citizens, namely former dissidents and inmates of the Gulags who have no pensions, and running other community projects. There is fierce opposition to Memorial in running this scheme, particularly vocal from the mothers of soldiers - many of whom of course have lost their sons in Chechnya. We were guided around by a devoted young history teacher, who also showed us his exhibition - a piece of work that would grace the walls of most galleries in London and consisting of panels dedicated to individual dissidents who had been incarcerated in the Gulags, mostly for 25-year stretches and for deeds such as writing the Ukrainian constitution.

We then took a slow walk in the unbearable heat, through the mosquito clouds, towards the 'special' Gulag, a small and immaculately conceived concentration camp. We were shown around, there were coils of barbed wire everywhere - all the signs you would expect. It was truly awful. The solitary confinement cell was particularly memorable with its unique bed - a slab of wood like a butcher's block and built on a slant so that no prisoner would be able to sleep. I took some photos, stood above the exercise yard - about 12ft by 15ft and felt completely and utterly numb. It was a beautiful day, the birds sang, the sky was blue - and I just couldn't believe that people had been living, no existing, in this environment only six years ago. We returned slowly and then I began to notice what was to become my abiding memory of the whole trip.

There were clusters of young men wandering up

I ASKED WHAT THE BUILDING WAS AND WAS TOLD IT WAS THE 'MENTAL HOSPITAL'. I ASKED WHY PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES WERE IN IT, AND THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION.

the road aimlessly. On closer glance I could see that most of them were wearing what appeared to be some form of prison uniform - drab heavy rough jackets with draw-string trousers. They weren't all wearing shoes. They all had learning disabilities. They were milling around a new building that I hadn't noticed before - it was adjacent to the Gulag. There were dozens and dozens - all standing about doing absolutely nothing in the deepest heat of the day with no protection against the sun whatsoever. Some were tied to each other with string. I asked what the building was and was told it was the 'Mental Hospital'. I asked why people with learning disabilities were in it, and they didn't understand the question. They were almost certainly being driven mad by that environment, but why were they there? It turned out that Memorial had found them living in the Gulag and had campaigned for them to have somewhere else to go - but Memorial in Perm is a tiny organisation and couldn't do much more for them. They then discovered that they were being given somewhere else to go, a brand new institution and right next door to the Gulag. Memorial still campaigns for them, but to deaf ears. Russians seem to be comfortable using words like 'deviants' and this is how people with learning disabilities are seen. With no other common language in use, there is consequently little discourse about their situation, let alone understanding of their rights.

I have to say that I wept in front of all the volunteers. This year because of this project, and because people understand that I have 'something to do with the press', I have had many people paraded in front of me - each victims of human rights atrocities - which has been harrowing and

disturbing on many levels. But this experience - because there were so many totally vulnerable people suffering such torture - hit me hard, and will not go away.

We spent a bit more time with Memorial planning our debates, and then left for St Petersburg. There we worked with Citizens' Watch - the only NGO dedicated to working on human rights in the city. They had organised an amazing international conference on policing the city and we were invited to attend. It was slightly alarming to find myself described as the British Delegation! I spent a morning as part of the Latin American contingent in a police station in the city - hearing those on remand described as 'criminals' was of course all familiar stuff. However, some of the Brazilians were formidable questioners and pursued many tricky themes. It was enlightening to discover that the average Russian police officer earns \$70 a month. We were told a lot of facts (Russian officials are big on lists of facts) and learned how they had 36 squad cars to patrol their patch of the city, but later discovered that they only have enough petrol for two. Somehow this summed up so much of what I witnessed. Of course, there were other experiences - I met teachers earning \$60 a month and learned about the deprivation of schools and pupils, but also I had lots of laughs, and was deeply moved by how much commitment and creative talent I saw - everywhere I went.

I had another small moment that has stayed with me, I discovered that everyone who has a Russian passport still has to fill in a section that states their nationality. My companion has to say that hers is Jewish. She is still not allowed to be Russian. *Plus ça change.*

Above: exercise yard seen from above
Below: iron beds



Deceptively peaceful scene belies the turmoil within

NEVER MIND

Do faith schools strengthen a child's religious identity? How can Religious Education be taught in a system that values exam results over ethics? ANNE KRISMAN exposes some contradictions

One day a week, I leave the classroom, go to a teachers centre and work in an office that I share with literacy and numeracy consultants. Every hour, new boxes are brought in, which contain folders, videos, books and other teaching materials for the National Numeracy and Literacy strategies. This is very symbolic of the state of education.

Learning is a commodity the Government would like us to deliver, like a big cardboard box. Learning is not something co-operative, challenging, creative or fun. It is not a process of sharing teacher and pupil learning from each other. We now are the automatons that deliver. Never mind that teachers are complaining that there is hardly any time during the school day to fit in any other subjects, or that their pupils seem so tired in the afternoon they can hardly think. This lack of freedom and pressure has led to the present staffing crisis, where teachers feel undermined, undervalued and just cogs in a machine.

Ethics have also gone out of the window, sacrificed to drilling children on phonemes. At the moment, I am fighting against delivering a literacy programme to my special needs pupils, who are chillingly described as 'children who are out of step' in the strategy documentation.

At a time when we should be giving children clear messages about peace and respect for human life, I am instructed to teach stories about a child in Pakistan who has hot water thrown at them from a window, Indian children who mistreat a camel for fun, and children in Hong Kong who kill four snakes that they find. I was stunned to see that teachers were meant to 'deliver' The Diary of Anne Frank as way of teaching 'information retrieval'. Texts are there to be used as jumping off points to teach bits of broken up parts of language, their wider universal meanings and values are irrelevant.

Today's schooling is rigid and heartless – but I wonder if religious schools would offer anything diverse or different or spark any exciting developments in education. Will Christian schools, for example, use their faith to explore Christian art from different countries, or produce dance pieces based on music from the pilgrimage site of Taize? Will they swap emails with children from other religions or none, or confront the issues in what it means to be a Christian in today's materialist world?

That would be my vision for a faith-based school, but I suspect that the reality will be different. Most will be like any other institution that

tries to get the highest possible grades out of their pupils. They will slot into the pressurised education system that we have. Their values will not be based on religious ones, but on academic achievement. This will naturally make them popular with parents, especially in areas with declining schools. They will be able to pick and choose who they take in, their religious ethos giving them power to exclude and deny.

This contradicts my understanding of religion and culture. It should have the power to unite us and to discover the common humanity within us. For me, religion and culture has to be a bonding, life enhancing and not a separating experience. It is no surprise that Bradford schools are highly differentiated, with church schools being all white Christian and state schools predominantly Pakistani and Bengali Muslim.

People talk of values in religious schools, but the Living Values that are highlighted by UNESCO, which include tolerance, unity, happiness, responsibility, honesty and co-operation, are not ones just held by people with religious beliefs. It is a shame that values are something that are always associated with religious schools, as all schools have the choice to transform their school into something more than a learning factory. In one state school with mainly Muslim pupils, I saw a Design and Technology project which involved making a charity box.

Sometimes religious schools provide poor examples of values. I heard a story about a Jewish girl whose class had complained about her. She had learning difficulties and they wanted her moved to another school so she didn't hold them back any more. It was a Jewish school with high academic standards. Children with special needs found it difficult to fit into that achievement system, which proved, in this case, to be more of a powerful ideology than the teachings from the Jewish ethical tradition.

Do faith schools strengthen pupils' religious identity? Some individual pupils gain from being in a religious context, constantly communicating with children like themselves, but there is a flipside. In boroughs with Jewish schools, few Jewish children are left in the mainstream system. This means that less non-Jewish children will know from first-hand experience what Jewish children are really like. Their knowledge about being Jewish will have to come from RE text books, or from a Jewish visitor to the classroom, or an organised trip to a synagogue.

I have been helping to rewrite our locally agreed

THE VALUES

syllabus for RE. It suddenly hit me that some of the elements in our section on contemporary Judaism, which included Jewish culture as well as religion, were dependent on pupils knowing a diversity of Jewish people; Reform as well as Orthodox, non-religious as well as religious. Presenting the living reality of what it means to be Jewish is difficult to do when you have no living breathing resources. In a school RE lesson, faced with a choice of visitors, few teachers would bring in a secular Jew to talk about Judaism. They would naturally tend towards someone Orthodox, probably male, who will present the text book version of Judaism.

I am not sure whether Jewish schools strengthen Jewish identity. Of course they work for some children. Some pupils I know who have moved from a mixed, multi-ethnic school to a Jewish one don't seem that happy. In the multi-ethnic environment their religious identity was strong, as they were interacting with other groupings and constantly having to show who they were and what they believed. However, once they moved to a Jewish school, they lost their sense of distinctiveness and definition. They began to see Judaism not as a part of their identity but something with petty restrictions and a list of rules, like wearing a *kipah* or not eating in Macdonalds at lunchtime.

I am not someone who thinks ordinary schools should be secular. I disapprove of the notion of collective worship in schools, and I have yet to be in a school where anything approaching worship is happening, unless reading out room changes and telling children about trainers not being part of school uniform counts as worship. But I know what happened to my school when I left.

I had developed a form of Religious Education that encouraged children to share their life experiences and to respect each other's beliefs. In the period without RE, the ethos of the school and the individual children within it disintegrated, encouraged by a devastating OFSTED school report. RE is now back and the school is a happier place. I know that a sensitive, wide-ranging and responsive form of Religious Education can make a major difference to a school and that is why I don't want schools to be purely secular places. There are few sites left on the curriculum where children can engage honestly with their beliefs, hopes and visions for the world.

I am not shouting against faith schools, because I know they will be there for a while to come. I would gladly destroy the ridiculous notion of



Anne Frank (right). Will her diary be reduced to an aid to the literacy hour?

'collective worship' in schools. My main priorities are strengthening the non-faith schools that we have and working to change them.

We need an education system that is less stifling. I hear the word 'stressed' so often from pupils who are worn out by a too dense, too demanding, too rigid curriculum. This leads to bad behaviour and the breakdowns that we are seeing in many inner city schools. Few teachers enjoy their job. We used to co-operate, work together in teams, on integrated projects. Now we are isolated, worn down individuals. We need to dismantle the OFSTED system, which is the single most destructive element in education today and replace it with something supportive and encouraging. And we need to look again at what schools should be for.

I recently was a participant on the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme. It trains teachers to explore the unifying values of Love, Truth, Peace, Non-violence and Right Conduct in a structured, creative way with pupils. I opened the training manual and was struck by these words, 'The teacher has the greatest role in moulding the future of the country. Of all professions, his or hers is the noblest, the most difficult and the most important.' I felt very moved, as I realised that most of the time we are told we just aren't good enough. How can teachers promote positive values, when they feel oppressed themselves?

Anne Krisman is Head of RE in a special school and a Religious Education consultant.

FROM THE MIDWEST

TO THE MIDDLE EAST

The second intifada has been a catalyst for unity in the American Jewish Left, says **ABRAHAM WEIZFELD** and the movement is evolving and gathering pace, as we show on the following pages

The current crisis of the Zionist state brought together a broad array of the Jewish Left in Chicago over the 2nd-4th May weekend for a gathering of a new movement. Jewish Unity for a Just Peace (JUNITY). The situation in Israel and Palestine has created a unity of purpose for leftist activists from every major city of North America since the beginning of the second Intifada in September 2000. Irrespective of their political orientation (non-Zionist, anti-Zionist or left-Zionist, the 180 delegates came from 25 US states and 50 organisations in Israel, the US, Canada, France, Germany, Brazil and Ramallah.

The initiative for this new movement arose from the international day of protest last December organised over the internet by various discussion lists, choosing the UN International Human Rights Day and Chanukah to remind people of the human rights of the Palestinians. On that occasion seven vigils were held at various Israel Consulates. Bat Shalom and the coalition of Women for a Just Peace called an International vigil on 8th June 2001 and protests were held at 144 sites under the slogan 'Not In Our Name'

Some delegates at the JUNITY gathering remembered the New Jewish Agenda formation which had brought together left Zionists in the now demoralised attempt to win support for the Israeli Labour Party's peace initiative. In contrast, the new concept is of peace with justice, in recognition of the existence of the Palestinian nation and its struggle for liberation from the Israeli military occupation.

Jewish Unity for a Just Peace proposed a variety of resolutions, which may be found at their website (see below) together with founding documentation.

The basis of unity was for an end to the Occupation. Jeff Halper, co-ordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, denounced the 'Matrix of Control' that Israel has established in the West Bank in the name of security. This 'matrix' imposes overall Israeli control by such means as a network of 'bypass roads' connecting Zionist villages, and surrounding and cutting off Palestinian towns and villages that have won some measure of self-determination. These imprisoned communities encompass 90% of the Palestinian population of

the territories occupied in 1967. While this form of control removes the embarrassment of direct Israeli rule over three million stateless Palestinians (including Gaza), it has not satisfied the needs of the Palestinians who remain under military siege. This was what led to the second Intifada which erupted in September 2000, as well as General Sharon's intrusion into the Al Aqsa mosque square of Jerusalem protected by 1,000 soldiers. An examination of the peace proposal from former Prime minister General Barak reveals that, taking into consideration the various lands that have been annexed, the offer amounts to 67% of the occupied territories, although it is announced and repeated by the media as 95%.

Rela Mazali, a colleague of Halper's, offered some cause for hope in her presentation on the profound militarisation of Israeli society. A founding member of the organisation New Profile and an organiser of various peace and resistance activities against the occupation. Mazali pointed out that 25% of 17-year-old Israelis are currently finding excuses not to enlist in the army, although the law requires that they do so, and a full third of those who do enlist find reasons for early discharge. While thousands have found conscientious objection to be a way out of the draft, 600 others who have refused military service have found themselves in prison. Among older generations, an astonishing 70% of reserve soldiers – essentially all Jewish-Israeli men up to the age of 49 are required to report for military service – are simply failing to show up when called for duty.

