

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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JEWISH ★ SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

PROTEST AND SURVIVE EYEWITNESS REPORTS FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



NEWS

3-4 Anti-defamation legal tangle, Antisemitism in France, Benefit for refuseniks, Robert Hamill Campaign

FEATURES

6 Hidden agendas

Levin Johansson gives an eyewitness report on a neo-Nazi march through Berlin and looks at the responses of the police, the Left and the Jewish community

8 Stories of the streets

Ben Gidley reflects on a Berlin conference on the crossover of Jews and communist movements in Europe

10 Monkey business

Ralph Levinson investigates how creationism in schools relates to the privatisation of education

12 New Labour, old racism

Tony Kushner investigates the ideology behind David Blunkett's pronouncements on immigrants

15 Eyewitness Israel/Palestine

The International Solidarity Movement has brought hundreds of peace campaigners into the front line of a brutal conflict. Elizabeth Carola and Irene Bruegel report from their visit

17 Welfare and warfare

Maxim Ghilan and Paul Collins investigate how Israel's military imperatives affect the country's poor and disabled people

20 Drama out of a crisis

Doug Hilton describes a cultural project linking writers in Britain and the occupied territories

22 Put not your faith in princes

Israeli peace activist Jeff Halper explores how ordinary people can unite to achieve justice

22 The politics of shame

Julia Bard analyses the stances Jews are taking on Israel and Palestine

25 Midnight in Moscow

Charlie Pottins recalls the year when Stalin's paranoia of Jews reached a murderous peak

POETRY

14 The prayer of the political bigot

25 *Ikh bin a Yid*: Itsik Feffer

REGULARS

4 Change the world, Wisewords

5 Eye on Zion

14 From where I'm standing,

27 Dybbuk's diary

Editorial committee: Julia Bard, Paul Collins, Ruth Lukom, Simon Lynn, Charlie Pottins and David Rosenberg
Printed by The Russell Press, Russell House, Bulwell Lane, Basford, Nottingham NG6 0BT.

EDITORIAL

While international observers sift through what remains of Jenin, a courageous and determined minority of Israelis as well as diaspora Jews continue to cross real and invisible community boundaries to act in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination. For this minority, the commitment (while pursued more or less actively or effectively) is firmly held and not destroyed by the violence of the oppressed Palestinian people against the Israeli state, against its occupying settlers and soldiers, or by the terrible attacks on its citizens. The only possible antidote remains the end of Israeli occupation – and the beginning of Palestinian self-determination and statehood. Jeff Halper (page 22) argues that solidarity from international civil society is necessary to the success of the Palestinian people's struggle and says that they cannot succeed alone. We feature eyewitness reports from this solidarity work in this issue of Jewish Socialist (page 15).

With evidence of an increased incidence of antisemitism in Europe (see Marc Knobel's report from France, page 3), the British media has featured high profile articles where concern about increasing antisemitism has been set against a stance of solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve a just peace.

The black writer Audre Lorde has argued that there is no hierarchy of oppression and, difficult as it sometimes is, we can argue and struggle both against antisemitism in all its subtle and less subtle forms and for the rights of the Palestinian people for justice, self-determination and freedom from oppression. Julia Bard's article (page 22) explores some of these issues in more depth. The Israeli Marxist activist Michel Warshawski at his trial in 1989, where he was accused of assisting illegal Palestinian organisations, defined his stance as 'being on the border' between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. He had taken a definite decision to remain among his people but to be as close as possible to the other. This stance remains as important and difficult as ever to maintain.

At this time we should give support and publicity to the movements of those Israelis who continue to put themselves on the line in solidarity with the Palestinian people (see Eye on Zion, page 5) as well as ourselves being part of an international civil society that acts to support the Palestinian People's struggle for an end to occupation and for a just peace.

Rising attacks in France

Antisemitic incidents in France have risen sharply, particularly since last October according to a report by the National Consultative Commission of Human Rights. The report, which covers 1990-2000, says: 'The rise in overt antisemitism is to be found in all sectors of the population, men and women, young and old, workers and executives, left and right.'