The Palestinian speaker Ali Abunimah pointed out during the 'allies' dinner event that: 'It is important for Palestinians to know that Israel does not, as it purports to, speak for all Jews, and it is important for other Jews to know that they do not have to choose between succumbing to the appeal to tribalism trumpeted by mainstream organisations, which permits anything against one's enemies, or being cast out of the community and being labelled self-hating Jews or something worse ... It is important to recall what the Palestinian movement is about. It is a struggle for human and political rights for the right of people not to be treated like human garbage because another set of human beings has decided that their claims, their history, and their ambitions are of

more profound importance.'

JUNITY has evolved during and since the gathering to include the autonomous organising of workshops, including Women's Caucus, Direct Action civil Disobedience, Jewish Delegations to Israel/Palestine, and the Canada Caucus. The Canadian activists at the gathering have founded an internet listserve in order to maintain communication, co-ordination and lobbying efforts (details below).

In addition to the 8th June international action, two further actions were organised. One was in September (see Not in our name, page 17) the next is on 10th December, UN International Human Rights Day, like last year.

The rapid and spontaneous growth of this

movement is a challenge to the hostility often expressed towards the Jewish opposition by Zionist organisation representatives. Susanna Udler of Brazil summed up the elation of the delegates by saying: 'A butterfly in one part of the world that flutters its wings, will cause a typhoon on the other side of the world. I believe here at this conference we have started to flutter our wings.'

Jewish Unity for a Just Peace proposed a variety of resolutions, which may be found at their website: www.junity.org

The internet listserves can be reached for a free subscription at JUNITY-Canada-subscribe@YahooGroups.com while introductions may be made to JUNITY-CANADA-owner@YahooGroups.com or internationally at JUNITY-ACTION-subscribe@YahooGroups.com.

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IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PALESTINIANS TO KNOW THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT, AS IT PURPORTS TO, SPEAK FOR ALL JEWS, AND IT IS IMPORTANT FOR OTHER JEWS TO KNOW THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SUCCUMBING TO THE APPEAL TO TRIBALISM TRUMPETED BY MAINSTREAM ORGANISATIONS, WHICH PERMITS ANYTHING AGAINST ONE'S ENEMIES, OR BEING CAST OUT OF THE COMMUNITY AND BEING LABELLED SELF-HATING JEWS OR SOMETHING WORSE



TH 'MATRIX OF CONTROL' IMPOSES OVERALL ISRAELI CONTROL BY SUCH MEANS AS A NETWORK OF 'BYPASS ROADS' CONNECTING ZIONIST VILLAGES, AND SURROUNDING AND CUTTING OFF PALESTINIAN TOWNS AND VILLAGES THAT HAVE WON SOME MEASURE OF SELF-DETERMINATION

American Jews are campaigning with energy and creativity for a just peace in Israel and Palestine. But if they avoid central issues, such as the right of Palestinians to return, they will lose the trust of their allies, says
HENRY NOBLE

In a photo, two women hold placards. The first sign reads, 'I am a Palestinian Arab. I was born in Jerusalem. Palestine is my homeland but I cannot return there.' The other says, 'I am an American Jew. I was born in the USA. Israel is not my homeland but I can "return" there.' I was struck by this image while attending a conference in Chicago called Jewish Unity for a Just Peace. The Israeli state entitles every person of Jewish heritage to make *Aliyah* – to return from the diaspora, and become a citizen of Israel. But Israel denies this right to the Arabs whose forebears lived in Palestine for centuries and were driven out during and after the formation of the Jewish state. For them there are no return, no reparations, no respite from 50 years of living in camps as refugees.

How can this absurd situation be resolved? At Junity, someone quipped to me that we US Jews should apply for *aliyah* and then give our 'tickets' to Palestinians who want them. A cute idea, with distinct PR possibilities. But not, of course, a serious answer to the problem.

I travelled to Chicago with Raya Fidel, a colleague born and raised in Israel who represented Radical Women at the meeting. Before leaving for the all-

Jewish assembly, we solicited advice from Palestinians about the subjects that should be raised there. Among the people we communicated with, the most urgent demand was to get the Israeli army out of the Occupied Territories – to end the curfews, checkpoints, arbitrary road closures, travel restrictions, home demolitions and daily indignities suffered by a people under foreign military rule. Stop these atrocities in the West Bank and Gaza, they said, and we can negotiate more as equals with the Israelis.

These demands were unanimously supported by Jews at the conference, which was hosted by an organisation called Not in My Name, a marvellous slogan and moniker. Not in My Name formed in the early months of the current Al-Aqsa Intifada and has been active in demonstrations and lectures ever since. They had the delightful *chutzpah* to hire an airplane that waved their name over Chicago's Israel Day parade this year.

Junity brought together more than 175 anti-occupation Jews from five countries, 25 US states, and 50 groups. All are horrified at the murderous Israeli attacks on Palestinians, and most recognise the threat that Israel's actions pose to its own people.

All had clever, bold, dynamic ideas for methods by which Jews can raise hell and put pressure on the US government to cease and desist paying Israel six billion dollars per year to commit genocide. The two-day meeting gave birth to an action, education, and information network.

Raya and I, and other Junity attendees, had hoped that a more definite formation would emerge, one committed to helping build an international, multi-ethnic movement for justice in Palestine. The main goal of the organisers, however, was to preserve unity. This meant avoiding any topic that might be controversial, and it prevented the conference-goers from working together as a body with a common political agenda. From what I heard and saw, I believe that the most taboo question was the Palestinian right of return.

Some Jewish activists fear that allowing Palestinians to come home would erode Israel's special Jewish identity. This is, consciously or unconsciously, a capitulation to Zionism – the racist ideology that calls for an exclusive, religious Jewish state, by any means. Other Jewish peaceniks are reluctant to recognise the right of return for more

concrete reasons. They worry about what will happen to Jews in Israel now living where Palestinians used to live. So, this may not be an easy question to confront, but it must be done. For progressive Jews, winning the trust of Palestinians and their other allies ultimately requires Jewish acknowledgment of Israel's origin as a settler state, one that displaced a people from their homeland. Negotiations over territory can be entered into, compromises will be made, but recognition of this reality has to be the bottom line.

The urgent task now is Jewish participation in the movement against Israeli violence and terror. Within this united front, all shades of opinion are welcome. But the sooner Jews inside and outside Israel begin talking about the basic nature of the Zionist state, the greater the potential to create a Middle East where Arabs and Jews can live together in peace.

Veteran labour activist Henry Noble is National Secretary of the Freedom Socialist Party. He asks readers interested in working on a multi-ethnic united front in defence of Palestinian rights to contact him at fsnatl@igc.org or write to him at 409 Maynard Ave South, #201, Seattle, WA 98104.

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STANDING OUR GROUND

Jews, Muslims and Christians in a demonstration of solidarity that was unprecedented as well as courageous in the aggressive atmosphere following the attacks on the World Trade centre and Washington.
CINDY LEVITT reports

After the tragedy of Tuesday 11th September 2001, the leadership of Not In My Name (NIMN) wondered whether or not we should hold our weekly vigil on Michigan Avenue. Since March we have been standing together from noon till 1pm each Friday afternoon. We have not missed a week. Our message has consistently been 'Chicago Jews Say End the Israeli Occupation.' We distribute about 200 informational flyers to the passing public each week. Often our Palestinian, Muslim and Christian allies join us.

We knew our message today needed to be different. Some members said we should cancel the vigil and wait to see how things developed. Others felt that now, more than ever, we needed to be public with our views. With the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism rearing its ugly head in Chicago in the last few days we wanted to stand together with the Arab American community here. NIMN participated in a press conference on Wednesday with 15 other community groups and organisations at the American Friends Service Committee's offices. Our message was to urge people not to scapegoat the Arab and Muslim communities and to send the message that we all stood with them in solidarity.

It was with this in mind that NIMN decided to go ahead and have our vigil and to invite as many others to join us as possible from all faith groups. We knew that the President had declared Friday a day of Prayer and Remembrance. Mayor Daley wanted the city of Chicago to come together at noon for city-wide gatherings. Last night I found out that our weekly vigil location was one of two designated by the Mayor for people to gather. We knew we'd have a crowd to deal with and that made me a bit nervous for our safety. Would we be jeered? Would people try to attack us? We had people joining us for the first time. Would they find us in a large crowd?

Our messages were to be simple. We had signs in English, Hebrew and Arabic reading: 'Arabs and Jews: We Refuse to Be Enemies' We also had signs with the following: 'We Stand Together to Mourn the Loss of Innocent People: We are Jews, Muslims, and Christians Together' 'We are a multi-ethnic, multi-religious community in mourning for those who lost their lives. We are against scapegoating the Arab and Muslim Communities.'

When I arrived at our usual spot at 11.30 a crowd was already forming. The sidewalks were filled with throngs of office workers and people from all walks



of life who were heading toward Tribune Plaza. A Chicago police officer wanted to know about us, and who we were when he saw us arrive with armloads of posters. He asked us to move to a different location and stayed with us for the vigil. I tried to go back and forth to our usual spot to direct other NIMN people to our new location. I only found two more people and finally gave up as the space got too crowded to move about. Several of our NIMN regulars were there and some new people joined us. We picked up our signs. The crowd spilled on to Michigan Avenue and the streets filled up, cars not moving. Some people were standing on the medians dividing the streets.

In order to have our signs seen, some of us held them high above our heads. It was too close for many to see what our messages were. When the program ended at about 12.15 people started leaving the area and many passed before us. Suddenly people were able to see our messages. We had enough people by then so that most of our signs were used. We spread out in a line and you could watch the faces of people going by trying to read the signs. Suddenly someone came over to

us, gave the first person in line a big hug and then went down the entire line hugging each and every one of us and thanking us. Then someone else followed suit. And then it was as if we were at a wedding receiving line, with one after another waiting their turn to travel down the line. Some were crying as they hugged and thanked us. Some said, 'God Bless you!' 'This is just what I needed to see.' 'You have restored my faith!' 'I feel hope again.' We received so many wonderful hugs and such positive energy. I responded to each person that I appreciated him or her coming over to us. I mentioned that we had to support each other through this tragic time and keep our hearts open and full of compassion.

When I looked at our group I saw African Americans, Jews, Muslims, Quakers, multi-racial, multi-ethnic folks, Christians; in short a very multicultural mix of people with a common message. One woman spoke to me of her parents, one of whom is Jewish and the other Muslim. It was a surreal afternoon. Not one negative comment. I am hopeful that out of this tragedy we will find our common humanity and embrace a multicultural, diverse America.

WHO IS DESTROYING OUR CITIES?

The terror attack on New York twin towers in September was not a unique event, argues Michael Safier, but must be understood as part of an 'urbicide' seeking to destroy the civility, diversity and coexistence in cities.

The immediate and most basic facts of the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11th this year were that a small group of terrorists caused the total or partial destruction of two 'skyline' office towers and several surrounding office complexes in the heart of downtown Manhattan's 'financial district', killing in the course of the attack and its aftermath a now estimated 5,000-7,000 men, women and children, leaving 7,000-8,000 homeless, an estimated 10,000 children without one or both parents, and leaving a traumatic lifetime impact on a likely total of 50,000 plus close relatives and colleagues.

The attack on New York has been seen as an unprecedented event, whose impact and implications have changed America and the world and ushered in a 'new era'. This view fails to connect the attack with other, sometimes even more devastating attacks on cities and their citizens that have occurred in the recent (and not so recent) past in many different parts of the world. The common feature of these aggressions is their deliberate (even if supposedly incidental) targeting of cities, seeking to destroy the security, public order, civility and quality of life of all their citizens, and damage or destroy the viability and liveability of the city itself. This is the common element of acts or campaigns of terror of all kinds, perpetrated by all sorts of people, which can be termed 'urbicide'.

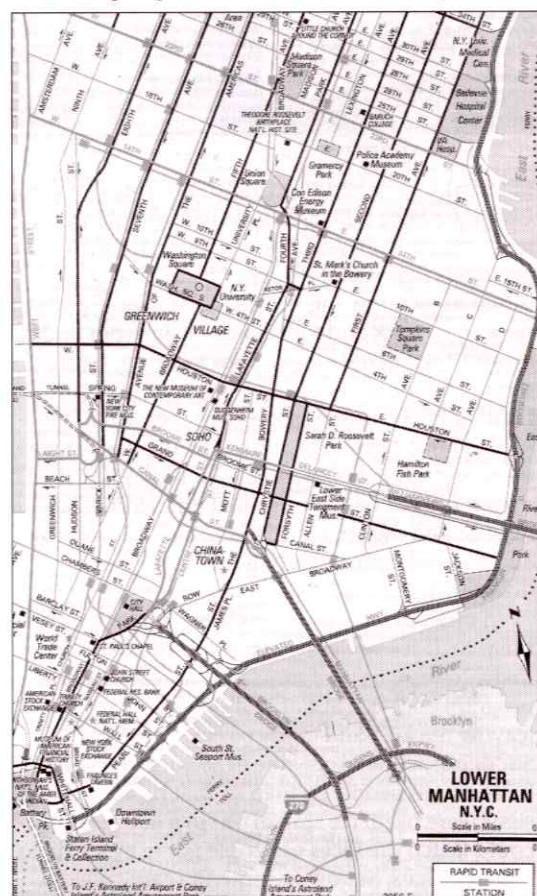
The term 'urbicide' was first used by the former mayor of Belgrade, Dravko Dizdarevic, to describe the deliberate physical destruction and 'ethnic cleansing' of the city of Vukovar in Croatia in 1991-92 by the forces of the Serbian government led by Milosovic. The invocation of a 'little genocide' is deliberate, since the objective of the perpetrators is to eliminate a whole group of people – citizens – without distinction, their existence being associated with a place and way of life which represents an intolerable threat, or expresses an effective resistance, to the reactionary ideologies of their attackers. 'Urbicide' is the negation of all normal urban existence, both literal – in physical terms – and even more significantly symbolic – in

The diverse urban culture of Manhattan was under attack along with the financial institutions

terms of such values as liberty, civility, diversity and co-existence.