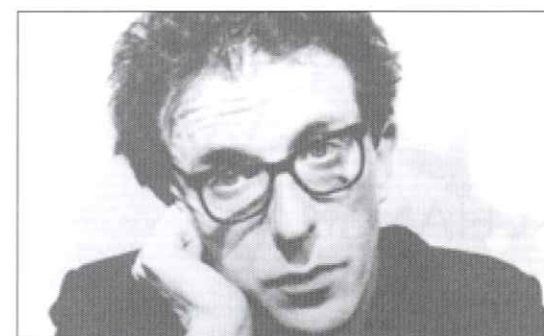
In 2000 there were 116 recorded acts of antisemitic violence, most commonly Molotov cocktails thrown at synagogues and schools. Magreb immigrant youth from the suburbs have been involved in some of the attacks. Lallaoui, a community activist and filmmaker, believes they are partly motivated by events in the Middle East; they feel a sense of solidarity with the Palestinian people and, 'by amalgamation, attack Jewish symbols for lack of Israeli targets'.

Politicians have said little about the attacks, which are nevertheless being challenged by youth and community leaders like Ali Rahmi who runs a 'meet

and discuss' group. Lallaoui is uncompromising: 'We have been fighting for years against racism ... we hear unacceptable things said in certain associations. The emotion stirred by certain pictures does not justify any of the violence. We have to say things as they are. Clearly these acts of violence are a tiny minority, but if we activists stay silent, that is a message we send to the most organised groups, who will understand they can go ahead. I do not want to hear "Death to the Jews" chanted every time there is a demo ... we are obliged to tackle this issue.'

The attacks continue to rise: the Jewish communal authorities recorded 350 incidents between October 2000 and December 2001. Against a background of public and political indifference there is a feeling of abandonment within France's Jewish community. Reports of further serious incidents continue to escalate and have gathered pace as the Israel/Palestine conflict worsens.

Marc Knobel



Funny business

Israeli army reservists who are refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories received more than £2,000 towards publicity and legal costs from a comedy benefit held at the Red Rose Club in North London. At a time when right wing Zionist organisations are placing huge adverts in the Jewish press to maintain support for Sharon, this show was sold out a day before the performance and many punters were turned away on the night, demonstrating the level of support the refuseniks have here among peace activists within and beyond the Jewish community. The show featured the outstanding Omid Djalili, backed up by Arnold Brown and Dave Cohen and finished with a brilliant extended set from Jeremy Hardy. The benefit was compered by Jewish Socialist supporter Ivor Dembina (above).

ADL settles apartheid spy case

America's leading Jewish 'defence' organisation, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), has settled a long legal battle over spying in collusion with the South African apartheid regime against left-wing activists, Arabs and Jewish dissidents. The league had to pay \$178,000 to the last three plaintiffs in a case brought by 19 activists in 1993.

Founded 90 years ago to oppose antisemitism, the ADL, an offshoot of the mainstream B'nai Brith, has increasingly turned towards defending Israeli policies. Well-resourced and professionally staffed, the league had the ears of politicians and the press. Then, in December 1992, police raided its San Francisco and Los Angeles headquarters. A league investigator and a former San Francisco police officer had been seen talking to South African agents.

The police seized 12,000 files containing information on a wide range of organisations and individuals. The ADL claimed to be only monitoring 'hate groups', and denied passing information to Israel or South

Africa. But the files ranged over Arab-American community organisations, trade unions, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, Anti-Apartheid, Women in Black and the International Jewish Peace Union. Only a relative handful of files dealt with the far right.

League spook Roy Bullock, who used his cover as an art dealer to attend meetings in US cities, admitted to moonlighting for the South Africans. Former police inspector Tom Gerard later pleaded no contest to charges of illegally accessing police files for information supplied to Bullock.