Because 'urbicide' is so often closely associated with forms of violent conflict including both civil wars, national defence and international aggression, it is crucial, even if complicated and controversial, to try to distinguish, to draw a line, between such extreme forms of 'terrorism', that are irredeemable, indiscriminate and morally without justification, from a continuum of other forms of conflict, violence and the use of armed force, which are experienced in cities. This division is especially important in the case of 'cultural conflicts' over the status, position, and claims of different identity groups, their sense of 'belonging' and their actual or imagined grievances vis-a-vis other groups.

In this perspective suicide bombers, hijackers



and all those engaged in terror aimed at the destruction and death of cities and their citizens forfeit all claims to be regarded as moral agents, as do those who have deliberately inspired, promoted and/or provided the means for their infamy. By the same yardstick the same infamous behaviour is involved in the use of armed force and military power, overt or covert, by any government or regime, to deliberately target – in any degree – the civilian population and life-sustaining infrastructures of a city. This dividing line has often been crossed, tragically, in recent times, with varying but always horrific degrees of comprehensiveness and effectiveness. In these terms the attack on New York was fortunately of a lesser degree; but then there is not even the least degree that can in anyway be tolerated as other than barbaric.

In relating to instances of 'crimes against humanity, civility and diversity' such as that perpetrated against the city and people of New York, it is difficult and even dangerous to make comparisons, but it may help to displace even more dangerous dualisms and dissolve unwarranted generalisations, which are illegitimately promoted on all sides to the detriment of any possible just and effective response to such crimes. Such comparative accounting can be attempted without diminishing even the smallest part of the tragedy experienced by New Yorkers.

Indeed the attack on New York has been by far the most hideous and devastating of that class of terrorist outrages which have been conceived and implemented by dedicated terrorist groups and networks on a 'demonstration' basis, in circumstances where otherwise vigilant security systems have foiled many other attempts. Death and destruction has been visited on western capital cities and their citizens by terrorist attacks on individual buildings and urban spaces: the administration centre in Oklahoma City, the shopping centre in Omagh, Northern Ireland, the railway station in Bologna, the central area of Manchester and the financial district of the City of London. The attack on the World Trade Centre expanded the scale and the 'global reach' of such 'demonstrations' by a truly appalling margin.

There is another group of cities terribly afflicted by a reign of terror that has become a regular feature of their existence. These are cities caught up in intractable cultural conflicts between different identity groups, in which groups of extremists, criminals and fundamentalists of every shade and on all sides have been able to hijack responses to tragic circumstances of conflict into the avenues of terror. These instances reveal the consequences of unacknowledged but 'reciprocal collaboration' between the terrorist groups on both or all sides of the conflict, dedicated to a 'rejectionist' ideology that denies the possibility of co-existence in a shared city space; who



deliberately seek to 'terrorise' and incite a broader constituency – and governments already so disposed – into violent reactions to terrorist-inspired deaths and destruction that further their infamous cause.

Beirut – its sophistication, diversity and democracy destroyed

The vicious circle of violence, insecurity, oppression, discrimination, distrust and demonisation that have engulfed the citizens of Belfast, Bayrut(Beirut), Srinagar and perhaps most consequential of all, Jerusalem, have afflicted these cities for decades, and so long as terrorist groups among all their constituent communities are not divorced from the broader societies in which they find – and deliberately promote – sympathy and support, feeding on the adverse reactions among other communities, so long will the terror, and with it the insidious degeneration of civic society continue.

There is a third group of cities, mercifully few in number, that have been visited by a form of terror even more comprehensive and destructive.

These are the cities which Dizdarevic had uppermost in mind when he coined the term 'urbicide', where the entire city and all its citizens, and the symbols of their humanity, civility and diversity, have been under attack by superior armed forces animated by a determination to kill or 'cleanse' those very qualities of civilised city living. These forces are again 'hijacking' nationalist, religious, ethnic or political traditions into service as ideological cover for their 'crimes against humanity'.

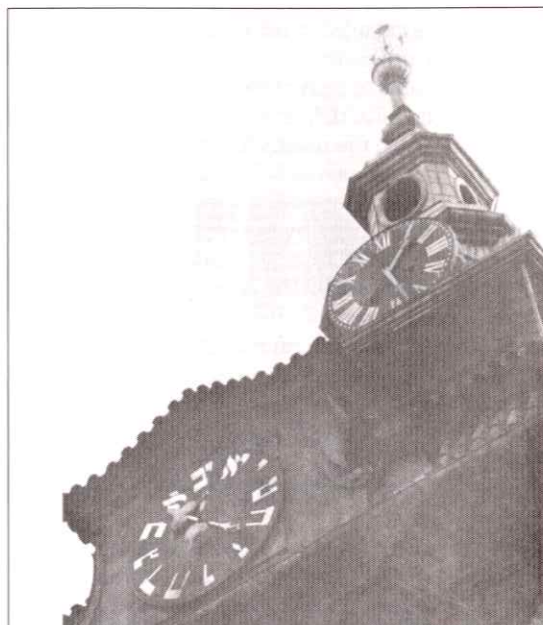
The most extended instances of this barbarism have been the attacks on the cities of Bosnia during the war of 1992-95; which were successfully resisted, but at great human, material and

SUICIDE BOMBERS, HIJACKERS AND ALL THOSE ENGAGED IN TERROR
AIMED AT THE DESTRUCTION AND DEATH OF CITIES AND THEIR CITIZENS
FORFEIT ALL CLAIMS TO BE REGARDED AS MORAL AGENTS

symbolic cost, by the citizens and associated armed forces of Sarajevo. These attacks crippled and divided Mostar, and largely destroyed and cleansed the multicultural substance of Banja Luka. The most intensive armed assault on urban civilisation in recent times however was made half a world away, in the almost unimaginable, deranged ferocity of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, which was able to virtually erase the life of Phnum Penh and deport its citizenry into their ultra-ideological remaking of humanity amidst the 'killing fields'.

Yet a fourth group of cities under attack have been those associated with broader conflicts, some localised, but most involving bilateral or international parties, where open warfare and military interventions have been under way. Here again the dividing line between military and defence engagements, blockades and sanctions, and the terrorising of civilian populations is difficult but essential to maintain; and here again the cities and citizens at risk are under attack from all sides. They are often the victims of deliberate 'militarisation' of their city and surrounding region, by national regimes indifferent or hostile to their plight, and also of the 'collateral damage', the literal as well as figurative 'fallout' from aerial bombardment, which is deliberately employed with the knowledge that such damage will be done.

This has been the perilous position in which the citizens of Baghdad, Basra, Belgrade, Pristina and Grozny have been placed, and continue to suffer until by the exertion of their civil society



organisations, often located in and spearheaded by civic associations, they successfully rebel against those regimes. It should be noted that Kabul, Kandahar and other Afghan cities have experienced this double assault from inside and outside their national societies over the past two decades, and as I write are entering another intensive phase of this apparently unending condition.

Two more groups of cities and citizens, only a little further back in recent history, suffered the final extremities of death and destruction of their humanity, civility and diversity. Firstly, the climactic closing years of the second 'world' war 1944-45 saw two acts of targeted terror, continuing

IN THE SAME PERIOD, 1943-45 THE DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL CHARACTER OF MANY MAJOR CITIES IN EUROPE WAS IN LARGE PART DESTROYED BY THE MASS MURDER OF THEIR JEWISH CITIZENS UNDER THE ONSLAUGHT OF NAZI TERROR

to be debated as to their moral status: the 'saturation bombing' of Dresden, and the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the latter cases the bombs literally and figuratively 'evaporated' an entire central city, with a radius of death and destruction that would, in comparative terms have extended the catastrophe of 'ground zero' to the whole of Manhattan Island and beyond. It is correctly feared, and devoutly to be hoped that the consequences of nuclear proliferation are never visited upon any other city in our age.

Secondly, and finally, in the same period, 1943-45 the demographic, economic, social, and cultural character of many major cities in Europe was in large part destroyed by the mass murder of their Jewish citizens under the onslaught of Nazi terror and the execution of the Holocaust, the greatest assault on the humanity, civility and diversity of cities ever experienced; the modern precursor of all subsequent infamies and instances of 'urbicide'. This aspect of the 'final solution' is often overwhelmed by the far greater numbers of East European Jews deported to the death camps, but the whole pre-war milieu of great cultural centres like Frankfurt, Vienna, Praha (Prague) and Budapest were destroyed beyond repair in the post-war era.

This enumeration of terror inflicted on cities worldwide challenges the simple allocation of

terrorist crimes to any particular civilisation, culture or identity group. It suggests the inadmissibility of any undifferentiated 'anti-Americanism', or conversely 'Islamophobia'; or the coincidence of a capacity for calculated criminal behaviour with some collective group, whether this be the Irish, the Iranians, the Israelis, the Palestinians, the Iraqis, the Afghans or the Serbs. No effective and sustainable solution to the problem of terrorism and 'urbicide' will be forthcoming on the basis of such credulous categorisation. Within each civilisational, national, and cultural group we must acknowledge a diversity of positions and views regarding these barbarities, and search for equivalent means of outlawing them and bringing their perpetrators to account, if necessary in a global arena such as the International Criminal Court.

This perspective seeks to replace much of the current conventional and ahistorical discourse on systems of national interest and security, and the processes of international 'realpolitik'. As the 21st century unfolds, in respect and recognition of the destruction, suffering and loss of life that has once again been imposed on the citizens of diverse cities, other forms and means of dealing with an increasingly globalised, urbanised and multi-civilisational world will be needed, and will be found.

WHERE WILL THE 'WAR ON TERRORISM' LEAD?

Have you ever known of a war led by the United States and Britain where the leaders tried so hard to convince us that they would combine humanitarian aid with dropping bombs? Can you remember when they actually did drop huge amounts of aid shortly after the bombs? And what about them trying so hard to convince everyone that this is not a war against Islam. Whatever actually happens in this war, these leaders clearly feel they don't have the amount of public support for a war that they might have expected.

I've listened to Question Time and Any Questions since the outrages. I've heard questioners remind us that the American Government backed the Taliban, of the continuing suffering in Iraq, and asking for evidence that El Qaeda were responsible. I heard virtually no-one back violent retaliation. Could these all be lefties

planted in the audience?

Even the Sun, on its front page felt the need to emphasise that the target were Taliban fighters rather than starving children.

Over the last ten years people have seen a lot of war on their TVs. They have seen people suffer - especially civilians. They see that Saddam Hussein is still in power. War reporters are not as gung ho as they used to be. I believe this has led to a change in the public mood to make it more critical of war. Most people might still support the air strikes, but they will be more critical if they hit civilians.

Opinion polls were carried out in thirty one countries asking people if they would accept substantial civilian casualties. In all but two countries the majority answered 'No!'. The two countries? Israel and the USA.

Bush blundered when he called the coming

The first battle that warmongering politicians and army chiefs face is to change a public mood that is already showing signs of cynicism about the aims and prospects of the war on Afghanistan, says

BERNARD MISRAHI

struggle a 'Crusade'. Mindful that the Moslem world they were trying to enrol into the alliance had a different view on the Crusades, this term was widely condemned. There was almost an apology for these Middle Age atrocities.

Also in the cause of winning Arab support, Bush has been pressured into support for a Palestinian state only days after Sharon attacked Straw for mentioning the word Palestine. The Americans were incensed when Sharon accused them of appeasing the Arabs in the way that Hitler was appeased. This was the reaction of parents of a spoilt child, furious that their child insults them 'after all they've done for him.' This is an opportunity that must be taken by those campaigning for a just peace.

There might be other changes too in this New World Order. America might be pressured to comply with the Kyoto accords. Most governments in the world will back the 'war against terrorism' -

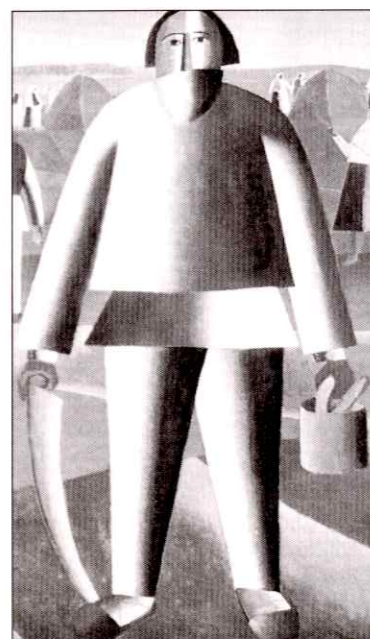
given the appalling nature of the attack on New York. But they will all want something in return. All the NATO countries invoked the article 'a strike against one is a strike against all'. They more or less made it explicit this was partly done to restrain hasty US retaliation.

The war did start - after 26 days rather than two or three. It was very unlikely that peace movements around the world would be able to actually stop a war. It is just possible they might restrain the combatants somewhat. OK, I'm the eternal optimist.

Who knows where this will lead? Maybe the events of recent weeks have taught us that the ideas of the left have greater support than one would readily believe. Secondly, those who are powerful are not always as powerful as they seem. We, more than anyone, should point out their weaknesses and bring them down to size.

The early years of post-revolutionary Russia were full of contradictions for the Jews. Antisemitism was officially outlawed but reappeared at the highest levels of the party under Stalin. Yiddish culture was initially encouraged but later channelled only into official outlets, and independent Yiddish cultural initiatives began to be repressed. Many Jewish traders lost their livelihoods but some found a new and freer life in farming collectives. This is a Yiddish folksong sung within Jewish farming communities in the Crimea in the 1920s.

Haymaking by
Kasimir Malevich, 1911



*Az men fort keyn Sevastopol
Iz nit vayt fun Simperofol
Dortn iz a stansiye faran
Ver darf zukhn naye glickn
S'iz a stansiye an antykl
In dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye*

Refrain:

*Hey dzhankoye, hey dzhankoye
Hey dzhankoye, hey dzhankoye
Hey dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye*

*Entfert yidn oyf mayn kashe
Vu'z mayn bruder, vu'z Abrashe
S'geyt bay im der trakter vi a ban
Di mume leye bey der kosilke
Beyle bay der molotilke
In dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye*

Hey dzhankoye...

*Ver zagt, az yidn, konen nor handlen
Esn fete yoykh mit mandlen
Nor nit zayn keyn arbetsman?*

*Dos konen zogn nor di sonim
Yidn, shpayt zey on in ponem
Tut a kuk oyf dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye
Hey dzhankoye...*

If you travel to Sevastopol, not far from Simperofol, there's a railway station. Who needs to look for new joys? This is a very special station, in Dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye. Hey dzhankoye, hey dzhankoye, hey dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye.

Answer my question. Where is my brother, Where is Abrashe? His tractor is running like a train. Aunt Leah is at the reaper and Beyle is at the thresher, in Dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye. Hey dzhankoye, hey dzhankoye, hey dzhankoye, hey dzhankoye, dzhankoye, dzhankoye.

Who says that Jews only know about trade and how to eat fat soup with almonds, but don't know how to be workers? Only our enemies say that. People, spit on their faces! Take a look at dzhankoye, dzhankoye.

I'M STANDING

Prior to the horrendous co-ordinated terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on 11th September, the plight of Afghan refugees was hardly an important item on the world agenda. The attention they did attract at that time was when a sinking boatload of 400-500 refugees (men, women and children) were taken on board a Norwegian ship in the Indian Ocean. The captain acted according to the International Rules of Rescue at Sea. Their original destination was Indonesia but as the refugees knew they were unwelcome there, they pressured the captain into taking them to Christmas Island – Australian territory.

The Australian Prime Minister's immediate reaction was: 'Not in my backyard,' and 'Why should these people be allowed a choice of haven?' He was vociferously backed by his nation. He gave the impression that the refugees had left Afghanistan with their Vuitton luggage and Gucci wardrobes and were on a luxury cruise. Australian forces were invoked after the refugees had spent two weeks in a caged enclosure on board the SS Manoora. They were transferred to a naval vessel, unwillingly, and transported after two weeks sailing east to the Island of Nauru, north of New Zealand.

Out of sight, out of mind. Now another similar group is being subjected to the same treatment. Shades of the Exodus, Struma and St Louis in the Second World War. We have heard nothing.

We are now being told that millions of Afghan people have attempted to leave their country due to lack of food, shelter and water – as well as the war – but the borders are closed to them.

Tony Blair admitted in 'Breakfast with Frost' that this has been going on for years. Until the present catastrophe, nobody appears to have noticed. It seems to me that the recently arrested missionaries who were working in Afghanistan giving aid and spreading the Gospel might have been better employed doing their missionary work in Australia. There is a real need in that country for the example of the Good Samaritan not passing by on the other side of the road.

Before these events, France was preoccupied with 'immigrants' (refugees) breaking out of the Sangatte asylum camp and attempting to get to Great Britain by Eurostar. The French Government should be congratulated on its imaginative solution to this problem: a disused psychiatric hospital in Dunkirk is to be used as a camp for these lucky people. 'Distance lends enchantment.'

I suggest that this could be the perfect setting for a research project. It could be set up with a present-day Dr Mengele with a brief to find a Final Solution to the Refugee Problem – using the Blair family as a control group. How about welcoming the new arrivals with 'Arbeit macht frei' over the entrance?

And not a religious voice is heard. Asylum? Christian, Jewish, Muslim – we all need one.

Zelda Bard

LABOURING UNDER A DELUSION

What's the difference between a Jewish mother and a Labour party supporter? The Jewish mother eventually lets go. This subversion of the familiar rottweiler conundrum perhaps carries as much stereotypical baggage as the original. Yet neither would assume resonance without some essential truth within these riddles. Labour's membership has plunged by almost a quarter since Tony Blair became Prime Minister. The leader who urged his backers to go out again and again to make Labour the natural government party now has fewer activists than the Conservatives. But many self-avowed leftists figure among the 311,000 stalwarts who continue to stay loyal through thin and thinner.

After a half century, one, Claire Rayner, fluttered her 'wings' to fly the nest in revulsion at attacks on the vulnerable, such as charging the old for nursing care. For countless others, though, no humiliation seems too much to warrant the exit door. The Tribune rally at the annual conference cheers Blair's war-mongering call to arms? Biff! The speech blames Afghanistan's drug trafficking for the heroin addiction of British youth – and offers no fresh hope for the jobless? Ouch! Hours after the address warns against nuclear proliferation, Margaret Beckett agrees for Sellafield to start global trade in the plutonium-based fuel MOX? Ugh!

At the general election, amid the quiet futility in polling stations was the deafening chorus of those who claim to have voted Labour while holding their noses. What struck me was that compared with this mild, unpleasant whiff for them, another rich-led administration would leave a nasty stink for the poor. These fake masochists bring to mind the gentile maid to a Jewish family who described their festivals. 'They have one called *Simchas Torah* where they eat and smoke in the dining room. On another, *shabbos*, they eat in the dining room and smoke in the bathroom. And one more, *Yom Kippur*, is when they eat and smoke in the bathroom.'

Labour diehards cite loyalty – a rare quality when voters are dubbed consumers with fickle tastes in politics, and relationships last until one partner junks the past. Yet blind loyalty – 'my party right or wrong' – brings tunnel vision. Further justification for staying put comes by invoking the need to maintain the party's original ideal of providing a voice for workers in parliament. But should tradition be upheld for its own sake? If alive now, Labour's founders would have jumped ship in anger and dismay.

Another notion is that withdrawing support would not only weaken Labour. It would strengthen opposition parties – in particular the Conservatives, under Iain Duncan Smith, the most right-wing leader since the Iron Maiden. Sticking with Blair now in the most crucial period – the

historic second term – at last could give Labour permanent office. Keeping indefinite faith seems alien to those who realise secularism's reason over religious suspicion. Yet they grip this God in case the alternative proves worse, despite evidence there is little and some negative difference between Phoney Tony and Hague's Dad.

On the other hand, Labour's trustees say the party offers advantages over the Tories. These include the statutory lowest wage, tax boosts for low-paid workers, the 'new deal' for the unemployed and higher child benefit. Their critics deride the minimum pay as a pittance. While the tax aid is said to still leave millions struggling to survive, they brand the help for jobless people as workfare. And increased child allowance is contrasted with paltry nursery provision and cuts in lone parents' support.

The same issue which propelled me into the Labour party triggered a departure. Chips. Oh, and class. A cramped home upbringing in London's East End – with an outdoor toilet and no bathroom – still never discussed social divides. The Damascus moment came on tiring of reporting sports trivia alongside people who couldn't write in search of people who couldn't talk. I took a publicist job for a northern industrial firm to see life beyond the capital. In a visit to its main plant, the naïfete peeled from my eyes. Low-paid assembly line workers grimaced at soggy fries in a rundown canteen while well-dressed office staff gorged on wholesome food in a plush restaurant. Next day I was Walworth Road's latest recruit. Little over a decade later, another sight of battered potatoes turned my stomach enough to ensure divorce. Until then, café snacks at the party's conference were consumed with selfless debate about ways to lift society's underdogs. Now, the only spectacle amid the spuds was the beauty contest involving careerists vying with each other for winnable parliamentary seats.

Between the years, my love affair with Labour went from good to bad to ugly as its socialist red flag symbol faded to a faint-hearted pink rose. There was the Early Period, joining a vain bid with many other leftists to urge Wilson and Callaghan to resist spending cuts and worker-bashing for a fairer Britain. It ended at the '79 election – invoking Neil Kinnock's anti-Militant intolerance – in a Labour government, a Labour government handing redundancy notices to its MPs. The era included a role as press officer for Livingstone's initial, failed parliamentary bid – which taught me to trust his media nous, but little else. The brief Middle Age followed – memorable days when Tony Benn headed a bold revolution for radical and accountable policies. Who knows whether the uprising would have succeeded had Thatcher not reversed popular distaste for her with Falklands

Deeply held loyalties to ideas and organisations can be hard to break. Three of our contributors describe the push and pull on their loyalties. On this page **PAUL COLLINS** charts the growing gulf between him and the Labour Party

jingoism? The Final Times staged tragedy and farce. Leader Michael Foot betrayed his libertarian roots to help lose Peter Tatchell a safe by-election by failing to support him against the tabloids' gay witch-hunt. Foot's successor followed suit. Neil Kinnock never stood on a coal picket line in his native valleys or at other pits during a seminal dispute. The beginning of the end came to cheers at Bournemouth from Bea Campbell and other

reformist posers. Turncoat Taffy's speech unleashed hatred for dissent to vilify a tendency I found simplistic, but needing meaningful exchanges - not McCarthyite expulsion. Months later, with subscription about to lapse, freedom reigned in the positive decision to sever my ties. It felt like walking away from another kind of party. The place is a tip, the guests over the hill and a sheepish woman under a host too drunk to raise his membership.

END OF THE AFFAIR

RUTH LUKOM
describes her
stormy
relationship
with Zionism

I was seven years old when I first fell in love. It was June 1967 - the Six-Day war. My mother showed me a map. 'Look at this tiny patch of land', she said, 'and look at all those huge countries surrounding it.' I didn't quite understand what had happened but I could feel the joy and euphoria of my parents and caught the excitement in the Jewish community. The newspapers and popular media portrayed the young handsome men and women of the Israeli Defence Forces. Comedians on television made jokes about Golda Meir coming over here to sort out troublesome trade unions or hopeless football teams. Britain was tired and old and its people were cynical but Zionism was noble and sexy and a natural home for socialists with its kibbutzim with women on tractors.

When I was 10 the first of my friends went to Israel for a holiday. I begged her to bring me a stone or a rock. From 12 onwards I joined Jewish Youth clubs. And in 1973 came the Yom Kippur War. It didn't quite match up to 1967 for drama or captured territory and the subsequent surrounding of the Egyptian army was a little messy and somewhat protracted. However we all still marched through the streets of London during a day of celebration for Israel. This is where I first saw Palestinians. They were standing on the kerb behind police lines. They were shouting and some had placards. I can remember some escaping the police lines and coming onto the road to remonstrate with their eyes wild and their hands in claw-like gestures of frustration as they screamed in our faces. We couldn't hear what they were saying but it didn't matter. We had won the war so we laughed and sang *David - melech yisrael* (David - King of Israel) even louder.

By the time I visited Israel in 1977 I had read *The Source* by James A Michener. I felt I belonged to the land. We were taken up to Kiryat Shimona near the border. Our guide pointed out to the hills. 'Where the green stops is Lebanon,' he said in his deadpan voice. It was obvious. There was no point in ceding land to the Arabs. They didn't have the skills or the idealism to make the desert bloom. They were motivated by tribalism and greed for oil revenues. And if further proof was needed about the moral superiority of Israel there was the Swords into Ploughshares checkpoint where Israel would help and assist the Lebanese people (actually the Christian Phalangists). All tourists were taken to this spot. In my many subsequent arguments with my parents about Israel my mother would relate her own visit to the border.

But now I was 18 and mixing in left-wing circles. I

joined CND and the Anti-Apartheid movement. When challenged, I told critics that Zionism was the self-determination of the Jewish people and a national liberation movement similar to that of other oppressed peoples. It all made sense. It seemed perfectly consistent. Those who argued otherwise were either naïve and ignorant of the historical legacy of Jews or just plain English antisemites. Jews who criticised Israel were warped and self-haters.

In 1982/83 Israeli soldiers marched into Lebanon and stood back to allow the Christian Phalangists into the Sabra and Chatilla camps. I was now a non-Zionist. A non-Zionist is neither a Zionist nor an anti-Zionist. You accept the reality of the State of Israel and the justification of the Jewish people's need for a homeland but are deeply critical of it. I suppose by the same definition I am also a non-public nose-picker.

As in a bad relationship you continue to defend Zionism and tell everyone that it's founded on fundamentally decent principles and that it's misunderstood. Privately you wring your hands and plead for change. And, no - emphatically no - Zionism is not racism. Well, yes - it's been abusive but rotten apples like Ariel Sharon are marginal and will never become the majority.

It wasn't an easy time but many Jews did speak out much louder than I did. Magazines like *Spare Rib* made a bad situation worse by excluding them from the debate and refusing to print their letters. A wonderful opportunity for Jewish women and Palestinian women to debate openly in a feminist journal was lost. Angry and embittered Jewish women retreated. But Zionism was there like the forgiving lover ready to gently chide them for walking out in a silly temper. *Spare Rib* helped many return to its loving embrace. In 1987 Jenny Bourne wrote an article in *Race & Class* called 'Homelands of the Mind: Jewish Feminism and Identity Politics', subsequently reprinted in *Spare Rib* as 'Jewish Feminism among Jewish feminists'. She argued that Jewish feminists had 'refused to take a stand on the crucial and painful contradictions posed by the material realities of the Middle East...preferring to escape into identity politics'. Some felt that the article was inaccurate and hostile but it did stimulate a widespread debate. Identity politics has since become deeply unfashionable and it is very easy to ridicule those terrible meetings in the late '70s/early '80s where you had to announce your credentials to ensure your contribution was treated with respect.