The ADL's claims to be merely acting like a journalist, gathering information for publication while protecting sources, looked thin. It was revealed that Bullock noted car numbers at Arab community events and Gerard supplied addresses for them. Jeffrey Blankfort, of the American Labor Middle East Committee, wondered why people interested in his politics needed his social security number.

Bullock had passed himself off as sympathetic to the Arab cause, helping steward meetings of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), and tried to join the Labour Committee when it was launched in 1987. Blankfort and co-worker Steve Zeltzer discovered he had also attended gatherings of the Institute for Historical Review, a Holocaust denial outfit. Blankfort says: 'The reason Bullock gave us for attending the IHR conferences was to distribute ADC literature and recruit some new members for the Arab-American organization. We found it both strange and suspicious that it had not occurred to him that the last type of individual that the ADC would want as a member would be someone with obviously anti-Jewish and perhaps even pro-Nazi sentiments. A link between neo-Nazis and Arab-Americans is, however, a connection that the ADL would like to make. Convinced that Bullock was indeed an ADL agent, we let the Arab-American community know of our conclusions.'

Worrying information emerged about ex-inspector Gerard's past links with the CIA and ties to Latin American death squads. Gerard had also taken part in a 'law enforcement' trip to Israel arranged by the ADL. Among the spy files was a report on African National Congress deputy leader Chris Hani's visit to California a week before he was assassinated on his return home. ADL director Abraham Foxman told the Northern California Jewish Bulletin that spying on the ANC and the left was justified as they were violent, antisemitic, pro-PLO and anti-Israel.

The case has discredited the ADL by showing how right-wing Zionism led it from anti-racism into collaborating with racists, leaving the USA's Jewish community without a respected voice to combat antisemitism. The National Lawyers' Guild was listed in the ADL's files. Its attorney, Marc Van der Hout, a Jew, said the contents of the files showed the league had lost touch with reality on groups that are engaged in antisemitic activity.

Charlie Pottins

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S PEACE SERVICE

A pioneering initiative to send international support for people suffering violent abuses of human rights is setting up a project in a village in the West Bank. The International Women's Peace Service (IWPS) is planning to establish a women's peace house in the Palestinian village of Haris, where trained volunteers from the international community will stay for three months a year along with others who are there for shorter periods. Their brief will be to witness, monitor, document and publicise human rights abuses; to peacefully intervene to try and stop such abuses from occurring, and to support the growth of non-violent resistance to the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The International Women's Peace Service aims to have the peace house functioning by August this year.

This ambitious and visionary project will establish a base in the heart of the conflict from which the kind of campaigning and support developed by the International Solidarity Movement over the last few months (see page 23) will be able to continue and grow.

Angie Zelter, respected throughout the peace movement for her unwavering and courageous stand against nuclear weapons, is the inspiration behind the IWPS. She says: 'We have raised £23,000 so far but we need to raise twice that amount to make the



project viable. We will also be looking for self-funded volunteers once we are established – probably by the end of August. Also, we need local support groups who would be willing to act on our reports, disseminate them and lobby with the information.'

For further information about volunteering or the project in general, contact Josephine Jaffray on 01539 732583, email josephine@jaffray.fsife.co.uk or Angie Zelter on 01263 512049, email reforest@gn.apc.org or Nadya Waziri (in the USA) on 001 720 564 1462, email solush@usa.net

To make a donation, send cheques made out to IWPS-Palestine to Angie Zelter, Valley Farmhouse, East Runton, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 9PN.

A police service for Northern Ireland?

7.30pm, 8th May, House of
Commons Committee Room 10
Speakers include Kevin
McNamara MP and Jeremy Hardy

Five years after the murder of Robert Hamill (see JS 43), three years after the murder of Rosemary Nelson and 13 years after the murder of Pat Finucane, an 'international judge' is being appointed by the British government to examine these and other cases. Details of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice are emerging in Robert Hamill's case. The police ombudsman in Northern Ireland has found complete failure within the RUC to prevent the Omagh bombing; she is furiously attacked by the Chief Constable and senior Unionists. In March, the security establishment burgles itself at Castlereagh. And still nothing has been done in Northern Ireland to investigate the RUC's role in the bombing of Dublin and Monaghan. What does it take for families to have the truth aired?

The Robert Hamill Justice Campaign, c/o CA, 1 Camden Park Road, London NW1 9AU. Email: Roberthamill@aol.com. www.hamillcampaign.freemove.co.uk

The outlook is fine

In our last issue we inadvertently gave the wrong address for the excellent left-wing journal, Canadian Jewish Outlook. Outlook is a monthly forum for news and discussion and always has a particularly strong literature section. Further details from: #3 - 6184 Ash Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V5Z 3G9.

WISE WORDS

Freedom is never attained; it must always be striven for. Consequently its claims have no limit, and can neither be enclosed in a programme nor prescribed as a definite rule for the future. Each generation must face its own problems, which cannot be forestalled or provided for in advance. The worst tyranny is that of ideas which have been handed down to us, allowing no development in ourselves and trying to steamroller everything to one flat universal level.

Rudolf Rocker 1873-1958, editor of the *Arbeter Fraynt* Yiddish anarchist newspaper.



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.

ISRAELIS RESIST

Here is an overview of political groups trying to challenge the Israeli government's brutal treatment of the Palestinians.

The Coalition of Women for Peace consists of nine groups: several small groups – such as Noga, the Israeli feminist magazine, and Tandy, the remnants of the Communist Party's women's group – plus larger organisations such as those described below.

Bat Shalom

PO Box 8083

Jerusalem 91080, Israel

Email: batshalo@netvision.net.il

Website: www.batshalom.org

Bat Shalom is rebuilding ties with Palestinian women after almost total separation during this second intifada.

Women in Black

PO Box 8083

Jerusalem 91080, Israel

Email: gsivirsky@netvision.net.il

Website: www.geocities.com/EndTheOccupation/

Women in Black holds vigils in regular locations in Israel and serves as the centre of an international network of vigils against the occupation.

Machsom (checkpoint) Watch

Contact through the Coalition of Women for Peace

A group of women activists in Jerusalem who, twice a day, during rush hours, stand watch against abuse as Palestinians pass in and out of Israel for work.

New Profile

Website: www.newprofile.org

New Profile is feminist but not exclusively for women. They respond to emergencies and support draft resistance, but their long-term goal is for the demilitarisation of Israel.

Ta'ayush (Arabic for 'partnership')

Website: <http://taayush.tripod.com/taayush.html>

Ta'ayush is a creative group of Jewish and Arab Israelis who fundraise to buy supplies for the besieged communities. They form convoys to deliver these goods and have an ongoing campaign to support the cave-dwellers in the mountains south of Hebron who the army is trying to move out.

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

c/o Jeff Halper

Rehov Tivria 37

Jerusalem, Israel

Tel: 00 972 2 6248252

Email: halper@iol.co.il

Website www.net-a.org/hdemol

ICAHD tries to mobilise in time to prevent demolitions and they also seek to rebuild homes in the territories and East Jerusalem. See feature page 22.

Physicians for Human Rights

PO Box 592

Tel Aviv 61004, Israel

Email: phr@netvision.net.il

Jewish and Arab Israeli doctors travel to the West Bank and hold free medical clinics.

Gush Shalom

PO Box 3322

Tel Aviv 61033, Israel



Demonstration in Jerusalem. The banner says: 'The occupation is killing us all.'

Tel: 00 972 3 5221732

Email: info@gush-shalom.org

Website: www.gush-shalom.org

Gush Shalom is a direct action group that organises demonstrations, publicity and international support.

Yesh Gvul (There is a Limit)

Email: ishai@shatil.nif.org.il

Yesh Gvul is a political movement of army reservists whose members increasingly face imprisonment for refusing to serve in the occupied territories.

Peace Now

Website: www.peace-now.org

Peace Now is associated with the Labour Party, and is weaker than during the first intifada, but still gets people out to demonstrate..