However I can also remember equally awful trade union or meetings of the left dominated by the great male unwashed who felt you weren't qualified to speak about unemployment if you didn't know the seating plan of Second Congress in 1903.

Were Jewish women guilty of selfish indulgence at the expense of political activity? Probably some were, but Jenny Bourne tarred us all with the same brush. She also raised the more interesting question of to what extent diaspora Jews were 'responsible' for actions committed by the Israeli state if they didn't speak out against them. Jews claimed the collective memory of the Holocaust as part of a shared past. Isn't Israel also part of that past?

In 2001 I have fallen out of love with Zionism and I don't have to make excuses anymore. Jews all over

the world are breaking the consensus. Israel does what it does in its own narrow nationalist interests and not 'on behalf' of anyone else (except of course the Brooklyn Jews who will populate their settlements). And as we reflect on what we've learnt from this unhappy love affair how 'guilty' should we feel for not ending it sooner? To answer this I must turn to Margaret Thatcher who claims British Muslims have not show enough remorse for the attacks on the World Trade Centre 'done in their name'. I empathise with the frustrated anger of those Muslims who feel they have to prostrate themselves for the readership of *Daily Mail* - (because of its natural sympathies towards asylum seekers and Iraqi people?) Yes - you condemn (and in my case acknowledge) your past.

ANY CHANCE OF A SABBATICAL?

Dear God,

I've always liked being English and I've always liked being Jewish. As a kid in the Jewish Sunday school in north London, I was taught that the Hebrews, like the English, were always the good guys and the others, like the Romans and Egyptians, were always the baddies. In the English state school too, the Russians and the Germans were always the baddies and we, the Jews, were always the goodies. Sure, we got killed a lot, but we were always the good ones.

But now everyone's talking like the Jews are the ones in the black hats. What's going on? All this stuff with the Palestinians is confusing me. I know it's good to build new houses, but maybe the Israelis could build further inside the country. When I was there, there still seemed to be a lot of space.

As a Jew in England, supporting Israel is a bit like following the national football team; delight in a good performance by the side, followed by dismay at the antics of the fans and all the sponsors and TV people who feed off of it.

I'm 50 now and still believe Jewish people are good. For example, I'm permanently indebted to my cousin Maurice for what he did when I couldn't get work. He took me in and gave me a job in the warehouse. He put me in charge of the planks of wood. He said I was the ideal man for the job. I know I'm not very clever.

Mind you, when Maurice came back from Israel this morning and heard me say maybe they should stop building these settlements, he looked at me like I was mad. He said in Israel they'd string me up. 'Wring your neck like a chicken', he said. He said you can't trust the Arabs and the only way to deal with them was like that; at which point he turned down his thumb like a Roman emperor. When I asked him why, he nearly hit me. 'Can't you see?' he said, 'this is what the Arabs do! They get us Jews to fight among ourselves.'

I'm not sure why he got so excited. Maurice says religion is superstition and he eats lots of pork but, he says, we Jews didn't suffer all these years so that we could hand over our land to a bunch of fanatics.

'Suicidal cowards', he called them. 'Look at the tally man', he said. I think he means Taliban.

I feel paralysed. On the one hand I have this emotional tie to Israel, but on the other I'm deeply uncomfortable with what's happening out there. I don't think I'm the only one. The trouble is, other Jews who feel like me don't air their qualms publicly because they get accused of treachery and, as nearly happened with me and Maurice, get into fights with other Jews.

So, after giving the matter careful thought, I want to ask you if it's possible for me to resign from the Jewish religion. Maurice says if I did, I'd lose entitlement under the 'law of return' that is, my right to Israeli citizenship. He said, 'Look at life like a business and think long term.' He says there are still plenty here in England, antisemites, who'd like to finish off Mr H.'s work and I should be thankful that a place like Israel exists where I can go and live in safety.

Then, if not resignation, what about leave of absence? Say, three years? I could still pay my synagogue fees, receive the congregation newsletter and stay in touch with the Jewish community via Maurice whom I see every day, except when he's away on business.

If that's no good, how does this sound? Maurice doesn't allow time off for Jewish holidays. He says his gentile employees become jealous and resentful. I said I'd happily work Easter and Christmas instead, but Maurice said it wouldn't be financially worth opening up the warehouse. I calculate over the 30 years or so I've been with him I'm owed nearly two years Jewish holiday and, I was wondering, maybe, if I could take it as time in lieu away from the religion?

I know these solutions might sound weedy but, I'm not a fighter. Please get back to me. I can't talk any more now. Maurice is coming. He's returned with a big order from Israel. Something to do with planks of wood for prefabricated buildings.

*Yours sincerely
Maurice's cousin*

**Writer and comedian
IVOR
DEMBINA
needs some
time off**

ROOM VIEW

WITH A

When IVOR MORGAN came to London to teach history last year he discovered a fascinating source on his own doorstep

My landlady was a fit and active 80-year-old. She was German and had grown up in Silesia in the 1920s. I noticed a copy of *The Origins of the Second World War* by AJP Taylor on her desk, and told her that I was doing some history teaching. She suggested we have regular chats about the subject. As I headed off to my room I mulled over the fact that this was the first landlady I had ever met who was keen to talk about history.

At the time my GCSE history class was studying Eastern Europe in the early 1920s. 'Upper Silesia', our textbook informed us, 'was an industrial region on the border between Germany and Poland. Both Germany and Poland wanted control of it. In 1920 a plebiscite was organised for the Silesians to vote on which country they wished to join.' I told the students that the family of my new landlady – who was a keen historian – had lived through these events.

After a few weeks the history discussions with my landlady underwent an abrupt shift in mood. Controversies over 'revisionist' accounts of Nazi history were receiving intensive media coverage. Deborah Lipstadt, the author of *Denying the Holocaust: the Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* and her publisher, Penguin Books, were being sued in the high court by David Irving. My landlady asked me if I could obtain some background information on the trial from the internet. The material I found anticipated Justice Gray's eventual summing up of the trial. Irving was described as a Holocaust denier, a falsifier of history and a racist. It soon became evident that my landlady did not subscribe to this analysis. Not long after I gave her these articles she handed me a large brown envelope with a Canadian stamp on it. 'Read this', she said, 'but be careful not to show the contents to anyone. You will see why that brave man had to take these people to court!'

The envelope contained a 28-page booklet called *Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth at Last*. The words 'Historical Fact No 1' were printed in gothic-style lettering on the cover and in the background was a picture of corpses heaped on top of each other. The author was Richard E Harwood, and the booklet had been published by the Historical Review Press in Richmond, Surrey. The Holocaust, it said, was 'a colossal piece of fiction'. It had been used to 'undermine the principle of nationhood and national pride, but it threatens the survival of the race itself. Many countries of the Anglo-Saxon world, notably Britain and America,

are today facing the gravest danger in their history, the danger posed by the alien races in their midst.' The sub-headings conveyed the flavour of the text. They included 'Fake Photographs', 'No Evidence of Genocide', 'Imaginary Slaughter'.

I immediately wondered whether some of the rent I was paying might be finding its way into the pockets of the man my landlady admired so much. (In April 2000 Irving said that he had received donations of about £340,000.) My initial intention was to vacate my room pronto, but I decided to stay on. The opportunity of exploring the mind-set of an authentic Holocaust denier would be unlikely to come my way again.

Everyone has their heroes and anti-heroes, and my landlady started to introduce me to some of hers. She had watched a television programme about Winston Churchill and his refusal to make a peace deal with Hitler. 'Hitler wanted to stop the war with Britain,' she said, 'but Churchill would have none of it. What a vainglorious and obstinate person he was!' One of her heroes was Fred Leuchter. 'He is the man!', she would say. I was given a collection of press cuttings and photocopied articles about this North American engineer, a self-taught expert on methods of execution. In 1988 he spent eight days in Poland and took samples from the walls and ceilings at Auschwitz. He claims to have found little if any trace of cyanide. As far as my landlady was concerned, Fred Leuchter had proved beyond all doubt that no gas chambers existed. While she accepted that thousands of canisters of Zyklon B had been delivered to Auschwitz, these, she insisted, had been used for nothing more sinister than 'delousing and pest control'.

Fred Leuchter was called at the David Irving trial. He had been used as a witness by lawyers acting for Ernst Zundel, a German national, resident in Canada who in 1988 was prosecuted for publishing the very same booklet that had recently been handed to me in the brown envelope. During the Irving trial, Leuchter's claims were vigorously contested by Robert van Pelt, a professor of architecture who thereby, unknowingly, forfeited a chance of entering my landlady's pantheon of heroes.

Another booklet handed to me by my landlady was *An Eye for an Eye* by John Sack, 'a Jewish writer', she emphasised to me. The focus was a novel one: the crimes committed by Jews on Germans, specifically on the German population living in Soviet occupied Poland and parts of

Germany in 1945. It quoted a 'mother of Gleiwitz' saying: 'What happened to the Jews was sad but there was another Holocaust too.' (This was the nearest my landlady's literature ever came to acknowledging that any crimes had been committed against the Jewish people.) Jewish concentration camp survivors supposedly rounded up German civilians and placed them in '1,255 concentration camps' (this number had been heavily underlined). Between 60,000 and 80,000 Germans died in custody. In the camps run by the Jewish officers of the Office of State Security there was no more Mr Nice Guy. These people were of a very different character from the goody-two-shoes SS personnel in Auschwitz who, so the booklet declared, 'had been forbidden to hurt a Jew for emotional satisfaction'.

Unlike 'the mother from Gleiwitz' quoted in the booklet, my landlady never gave the slightest indication of feeling that 'what happened to the Jews' was sad. Indeed she never even acknowledged that anything very much had happened to them. Perhaps a few hundred thousand had been 'resettled' to 'work camps' where some may have died of typhus. Big Deal! Indeed in my landlady's view even when Jewish people were 'resettled' their treatment was cosseted and privileged. She told me that when she left Silesia for Germany she had to travel in an open cattle truck. The Jews, on the other hand, were transported in closed cattle trucks. While the cold rain soaked her to the skin the Jews were kept nice and comfy and warm, and provided with loads of food provisions as well. Not only did they have the good fortune of travelling in de luxe cattle trucks but they were also cared for by the polite SS in the ultra-humane 'labour camps'!

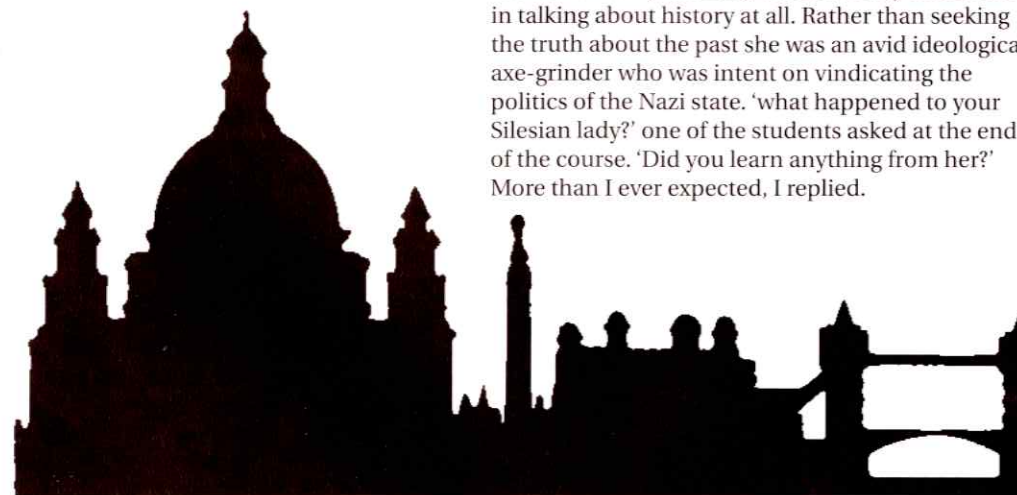
From time to time my landlady brought in a copy of the *Jewish Chronicle*. One of its articles examined the claim that thousands of 'Jewish soldiers' had fought for Hitler. It pointed out that these soldiers may have had one or two Jewish grandparents, but the great majority, 'were Christians who had absolutely no desire to be associated with the Jewish people'. However my landlady saw things rather differently. Some of Hitler's doctors, she said, were Jewish. Many leading Nazis had Jewish girlfriends. Not only the military but other pillars of the German state were staffed by large numbers of Jewish people. In fact the Nazis had not really been antisemitic! They were actually on the side of the

Jews. The Nazis had been keen Zionists all along and yearned for nothing more than Jews being safe and secure in their own Jewish state!

To give further weight to her case my landlady lent me a booklet called *Zionism in the Age of Dictators*. It was written by a socialist – Lenni Brenner – (after whose name my landlady had written 'Jewish'). Brenner states that under the 1935 Nuremberg laws 'only two flags were to be permitted in the Third Reich, the swastika and the blue and white Zionist banner.' Nazi policy was to dissuade Jews in Germany from thinking of themselves as assimilated Germans, and to 'encourage' as many as possible to leave. Zionists also wanted to leave Germany. Therefore Nazis and Zionists were on the same side!

A belief in the moral legitimacy of the Hitler State stood at the very centre-piece of my landlady's worldview. She felt that the Nazis had every reason to inflict a Holocaust on the Jewish people – but insisted that because they were such humane and decent fellows they never did. Of course Jews continue to make the slanderous claim that there was a Holocaust, which only goes to show how justified the Nazis would have been in inflicting one on them, not that they did, although perhaps they should have, and then those slanderous allegations would never have seen the light of day. My landlady was filled with indignation about the Holocaust being on the history syllabus of British schools. She was angry that wholly 'innocent' people had been tried and executed at Nuremberg in 1945 for fictitious war crimes. People like Oswald Pohl, head of the SS Economy and Administrative Office who – according to the last pamphlet I was given – was such a decent chap that he 'did not mind his wife entertaining her Jewish friend Annemarie Jacques at their home'. My landlady fumed when she learnt that the Chancellor of the Exchequer held a reception for Deborah Lipstadt after the end of the Irving trial. She was offended to discover that a Holocaust Exhibition was being held at the Imperial War Museum. As for the shoes on display there, these, she declared, had not been taken from Jews at all! They had nothing to do with the victims of concentration camps. 'The Russians collected them from us in Silesia to use as communist propaganda against Hitler. They only took the left shoes – go to the exhibition and you will not see any right-fitting shoes there!'

First impressions can be misleading. I gradually realised that my landlady was not really interested in talking about history at all. Rather than seeking the truth about the past she was an avid ideological axe-grinder who was intent on vindicating the politics of the Nazi state. 'what happened to your Silesian lady?' one of the students asked at the end of the course. 'Did you learn anything from her?' More than I ever expected, I replied.



ALIVE AND KICKING

CHARLIE POTTINS
follows the trail
of some old but
still active Nazis

A MATHS PROFESSOR GOES MISSING

In January, 1985, Boris Weisfeiler disappeared on a hiking trip in southern Chile. His rucksack, clothes, shoes, credit card and return air ticket were found by the river Nuble. Chilean police said the maths professor must have drowned trying to swim the river. Professor Weisfeiler's colleagues at Penn State University didn't accept this story. Chileans who knew the river said it would be far too full and fast at that time of the year for anyone to try it. In 1986 the Washington Post reported that the US State Department had asked Chilean authorities for information on Professor Weisfeiler's whereabouts.

Weisfeiler, a Russian-born Jew, had disappeared not far from a mysterious German settlement called Colonia Dignidad, founded by an old Nazi. On June 30 last year the Department declassified 250 official documents relating to the Weisfeiler case. These show that two or three weeks after the professor disappeared, a person called the American embassy in Santiago and told them the professor was alive. In 1987 the embassy heard that Weisfeiler had been arrested and taken to Colonia Dignidad where he was being held in inhuman conditions, and tortured. Another report said he had been killed.

All this information remained locked up in secret government files while Boris Weisfeiler's family were trying to find out what had happened to him. The Committee of Concerned Scientists, of which he was a member, set up a legal fund for an investigation. Last year, Chilean courts agreed to re-open the case – one of many concerning disappearances under General Pinochet's 17-year dictatorship. On 11th October last year police raided the offices of Colonia Dignidad.

US State Department documents obtained by the Weisfeilers lawyers describe Colonia Dignidad as 'a religious sect led by a charismatic leader similar to Jim Jones in the Jonestown (Guyana) disaster'. Schaefer, an SS veteran and army doctor, became a preacher in post-war Germany, but fled abroad to avoid charges of whipping and molesting children at an orphanage near Bonn. Some of his flock were already in Chile and others followed. They set up Colonia Dignidad on remote land in the Andean foothills 200 miles south of Santiago in 1961. The 32,000-acre farm, shielded behind high barbed wire fences, was watched over night and day by armed guards with attack dogs. Visitors were not encouraged, and residents were not permitted to leave. A German government investigation reported that the sexes were segregated, and children

separated from their parents. People caught trying to leave were subjected to psychological and physical punishment, such as being held for long periods in solitary cages, beaten, and injected with drugs. Wolfgang Mueller, who did escape, claimed that as a young boy he had been sexually abused by Schaefer. Others told of sexual assaults and forced labour. Schaefer has been on the run since paedophile charges were brought against him four years ago.

Two visitors who were welcomed at Schaefer's colony were General Pinochet, and his security chief General Manuel Contreras. Pinochet's secret police, DINA, enlisted a former SS man. Colonel Walter Rauff, as an adviser. In 1941, as head of the technical division at Reich Security Head Office, RSHA, Rauff decided to ease the work of German forces on the eastern front, by having some 20 heavy trucks converted into mobile gas chambers, and despatched to the *einsatzgruppen* (extermination squads). 'So far as the extermination of Jews in Russia is concerned, I know that gas vans were used. Did I think twice about employing the gas vans? I couldn't say. At the time the most important consideration for me was the psychological stress felt by the men involved in the shootings. This problem was overcome by the use of gas vans.' An estimated 200,000 people were killed in these vans.

In 1943 Rauff became SS commander in northern Italy. Captured by the Allies, he escaped a prisoner of war camp in 1946, and hid in an Italian monastery, before travelling to South America. A West German extradition request in 1963 was rejected because the crimes of which Rauff was accused were beyond Chile's statute of limitations. The SS colonel was able to resume his career under General Pinochet. Retiring in comfort, he died in 1983 of natural causes.

OLD NAZIS AND NEW

Pinochet's persecution of opponents was not confined to Chilean borders. The CIA and FBI supplied DINA with intelligence reports on Chilean exiles, and Colonia Dignidad helped it 'draw on national and international contacts', a declassified CIA report says. In April 1974 two Italian fascists, Prince Luis Borghese and Stefano delle Chiaie, arrived in Chile and met Pinochet. Like Walter Rauff, Borghese had served in northern Italy. Captured by partisans, who might have executed summary justice for his crimes against them, he was spared on the insistence of US intelligence officer James Jesus Angleton. Della Chiaie was a younger fascist, a street-fighter who gloried in violence and was implicated in bombings in Italian cities aimed at terrorising people into submission to a right-wing dictatorship. In December 1970, after

attempting a fascist coup, the 'Black Prince' fled with his street thug protégé to Spain, where Borghese's wartime comrade in arms, SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny welcomed them.

Set loose in Latin America, the Italian fascist Delle Chiaie ranged from Argentina to El Salvador, helping DINA hunt down Chilean exiles, and assisting right-wing death squads. After Chile's former ambassador in Washington, Orlando Letelier, was blown up on Embassy Row, together with a young American aide, Ronnie Moffat, on 21st September 1976, there was an outcry which eventually led to the conviction of DINA chief and CIA liaison Contreras. By then the Argentine military had emulated Pinochet, and launched its 'dirty war' to wipe out 'subversives'. Then in July 1980, Delle Chiaie's masterpiece coup in Bolivia brought to power a barbaric military regime which brutalised, tortured and murdered 1,000 people in its first week.

For one resident, it brought comfort and joy. Klaus Barbie, the wartime Gestapo butcher of Lyons, recruited after the war by US army intelligence to spy on left-wing trade unionists in Europe, had been given an assisted passage to South America when French prosecutors first got on his trail. In La Paz he made himself known to the military as representative for the German arms company Merex. Arms dealers can go where diplomats fear to tread. In 1978, after Amnesty International reported what had gone on at Colonia Dignidad, Merex boss, Gerhart Mertens, also linked with intelligence services, was prominent in a 'Circle of Friends' of the German settlement. Skorzeny was a Merex director.

Barbie had done well in Bolivia, organising torture and death squads for the right-wing military dictator Hugo Banzer, and financing them through the cocaine trade and money laundering. He even set up Transmaritima Boliviana, buying boats for a landlocked country. Then in June 1980, Bolivia's elections put a reforming coalition led by Herman Siles Suazo into office, pledged to clean up corruption. The new government accused Barbie of massive fraud, and looked set to deport him. But on 18th July the military seized power, under Luis Garcia Meza, and Barbie could breathe freely. Trade unions were abolished, newspapers closed, curfews imposed, and thousands of people arrested, tortured and killed. The Butcher of Lyons was back in business for a few years more, with the butchers of La Paz. Reports used to distinguish between 'neo-Nazis' or 'neo-fascists' and old ones, but here we see the continuity at work between them.

OTTO SKORZENY'S WEB

After the defeat of Hitler's Third Reich, a handful of senior Nazi war criminals were tried and executed at Nuremberg. The will to prosecute Germany's bankers and industrialists was blunted by their links with American and British business. The onset of the Cold War against the Soviet Union and communism meant Hitler's generals and their allies were perceived as NATO assets. As is now well-known, leftovers from the Ukrainian SS Galicia division and Latvian units were shipped to Britain, whence some were despatched on ill-fated missions to infiltrate the USSR. Other Nazis and fascists were assisted by various routes (Madrid and

the Vatican were favourite rest stops) to warmer climes, where they formed a network available for skulduggery while awaiting their return to power – the so-called Fourth Reich. This was a hidden counterforce against peoples who aspired to raise themselves, between two world power blocs, as a Third World.

Otto Skorzeny, the commando whom Hitler sent to rescue Mussolini, and entrusted with organising Werewolf resistance to the Allies, was acquitted at Nuremberg on charges concerning his actions in the Ardennes, where unarmed US prisoners were massacred at Malmedy. His subsequent 'escape' from an internment camp in 1948, just ahead of an extradition demand from Czechoslovakia, was probably arranged by his American captors, so that Skorzeny could recruit fellow-Nazis to a 'stay behind' network to stop communism. But he was involved in a parallel network, a later favourite of thriller and movie writers, the Organisation of Former SS members known by its German initials as ODESSA. Some reports spoke of *die Spinne* – the spider's web.

Living on a farm in Bavaria rented by Countess Ilse Luthje, niece of the Nazi finance minister, and banker Hjalmar Schacht, Skorzeny contacted General Reinhard Gehlen, the wartime intelligence officer with whom he had set up underground units in Russia and eastern Europe. Gehlen's post-war American-backed spy organisation, based at Pullach, just outside Munich, became the official Federal German intelligence service, the BND, in 1955. By then, Skorzeny had married Ilse Luthje and moved to Madrid, where he became an arms dealer. With help and advice from Uncle Hjalmar, the Skorzenys amassed a fortune and a host of useful connections. Among those who had found the climate in Franco's Spain better for their health in post-war years was Leon Degrelle, commander of the SS Walonie Division on the eastern front. Sentenced to death in absentia by his native Belgium, Degrelle entertained fascists from all over Europe at his luxurious seaside apartment in Malaga, and considered Skorzeny a 'great friend'.

Skorzeny's links with Schacht and General Gehlen (and through Gehlen with the CIA) brought valuable business assignments from foreign governments such as Argentina and Egypt, who wanted arms, investment and expertise from wherever they came. Much of the Nazis' looted gold had been shipped to Argentina after the Vatican and the British government took their cut, and a former Nazi agent in Spain, Horst Fuldner, helped General Peron recruit German scientists and technicians. Through his connections, Nazis like Adolf Eichman found employment in Argentina. Croatia's wartime dictator Ante Pavelic even set up a 'government in exile' in Buenos Aires.

When the infamous 'Angel of Death', Josef Mengele slipped away to Argentina, he was helped by Hitler's ace pilot, Colonel Hans-Ulrich Rudel, who was involved in Argentina's plane industry. Although Mengele retreated to Paraguay, Rudel continued in business and Nazi politics, starting a Nazi paper and returning to Germany to launch the neo-Nazi Deutsche Reichspartei. In March 1962, meeting in Venice with Italian and French fascists, the Belgian Jean Thiriart and Britain's Oswald Mosley, Rudel helped form a European National

THE 32,000-
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SHIELDED
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FENCES, WAS
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VISITORS WERE
NOT ENCOUR-
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Party. Among the 2,000 people who flocked to Rudel's funeral in December 1982 was David Irving. Two jets of the modern Luftwaffe flew over and dipped their wings in salute to the dead Nazi hero. German Defence Minister Manfred Worner, a future NATO secretary-general, claimed he knew nothing of Rudel's politics, but respected his 'achievements as a soldier'.

A MARRIAGE MADE IN LANGLEY, VIRGINIA

After the defeat of the 1936-39 Palestinian revolt, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el Hussein, allied himself with Hitler, hoping Nazi victory would help rid Palestine of both the British and the Jews. (The right-wing Zionist Stern group to which future Israeli premier Yitzhak Shamir belonged, also naively sought an alliance with the devil, albeit with less success.) After the war, the Mufti took up residence in Egypt. Many Germans made their way where Nazi influence had gone before, as mercenaries, businessmen or technicians. For nationalist army officers and parties who had fought 'democratic' colonial powers, and found state intervention necessary to their country's development, words like 'national socialism' had an appeal. So did anti-Jewish conspiracy theory (suitably adopted, to appeal to people who were also 'Semites'), when they tried to understand why the West and the Soviet Union had backed partition in Palestine and helped bring about the Naqba (catastrophe).

But insofar as there was a marriage between European Nazism and Arab nationalism, it was an arranged one, and America's CIA was the *shadchan* (matchmaker). US policy in these Cold War years was not averse to seeing British, French or other allies (and business competitors) eased out of their colonial fiefdoms, so long as Soviet influence was kept out, and social revolution did not threaten US interests.

In Egypt the Free Officers movement overthrew the corrupt King Farouk in 1952, and two years later Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser became top leader. Striking textile workers at Alexandria were ruthlessly crushed, and militants executed. Communist Party leaders were thrown in jail. The CIA wanted to help the new regime, but without being seen to dirty its hands. So it donned German gloves. Or as Miles Copeland, the CIA's man in Cairo in the 1950s, put it, the Agency 'had on its hands a number of Germans who were not – or in some cases not quite – war criminals'. Seeking jobs for them, it decided in 1953 that Egypt's intelligence and security services needed help. In talks with CIA director Allan Dulles, General Reinhard Gehlen said the best man to take charge of the job would be Otto Skorzeny. With a little persuasion, and promised the CIA would top up whatever Nasser paid, Skorzeny agreed, and began recruiting his team. His old friend Hartmann Lauterbacher was in touch with the Mufti, and became the BND's station head in Cairo.