Ariga,

Website: www.ariga.com/

Ariga is a very useful and informative Israeli website publishing peace/alternative stories

B'tselem

43 Emek Refaim Street

Jerusalem, Israel

Email: btselem@actcom.co.il

Website: www.btselem.org

B'tselem is the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.

Israel Independent Media Center

Email: indymedia@inymedia.org.il

Website: www.indymedia.org.il

IMC provides up-to-date news and critiques from grassroots journalists.

The Other Israel

POB 2542

Holon 58125, Israel

Email: otherisr@actcom.co.il

Website: http://members.tripod.com/~other_Israel/

Provides regular briefings, available on request.

Jewish Peace Fellowship - Supporting Israeli

Conscientious Objectors

Box 271 Nyack

NY 10960, USA

Email: jpf@forusa.org

Website: www.jewishpeacefellowship.org

The Committee Against Torture

Email: PCAT@netvision.net.il

Website: www.stoptorture.org.il

Spike Katz

HIDDEN AGENDAS

When the neo-Nazi Nationale Partei Deutschlands marched through Berlin in December with police protection and city government connivance, the radical left and Berlin's mainstream Jewish community were drawn into an uneasy alliance.

LEVIN JOHANNSON

The Nationale Partei Deutschlands (NPD) was ostensibly objecting to an exhibition on war crimes conducted by the Wehrmacht, the German regular army in the Second World War. After a storm of protests, the city authorities announced late on the eve of the march that they would reroute the demonstration away from two synagogues as congregations left Sabbath morning services. Though there had been unattributed statements that a rerouting was being considered, the authorities refused to make a definitive public statement. It left Berlin Jews feeling vulnerable for three weeks and angry at the lack of public action by the authorities to prevent this potential antisemitic threat.

The counter-demonstrators fill the street crossing beyond the New Synagogue, one of eight functioning synagogues in Berlin, on Oranienburgerstrasse. This street met the route of the neo-Nazi march, some three blocks further on, and two blocks short of the crossing which had been agreed with the police only that morning. The protesters are irritated by this unexpected police volte face. They may not reach the neo-Nazi demonstration to express their outrage there, but they are still 'protecting' the synagogue and the exhibition itself. They don't take lightly to giving more ground.

The synagogue members, who form one of the few egalitarian congregations in Germany, are holding the *minkha* afternoon prayer service on the pavement in front of the building. They didn't know the anti-fascist rally would be there. The normal low profile approach has broken down over the one issue on which Jews take a consistent public stance – antisemitism – as Jews engage in a German political demonstration and pray publicly. Curious protesters stand around nearby, but can't understand why the service is not being held in the middle of the road to block it more effectively. It is hard to concentrate or hear the cantor with a helicopter clattering overhead and a loudspeaker exchange with the police about why they can't keep their promise and let the demonstration continue. As the service ends, firecrackers are exploding along the police lines beyond the crossing.

With nervous sideways glances towards the crossroads, I return the *siddur* to the synagogue, wondering whether it was such a good idea to hold a public service. But I was encouraged by the cantor's words, taken from the week's *parasha*, *Vayishlach*, of Jacob becoming Israel through struggle. Germany's Jews were going through a similar process, to (re)gain enough self-confidence to act in public. I wondered if all those participating really had been ready to 'go public', and also, as one of my orthodox friends later put it, 'Is it appropriate to hold a service, for any reason other than for prayer?'

Upstairs, there is a grandstand view and, with the window open, one can hear and see everything. Suddenly, without warning, the police water cannon standing beyond the crossroads sends hard jets of water to soak those occupying the crossing. Fist-sized stones, dug up from the pavements, start to fly in larger numbers. If not agents provocateurs, some anarchist 'Autonome' are probably responsible. There's smoke drifting out of the cross roads. I run downstairs and encounter the wide-eyed congregation pushing to get back into the synagogue. I glance at the closed-circuit monitor of the street outside. It's empty. Misty. Tear gas.

The police force the protesters back past the synagogue. Yet the defence of the building was the last of the possible 'successes' which the counter-demonstrators could possibly claim. Tensions have been heightened over the last week by the city government's refusal to discuss the route of the neo-Nazi march. The police tactic to disperse what was still a largely peaceful demonstration appears to have little reason and, given the tensions, is bound to provoke. So the regular drama between the Berlin police and left-wing protesters unfolds its familiar routine directly in front of the synagogue. The demonstrators lift barriers which protect the synagogue and try to build a barricade. Eight police wrestle a protester to the ground and slam him into the back of a van. The vice-chair of the Jewish community and the television crew interviewing him are unceremoniously brushed aside by an armoured car rushing the hastily improvised barricade. A police squad and demonstrators tussle over it. The armoured car reverses. A courageous old woman walks directly in front, following it closely for 50 yards to prevent it rushing the demonstration again. A water cannon blithely continues its way, washing people aside.

The board of the Jewish community had said it would stage a sit-down blockade, despite *shabbat*, if the neo-Nazi protest wasn't diverted from its original route. Not quite trusting that it would be diverted, they are on hand. No one had reckoned with the substitution of one demonstration by another, this time of the far left. Who had taken the decision to disperse this counter demonstration? Is this over-reaction by an individual police officer, who hadn't noticed the political sensitivity of the location? This would play into the NPD's hands. It didn't need conspiracy theorists to speculate on potential co-ordination between neo-Nazis and some police. Or has the city government allowed this police-instigated riot to happen because they wanted to discredit Jews who were not prepared to remain silent? If the city government, like the neo-Nazis, wants to put the Jewish community 'in its place', then



this would be an important political wind-change. The city government has apparently bent over backwards to enable the NPD to march unmolested.

This police action has shown the limits of the regard the political élite has for the Jewish community – despite the declaration of support from the national government on Friday afternoon, which nonetheless was only verbal and had not led to the definitive statement sought by the community. The police action only ended nearly two hours later when the Communist politician Gregor Gysi intervened.

The riot has diverted from the real issue of how to oppose a nascent fascist party that doesn't say openly what it really thinks; a party which carefully denies openings for legal action to opponents and is only too ready to invoke legal challenges to enforce its rights and gain supporters and momentum. It finds excuses for provocative demonstrations, choosing the route for its symbolic value, coding its real message in the route. It is hard to believe the neo-Nazis decided to pass synagogues without thinking about what it means in Germany. But the city government doesn't appear to be willing to think in symbols and isn't prepared to ban marches because of symbolic, antisemitic violence in the form of a coded, veiled threat.

In an interview distributed by Reuters and broadcast by the BBC, the NPD spokesman says: 'There is no taboo zone for us in Berlin.' As a political party, this may be true. Yet if one knows about the rather too effective 'foreigner-free zones' in the former East Germany, such a statement is extremely worrying. Their spokesman continues: 'We didn't intend to provoke the Jewish community. The focus of our march is a protest against the anti-Wehrmacht exhibition.' He could hardly say they intended to provoke the Jewish community, without breaking laws about inciting racial hatred.

With help from a friendly journalist, I get through six police barriers to reach the route of the demonstration. It is lined by police, one every few yards. Young men swagger by, clearly enjoying the importance of being honoured by a full police escort, marching down a street which belongs to them. This is German-style national liberation, backed by the city government in the name of the right to assembly and free speech, and with their staff giving protection. Eight square kilometres have been sealed off. All public transport is interrupted for hours. Stations are closed. Only journalists and those who can prove local residence are allowed to enter the area. Anyone without proof of identity is barred. Many people, heeding politicians' calls to attend the exhibition, can't get there. Protesters are kept in separate, small and manageable groups, divided by streets controlled by the police. The neo-Nazis,

having closed down part of central Berlin for the day, can feel their importance. The sole bystanders they face are skulking behind the police, not daring any vocal opposition, with no right to be there as they cannot provide credentials accepted by the police. The NPD's confidence will be boosted by seeing just people who appear afraid of them, even if, in reality, the bystanders are more worried by the police.