Among those arriving in Egypt was SS Major Leopold Gleim, who had been Gestapo officer responsible for Jewish affairs in Poland. SS General Oskar Dirlewanger, who had commanded a penal brigade, took charge of training Nasser's guards, assisted by SS Major Eugen Eichberger, who had

participated in Nazi extermination squads in the Ukraine. Recommended by the Mufti, Johannes Von Leers, who had worked with Goebbels, took the Muslim name 'Omar Amin' and a post in Egypt's Information Ministry, with special responsibility for 'Jewish Questions'. Louis Heiden, alias Louis al-Hadj, translated Mein Kampf into Arabic, and the Egyptian government also published an Arabic version of the notorious Czarist secret police forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Franz Bunsche, another ex-Goebbels hack with Skorzeny's team, might have had a better-seller with his work, The Sexual Habits of Jews, if he'd turned it into a series of postcards.

For Egyptian Jews and Communists (many of whom were also Jews), falling into the hands of Gestapo-trained torturers was not so amusing. An Israeli campaign of sabotage and provocations, misusing idealist young Egyptian Jews, did not exactly help the Jewish community. Whether Nasser believed the nonsense produced by Nazi propagandists, or merely thought it would impress people in the West, is unclear. In the period before Suez the Egyptian leader did consider clandestine peace contacts, some via the British Jewish Labour MP Maurice Orbach. But the Protocols continued to circulate, and their influence can be seen in some supposedly Islamic material. Antisemitic and racist groups have been funded by some Arab states, including Saudi Arabia. In 1962 Egypt's military attaché in London entertained the British Nazi Colin Jordan. Ill-advised as such dalliances are from an Arab standpoint, it has suited both Western imperialists and Arab reactionaries to exaggerate the power of the 'Jewish lobby', rather than see anger directed at the West and its interests.

US policy received a couple of blows in 1955 when, stung by heavy Israeli 'reprisal' raids for fedayeen action, Egypt turned to the Soviet bloc for arms and aid. Nasser went to the Bandung conference of 'non-aligned' nations, and recognised the People's Republic of China. Egypt emerged from the 1956 Anglo-French-Israeli invasion shambles holding its canal, international status, and courtship from both superpowers. German companies like Krupp and Siemens invested in Egypt's development, while Gehlen's Org, now the official West German intelligence service, BND, expanded through the Middle East. Alois Brunner, wanted for war crimes including deportation of Jewish children to Auschwitz, moved from Cairo to become BND station chief in Syria. The US had hoped Egypt would join the pro-Western Baghdad Pact, but the 1957 Iraqi Revolution tore Baghdad out of the Pact. Egypt and Syria formed the United Arab Republic in 1958, but Iraq's General Kassem obstinately pursued his own policies, even letting Iraqi Communists out of prison and into his coalition.

In 1963, Kassem was overthrown in a CIA-supported coup by Ba'athists allied to Nasser. Egypt's Nazi-trained and officered secret service played its part in the coup and the bloody massacre of thousands of Iraqi workers and leftists, which foreshadowed the even bigger slaughter in Indonesia two years later, and the Pinochet coup in Chile in 1973. Among Iraqi officers whose careers were advanced by the CIA coup was Saddam Hussein.

ISRAEL: IS IT GOOD FOR THE JEWS?

Israeli propaganda naturally made much of the Nazi presence in the Middle East, as though it explained Arab hostility, rather than merely exploiting it. The capture of Adolf Eichman in Argentina in 1960, and his trial in Jerusalem, highlighted Israel's claim to defend Jewish people and bring retribution upon our enemies. But as relations with West Germany improved, Israeli agents were told to lay off fugitive Nazis. Reports on Mengele's whereabouts were filed away for no action. Mossad was concerned about German scientists and engineers developing Egypt's weapons technology, and sent ex-Sternist Yitzhak Shamir to Paris to organise a two-pronged campaign. Scientists and their families received threats and parcel-bombs, newspapers received sensational articles about a Nazi plot to wipe out the Jewish state with new fiendish weapons of mass destruction.

After each world war defeat, Germany's military-industrial complex took itself abroad to work its way around restrictions on rearmament. But in response to Israel's concerns, Gehlen's BND helped an Israeli agent, Wolfgang Lotz, infiltrate German circles in Egypt, where he spied on the government and waged cloak and dagger war on the weapons scientists. In 1963, Israeli agents met Otto Skorzeny in Spain, and enlisted his help. This liaison may have been facilitated by the BND's Gehlen, or the CIA's James Angleton, who handled links with foreign services, and managed good relations with assorted Nazis, fascists and Zionists. A German rocket scientist visiting Skorzeny was told the two inquisitive gentlemen with him were 'NATO officers'.

By the 1970s, Israel itself grew big in the defence and security business. Military exports overtook diamonds, textiles and citrus as earners, and retired or serving Israeli officers turned up in numerous countries, among them Argentina. During the junta's 'dirty war' when at least 11,000 people were 'disappeared' by the military, it is estimated that at least 5% of victims were Jewish, although Jews only constituted 1% of the population. This might partly be explained by the targeting of left-wing intellectuals and professional people, but there is other evidence that Nazi training had left its mark on the Argentine officer class and its outlook. Former prisoner Nora Strejilevich recalls: 'They assured me that the "problem of subversion" was the one concerning them most but the "Jewish problem" ranked second and they were collecting information.' During raids on homes the security forces became especially vicious if they found a family was Jewish. In prison Jews were made to crawl on their knees, as Jacobo Timerman recounts, humiliated and tortured. Amnesty International reported that torture centres were decorated with swastikas and portraits of Hitler. The military saw nothing incongruous about condemning Timerman as, among other things, a 'Zionist', and doing business with the Zionists in Israel.

Israel was selling arms to Argentina. What else was it selling? A 1976 CIA report said officers from an Israeli intelligence centre in Rio de Janeiro had 'gone to Buenos Aires to give training to the Argentines. In the course of these contacts the Israelis recommended greater involvement in joint antiterrorist operations.' The junta, of course, claimed its 'dirty war' was a war against terrorism. A report into the 'dirty war' commissioned by

Argentina's Jewish representative institution, the DAIA, says Jews were interrogated about alleged 'Jewish campaigns' and about the community, its institutions, buildings, staff and ideologies. 'The victims state that torturers evidenced a surprisingly accurate knowledge on some of such issues, and some of them even spoke Hebrew or Yiddish.'

Where US operations or direct arms exports were restricted by Congress, Israel was ready to fill the gap.

After Bolivia's 1980 coup, and brutal repression, the US government, followed by Britain and other European Union countries, and several in Latin America, broke off diplomatic and trade relations, and the IMF refused to renew loans. Israel, together with South Africa, Argentina, Paraguay, Egypt and the USSR, maintained relations, and went further, offering arms and military aid to the brutal dictatorship that was shielding Klaus Barbie. That the 'butcher of Lyons' was brought to justice three years later owed nothing to Israel. 'We must be guided in our relationships by the one criterion that has guided governments of Israel since the establishment of the state, namely: "Is it good for the Jews?"', wrote former military intelligence Brigadier Haim Vivien Herzog, before becoming president of Israel. Perhaps he even believed it.

LOOKING AT CONNECTIONS

In 1992 the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires was bombed, and 29 people killed. Two years later a car bombing at the AMIA, Jewish welfare society premises killed 86 people and wounded hundreds. It was assumed that Middle Eastern terrorists were responsible for both bombings, and the finger pointed at Iran. But Argentine Jews suspected an Argentine connection. 'The key question in the case is: who provided local intelligence and support?' said Horacio Lutzky. 'That means looking into the Nazi underground, and we all know of the deep influence Nazi ideas have on the Argentine, police, military and security agencies.'

As Argentine democracy attempts to probe the truth about Nazi gold and the 'dirty wars', the Far Right lashes out, and new links are revealed. When police investigating the AMIA bombing raided an army barracks at the end of 1995 they uncovered a military coup plot, and found literature produced by the White Aryan Resistance, a US-based Nazi outfit. People remained sceptical, suspecting those arrested, mainly NCOs, were small fry. In 1996 it was revealed that Justice Minister Rodolfo Barra had been a member of a violent Nazi youth movement. On 24th September, 2001, the trial began of 15 former police officers and five civilians charged with supplying the van that was packed with explosive in the AMIA bombing. Who was responsible for the bombing, and why, has yet to be established. Some doubt it ever will.

When I was growing up in the 1950s, adults told me Nazism was past history, and neo-Nazis insignificant, not worth bothering about. Sadly, their optimism has proved mistaken. Starting in Boris Weisfeiler's ill-fated footsteps, our hike through history to a Buenos Aires courtroom has found hidden connections between yesterday's horrors and today. The collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War are bringing new contradictions and strange alliances. We will need to confront them with open eyes.

IT HAS SUITED BOTH WESTERN IMPERIALISTS AND ARAB REACTIONARIES TO EXAGGERATE THE POWER OF THE 'JEWISH LOBBY', RATHER THAN SEE ANGER DIRECTED AT THE WEST AND ITS INTERESTS

Capital offence?

IBM AND THE HOLOCAUST: THE STRATEGIC ALLIANCE BETWEEN NAZI GERMANY AND AMERICA'S MOST POWERFUL CORPORATION

Edwin Black

Little, Brown & Company, £20

Michael André Bernstein, an acute critic of Holocaust literature, coined the term 'backshadowing' to describe one of its worst characteristics. 'Backshadowing is a kind of retroactive foreshadowing in which the shared knowledge of the outcome of a series of events by narrator and listener is used to judge the participants in those events as though they too should have known what was to come.' History students are routinely taught to spot this tendency and to avoid repeating it. Journalists are also supposed to know better. Yet there is always a temptation to ramp up complicity in great tragedies, catastrophes and crimes for the sake of creating a sensation. There is an added incentive in the case of the Holocaust because evidence of guilt has become the premise for legal action against anyone who can be deemed liable for the Nazis' murderous policies.

Edwin Black, an experienced journalist, has allowed 'backshadowing' to flaw his intriguing account of IBM's corporate relations with Nazi Germany. IBM was founded by Herman Hollerith, an American of German parentage, who invented a machine for processing statistical data. In 1910 he licensed Dehomag in Germany to build, lease and operate Hollerith machines. After the First World War, IBM, now led by Thomas J Watson, exploited German hyperinflation to obtain control of Dehomag. Watson 'was a pure capitalist' who did business with anyone if it brought IBM profit. When Hitler achieved power, he saw rich opportunities for IBM in the Nazis' predilection for social engineering based on statistical analysis. It didn't matter if race was one of the chief organising categories for data research.

The Nazis used IBM machines for population surveys in 1933 and 1938 that helped classify and enumerate German Jews. Racial violence and discrimination did not deter Watson from regularly visiting Germany. His machines meanwhile helped sort Germans slated for sterilisation. As head of the International Chamber of Commerce, Watson arranged for the ICC's annual meeting to be held in Berlin in 1937, where he was given a medal by Hitler. To prepare for war the Wehrmacht used IBM apparatus extensively and its business in Germany boomed. Watson, still visiting routinely, was momentarily disturbed by Kristallnacht and sent Hitler a mild reproof, although it was mailed to the 'wrong address' and never arrived. In public, he campaigned for good relations with the Third Reich. However, IBM was under increasing tax pressure in Germany. Watson set up devious arrangements to evade tax and when the Nazis got irritated with this 'foreign' concern he ordered that Dehomag accentuate its native credentials.

Black does a terrific job piecing together the scam and showing how it backfired when Watson's German partner became frustrated by having to take 'losses' every year. Resentment exploded in June 1940 when Watson returned his medal to Hitler

in deference to public outrage against the German onslaught in Western Europe. Yet instead of letting Dehomag go, Watson fought to retain the company and its profits. Ironically, war saved IBM because the German subsidiary fell under the control of the Custodian of Enemy Property who actually protected IBM's interests. Black provides shocking evidence that IBM in America continued to supply vital punch cards and other services to its lessees in Nazi Europe, despite the use of the technology in the apparatus of repression and in defiance of Allied regulations against trading with the enemy. By another irony it was this very business that saved IBM from prosecution and retribution, since it could provide intelligence for the Allied forces and once Germany was vanquished became crucial for reconstruction work.

This story would have made a stunning book, but Black indulges in hyperbole that verges on distortion. He asserts that: 'When Hitler came to power he made an open promise to create a Master Race, dominate Europe, and decimate European Jewry.' Black, then, knows better than the legions of scholars who have debated Hitler's outlook and objectives in 1933. And if Black knows, then Watson ought to have known. When IBM dealt with the Nazis in 1934 it should have been aware of their 'methodical program to destroy the Jews' and conquer Europe. During a visit that year Watson should have noted that 'everywhere Jewish misery was evident'. Strange, then, that in 1935 Britain concluded a naval agreement with Hitler and 10,000 Jewish refugees decided to go back to Germany.

Black exaggerates the Nazi repression of the Jews before 1938. He asserts quite fantastically that 60,000 Jews were imprisoned in April 1933. He also overstates how much world opinion knew or cared about it so as to make Watson appear more nefarious. Black claims that in 1933 the 'world reacted with a boycott'. This boycott was so powerful that by 1938 it had 'virtually crippled' the German economy. This is nonsense. The controversial boycott was staged by some sections of the Jewish population in various countries with limited support from the labour movement and a few parties or prominent individuals. Historians agree that it was largely ineffective: the German economy hit trouble because of rearmament. And Watson's Berlin adventure in 1937 was hardly contentious coming a year after Germany staged the Olympic Games there.

Black's own investigative work disproves the existence of any 'strategic alliance' between IBM and the Nazis. The corporation and the Party may have shared a penchant for dictatorial leaders, uniformed employees and rousing songs, but Watson systematically deceived the Nazi authorities. IBM avoided paying corporate tax in Germany from 1934 to 1938. Watson fought to prevent the Nazis taking a controlling interest in Dehomag or promoting alternatives. During the war IBM serviced Axis requirements, but it obliged the

Allies equally. As a wartime investigator observed, 'The personnel of IBM, though nominally citizens of the USA, is actually composed of citizens of the world. Their loyalties to their corporation know no national bounds.' What Black proves with devastating clarity is that capitalism is amoral.