There were enough of the 'old right' there – an archaic youth movement on parade, local heraldry, gothic lettering, military apparel, glowering marshals, discipline and nostalgia. Banners proclaiming the honour of German soldiers who sacrificed themselves so 'Germany would live'. The banner heading the procession is about Germany being Christian. Like many other banners and shouted slogans, it excludes others, but doesn't break any law.

Yet I wonder where I am. A banner against the 'Globalisation War' and a quotation from Rosa Luxemburg, a Jewish socialist: 'Freedom is always the freedom of the one who thinks differently.' There is also an anti-American slogan, referring to the 'East Coast' – code for Jews – adding Wiesenthal in brackets for good measure. An apparently anti-militaristic banner lists cities where many civilians died under American bombs: Hamburg (1943); Dresden (1945); Afghanistan (2001); by way of Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. A banner concerns other American 'war crimes'. One banner demands 'civil rights for Germans'. Palestinian scarves, once the prerogative of the anti-Zionist left, are often worn by stewards and organisers. Expressing antisemitism without stating it openly, or evidence of more sinister connections, the real present-day danger of terrorism? Or another way to woo young radicals, twisting the symbols of the left to gain, by any means, new members needed to win political power?

What we are witnessing here is more interesting and problematic than the *passé* images normally associated with neo-Nazi movements – nationalism clothing itself in socialism again, with a smattering of multiculturalism thrown in. This has little in common with past imperial hopes, but similarities with the early years of the Nazi party. If anything, the references are to Third World liberation movements. Nonetheless, they resist globalised culture.

After the march has gone, people slip out of doorways where they have taken refuge from the police. The streets leading to the route are still blocked. News of the march will be almost entirely filtered through the media, since there are few observers. Most reports say nothing about the march itself and there is scant analysis of its slogans.

Few commented on the political failure to adapt the response to this neo-Nazi march. Or that this society is no longer homogenous, where the right to

assembly and expression has to be tempered by other fundamental rights that protect minorities, not just Jews who, after all, are fewer than 0.005% of the population. And how the political leadership, implementing policy on day-to-day policing, has not lived up to the city's own advertising slogan, 'Open to the world'. Only one paper reported how, when the march ended, the neo-Nazis sang the entire Third Reich national anthem, forbidden today by law, and defied the police attempt to disperse them for a while. So they left the scene apparently decent, clean and law-abiding.

Somewhere Strauss waltzes play very loudly, the sound filling the streets. The music emanates from the bombed-out space behind Tacheles, the remains of a pre-war department store, squatted by artists to prevent redevelopment. I pass a lone skater, pushing a discarded beer can with an ice-hockey stick, a swirling figure in front of police in parked vehicles. A woman waltzes slowly. I approach. She is the one who faced the armoured car earlier. We talk. Another friend appears. We dance briefly, regenerated by the music. The heavy atmosphere of the neo-Nazi demonstration lifts. I'm grateful to the artist who thought of this.

Near us, a woman climbs on to a wooden children's climbing frame. From her platform she makes a Hitler salute to a nearly empty space, shouts 'Heil! Heil! Heil!' and rambles on about being crazy. The few people around ignore her. She appears unhappy, alone. Silent, she looks crumpled. A reminder that they are only powerful in numbers.

Later, papers report that one man, unlucky enough to go home by a train on which neo-Nazis were travelling from their demonstration, was beaten up so badly he had to be hospitalised. They

said they recognised him from a video they made. Quite a number of the marchers filmed onlookers.