Perhaps because an anticapitalist homily might not make the US bestseller lists Black makes his gravest charge against IBM its alleged complicity in the Final Solution. Yet here his evidence is weakest. He demonstrates conclusively that Hollerith machines were used to count Jews, run concentration camps, and facilitate railroad operations. But machines did not identify Jews. They only processed the data that humans collected. Hollerith machines only enabled faster use to be made of existing lists of Jews. Black's reductive argument leads him to conclude that a higher proportion of Jews in Holland than in France

were sent to the camps because the Nazis in Holland used IBM technology whereas in France they could not. This explanation totally ignores the radically different character of the two occupations, the terrain, and the timing of the deportations. Black conveniently omits any mention of Lithuania which suffered the highest Jewish losses without the assistance of a single punch card.

The case against IBM is damning enough without needing to exaggerate what Thomas J Watson and the world knew about the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews and when. The facts suffice without the overheated prose. For some of these facts, however, Black relies on the NY Times and a few of them are downright wrong. As a journalist he ought to know that you can't believe everything you read in the papers. I am afraid the same goes for this book.

David Cesarani

Belated recognition

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

Imperial War Museum, 20th October 2001 to 28th April 2002

Some years ago I was fortunate to meet the late Charlie Goodman, on the surface an ordinary East End Jew, who remained living and working in the East End until he died. But there was a gap in his youth where he temporarily left the ghetto and took off to Spain to fight for the Republicans in the bloody civil war that erupted in 1936 when General Franco attempted a coup against a popular and democratically elected left-wing government. Charlie went as one of the International Brigades – an organisation through which 45,000 predominantly young people from 38 countries put their lives on the line for their ideals. They left a great deal behind, lovers, children, work, friends. Nearly 10,000 of them never returned. They were among the 350,000 lives lost in three years of battles. Most of those who did return, including Charlie, came back physically wounded but, emotionally, even more determined to struggle for social justice.

Fighting against overwhelming military odds they were part of a



brave but losing struggle for life and dignity against fascism. Though appreciated by their comrades, families and communities, they were condemned as 'premature anti-fascists' by the British establishment and suffered great indignities when, as experienced fighters, they joined the allied forces against Nazism in the Second World War. They were given lowly and demeaning jobs. As the fight against Hitler's Nazis came to

dominate the historical discourse on fascism, they were largely ignored in a post-war world, which regularly and smugly congratulated itself on its defeat of the fascist enemy. Nevertheless surviving brigadiers still meet when they can to share reminiscences. Today, only a handful remain alive in Britain, but their struggle has at last been acknowledged in an excellent exhibition at the Imperial War Museum.

Photos, paintings, propaganda posters, personal testimonies and mementos – scarves, badges, diaries, letters and telegrams – take you into the real lives of the 'volunteers for liberty' and their counterparts in Franco's ranks. There were 600 'blue shirts' who went from their native Ireland to fight for Franco's nationalists. Historians of the Spanish Civil War have often focused on the writers, artists and intellectuals, steeped in the European political milieu of the time, who gave up relatively comfortable lives and careers to take part in armed combat on unfamiliar terrain. For many of

Times of war and revolution

The years reveal successively the true significance of all the casual shapes shown by the Atlas. What we scarcely knew becomes an image haunting as a face; Each picture rising from neglected place To form the dial of our cursor hopes, As that undreamt-of frontier slowly withers Along the wishes of explosive lives.

The pages char and turn. Our memories fail. What emotions shook us in our youth Are unimaginable as the truth Our middle years pursue. And only pain Of some disquieting vague variety gnaws Seeing a boy trace out a map of Spain.

Roy Fuller

them only their words survived to take on an added poignancy. One display includes the letter of condolence from the Spanish embassy to the family of John Cornford, a brilliant scholar, who died on the Cordoba front the day after his 21st birthday. This portrayal of the International Brigades, though, has often obscured the fact that, although Oxford and Cambridge Universities were well represented, most *brigadistas* from Britain were manual workers from the industrial heartlands.

My only criticism of the exhibition is that it does not give enough explanation of what impelled ordinary workers with limited knowledge and experience beyond the poor districts in which they struggled for a living, to join the fight of their comrades in Spain, and what became of those 'ordinary' fighters who survived and did not write books or poetry. For Charlie Goodman, it was seeing fascism at first hand in Britain in local fights against the Mosleyites and at the Battle of Cable Street, after which he received a 6-month prison sentence for his efforts, that made him determined to fight fascism abroad as well as at home.

This exhibition conveys many aspects beyond the military battles - the volunteers who ran medical services and those who helped refugees get over the French border and continued to care for them. Four hundred thousand Spaniards went into exile in this period. The photos of their exodus, captured with great pathos by Robert Capa, are closely reminiscent of some to be found in the permanent Holocaust exhibition on the floor above. What a pity that the Spanish civil war exhibition is only temporary since it provides a vital context to the barbarism recalled in the Holocaust exhibition. Fascism did not start and end with Hitler.

David Rosenberg

We are not afraid of ruins, we are going to inherit the earth. The bourgeoisie may blast and ruin the world before they leave the stage of history, but we carry a new world in our hearts.

*Buenaventura Durruti
anarchist leader*

LETTERS

Observation points

The Jewish Chronicle reported recently on a sermon delivered by Rabbi David Goldberg. This is the first occasion, as far as I can recall, that a rabbi has said that Israel could be compared to a colonial power. I hope that this statement will make Jewish people consider how Third World countries must view the statements and actions of the present Israeli government.

I was born in India and spent the first 30 years of my life there. We were taught the history of the previous 250 years when European states established a colonial domination of the world: western European states in the whole of North and South America, Australia, South Africa, the Indian subcontinent, every part of South East Asia and substantial parts of East, West and North Africa; and Czarist Russia which spread its empire in Central Asia right to the borders of Afghanistan.

We learned of certain religious groups and other 'unwanted' groups from Western Europe who were 'encouraged' to take over parts of their colonies, even if it meant annihilation and extermination of the local 'native' population. And then in the 20th century, helped and organised by the British government, Jews from Europe - part of Europe's white population - established a colonial pocket in the Middle East. This was the understanding shared by my Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Bhuddist and Christian colleagues and is still the perception of people who have lived and struggled during the long period of western colonialism; and this is what Jews all over the world have to understand.

Shalom Charikar
Isleworth, Middlesex

What about the workers?

Your editorial (JS44) ignores the several thousand May Day marchers, including large numbers of Turks and Kurds, who marched on the peaceful official TUC May-Day march.

Last year the official march was stopped by several police forces in the Strand because 'guerrilla gardeners' and others were 'smashing capitalism' in Trafalgar Square, planting dope in Parliament Square, giving Churchill a Mohican and draping a banner proclaiming

the makers as Turkish students with a 'communist' bent - and thereby enabling the Daily Mail and other media to indulge their hatred of foreigners, asylum-seekers, students, socialists and communists.

And yet the original Chartists' demands for an eight-hour working day have still not been achieved. In May 1997, 14,000 people were found to be working seven days a week. Meanwhile the CBI wants the French government (socialist I'm told) to concentrate on providing 'less restrictive', low paid work, rather than its traditional concern with job security and rights.

Dave Shepherd
Hendon, London

Justified actions

In your editorial about the anti-capitalist rally you point out that 'For London's 5,000 May Day campaigners this year, a day of protest culminated in eight hours imprisoned behind thousands of riot police zealously using their truncheons and shields whenever people tried to break out.

I am broadly sympathetic with the aims of the rally and recognise that most of those participating are non-violent but it is almost impossible to separate the violent few from the non-violent majority.

In the previous anti-capitalist rally I was particularly upset to see the Cenotaph defaced. Many servicemen, including my father, lost their lives defending freedom against fascist tyranny. If the only way the police could prevent similar actions by the violent few this year, was to contain the whole rally, their actions, though unfortunate, were justifiable.

Lewis Stevens
Dunblane, Scotland

Betrayal

Only the fact that I am so disappointed could make me write to you in this manner. You have relaunched in a completely upmarket New Labour/New Statesman mode that is a betrayal of the feisty, very readable publication that you used to be. You had a publication to be proud of and you have chucked it away. Here comes puffed up stuffiness. Goodbye to real old Jewish socialism

Myrna Shaw
Stamford Hill, London

Village voice

Simon Lynn's article on Ravenswood Village (JS 44) was so inaccurate as to be unrecognisable to the hundreds of residents and staff who reside there and has the potential to cause considerable offence to the very people whom he seeks to champion.

Ravenswood Village was founded by parents in the 1950s in an attempt to find an alternative to the dreadful institutions that existed for people with learning disabilities at that time. Since then, it has burgeoned as a result of the high quality of the care services available there. Each person has a life plan and programme determined by that individual's wishes and needs and the freedom to pursue their goals with a high ratio of staff support. The location of Ravenswood Village is indeed a historical accident and only adds to its uniqueness.

Norwood Ravenswood's mission is to ensure that people with learning disabilities have the right to make informed choices about how they wish to live. That is why we provide a huge range of accommodation, from flats in London to independent houses and highly supported living homes in Jewish communities. Some Ravenswood Village residents have chosen to relocate and this has always been arranged. Conversely, some residents in community houses have requested relocation to the Village and this has also been arranged.

The question of employing Jewish staff is not a matter of rural location but exemplifies the reluctance of young Jewish people to seek careers in social care at this level. We employ two excellent cultural advisors to work with our residents and staff throughout the organisation to ensure that we are able to meet our residents' cultural and religious needs too.

Norwood Ravenswood continues to work and campaign for improvements for people with learning disabilities wherever they reside. We do not advocate that one form of living is better than any other as we believe that such a choice is best made by those directly involved. In the meantime, we shall continue to offer as many opportunities as possible to meet the diversity of need that we encounter.

Norma Brier
Chief Executive, Norwood Ravenswood



FUGITIVE AND FREE

In Pakistan, Syed Nasir Wajahat's life was threatened because he wrote articles accusing Taliban-run religious schools of turning youngsters into fanatical terrorists. When Syed's house was sprayed with bullets, he figured the threats were serious. Fearing that the Pakistan police might not protect someone who had upset fundamentalists, Syed fled to Britain. He was locked up in Campsfield and the Home Office has ordered him out of the country. Perhaps if Syed was a terrorist, instead of a target, they'd have given him a British passport and let him teach, like the Tories did for Abu Hamza al Masri, the Imam of Finsbury Park.

Leaving Syed's place, I pass Roberto Fiore's charity shop in Maida Vale. In 1980, Italian fascists bombed Bologna railway station, killing 85 people and wounding hundreds. Fiore, one of the fascists who came here while things were hot at home, has survived several extradition requests and numerous home secretaries. Nowadays, with pals in high places, and property all over the place, he is free to raise cash in London and raise Cain in Rome. War against terrorism? You must be having a larf.

CHEAP AND AWFUL

To Hounslow, west London, to see one of C&A's last two stores in Britain close. I'm sorry for anyone whose job has gone, but watching chairman Mark Brenninkmeyer, descendant of C&A's Dutch founders Clemens and August Brenninkmeyer, remove the 'closing down' banner, I can't repress a smile. My mother

oleh ve'sholem, would not shop at C&A, not because it stood for 'cheap and awful', as smart folk jeered, but because, according to her, the owners were *yiddeneints*, Jew-haters.

I might have shrugged this off as a *bubbamayseh*, or old wives tale, till I read the history. In 1937, C&A wrote to Herman Goering, proposing to open a store in Leipzig: 'We were one of the companies that penetrated the position of power held by Jews in the textile industry before the war and we were obliged to pit ourselves against the financial strength of the department stores and shops and against the power of the entire Jewish establishment, which we did successfully. Since the foundation of the firm no non-Aryan has ever been employed by us.' Did Mum encounter this policy when she was a young girl looking for shop work in the 1920s? I wish she'd lived to see them close.

FAITH AND CHARITY

Some people reduce Jewish existence to the Nazis' attempt to exterminate us. Some Holocaust survivors are distressed to see their lives reduced to financial claims, as though families could be bought. Survivors often suffer in later years, when they no longer have everyday work or childcare to keep their mind off painful memories. And like other old people, not least in America, the *goldeneh medineh*, they need money for accommodation and care. Two Brooklyn rabbis came up with an ingenious scheme, enabling society to ease its conscience by giving charity

while sparing the survivors the indignity of receiving it. For this they are going to jail, though not for long enough. Rabbi Jacob Bronner, an adviser to New York mayor Ed Koch for 12 years, and Rabbi Ephraim Stein, ran Project Social Care. In 1995 they received a \$2.5 million grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for a counselling programme 'tailored to meet the needs of elderly Holocaust survivors' and help them 'deal directly with the Holocaust experience'.

Our spiritual gents handed the money to the Council of Jewish Organizations (CJO) of Borough Park, New York. The CJO disbursed it to businesses controlled by the two, or purchased imaginary goods and services from companies, who paid the rabbis. Money paid Rabbi Stein's relatives for nonexistent training went to a *shul* run by him.

On 10th August, admitting they had swindled Holocaust survivors out of hundreds of thousands of dollars, the wonderrebbes were sentenced, under a plea bargain, to 33 months in prison. Less than you'd get in some states for stealing a doughnut. Allowed time for New Year and *Yom Kippur*, they were due to surrender on 15th October. District judge Raymond Dearie said that despite the 'wanton fraud and venality' of their crime, he'd been swayed to lenience by letters detailing the rabbis' work for Hasidic communities. A crowd of Hasidim were outside to cheer their two *tzaddikim*. What would he have to have done to lose their support?