The Berliner Zeitung says the NPD has taken the city government to court for breaking confidentiality. It apparently agreed on the route followed by the NPD three weeks ago – not just on the Friday before the march – and had also promised the party they would keep this secret. The authorities had argued that they couldn't say anything about the route in order to avoid clashes between left and right. Meanwhile, the press gave out the story that the route would pass the synagogues. This only heightens the impression that a trap had been laid for the Jewish community with full connivance of the city government's interior ministry. Has the interior ministry lied to the public? And why has the NPD now taken the city to court, exposing an agreement which was otherwise unknown? Two days later, the interior minister reluctantly acknowledges that he may have made a mistake not to have publicly ruled out in advance a route past the synagogues. The Jewish community has stuck to its guns, that, although it had been informed in advance about the route change, the minister responsible should have made this public as symbolic protection for Jews against the symbolic assault on them. In a speech on the march, the NPD leader relishes being able to accuse the Jewish community of colluding with violent leftists. The police union accuses the Jewish community of obstructing police in their duty. The NPD lays charges against two Jewish community employees for slander and – inciting criminal activity – the threat of a sit-down blockade. The constitutional court continues to deliberate about the NPD.

The hearings continue.

STORIES OF THE STREETS

BEN GIDLEY explores the contending histories and contending memories of the 20th century at conference entitled Jewish Questions, Communist Answers

The transit bus from the airport into Leipzig arrived at the exact time given on the timetable. The bus glided through the flat monotony of the Saxon countryside, entering a zone of grey, urban sprawl in which it was impossible to distinguish which low-rise concrete box contained homes, and which contained factories, warehouses, offices.

From the station, a wide ring-road separated the beauty of the baroque town centre from this post-industrial fringe – 'good for tanks', as my Yiddish teacher, Gennady Estrakh, pointed out, drawing on the bitter experience of his life in the Soviet Union. Since reunification, Leipzig has been a jewel in East Germany's crown, receiving heavy regeneration investment. 'Leipzig is coming', proclaims the tourist office, describing the city as a cosmopolitan, multicultural town (not something apparent from the faces of the people I passed on the street).

I had come here to participate in the conference 'Jewish Questions, Communist Answers', held at the Simon Dubnov Institute for Jewish History and Culture, examining the historical relationship between Jews and Communist parties. My paper was on Russian Jewish Marxists in London at the dawn of the 20th century but the conference also had a personal resonance for me, because my grandparents – Jewish New Yorkers – had been active Communists from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Post-September fear of flying kept away many of the American delegates, and this shifted the dominant language from English to German, leaving me feeling a little marginal – something non-English speakers regularly experience in the often America-centric academic world. As with many European academics, most of the conference participants could slide easily between languages.

ONE POLISH DELEGATE HAD KEPT HIS ACADEMIC POST THROUGH THE ANTI-JEWISH PURGES OF 1968, WHILE ANOTHER HAD FLED TO PARIS. THE FORMER LOST HIS JOB WHEN COMMUNISM FELL; THE LATTER RETURNED IN TRIUMPH AS A LEADER OF SOLIDARNOSC.

But the multilingualism of these conference delegates was part of something different.

One of the conference's themes was 'Empire and Borderland' and Jews have always existed in the cracks between nation states, at the margins and borderlands of empires, at the crossroads of languages. The storm which was the 20th century – the age of extremes as Hobsbawm puts it – intensified their scattering. The lives of those attending the conference had been touched by this history, by the 20th century, in a way that most English people's lives simply have not. There were people who were born stateless, displaced, their childhoods spent in refugee camps across Europe. One man was a refusenik, a Jewish Soviet citizen refused the right to emigrate. There was a Czech-born man, who had recently returned to his hometown after living in exile in Germany since the Prague uprising of 1968. There was Victor Karady, the distinguished Hungarian sociologist, who had recently returned to his country after living in exile in France since the Hungarian uprising of 1956. A Croatian historian told me of his participation in a Serbo-Croat historians' group, which alternates its meetings between Zagreb and Belgrade; the group met one year in Zagreb while Serb forces bombarded it, another year in Belgrade while NATO bombs fell around them. Jack Jacobs, an American scholar, whose son's school was at the very edge of September 11th's 'ground zero', told me of his post-war Bronx school days: every afternoon after normal school he'd go to the Bund school where classes were taught in Yiddish. At weekends, he would translate for his grandmother, a survivor of the Nazi occupation of Poland, as she did the weekly shopping in the neighbourhood's multicultural stores. Ordinary people made extraordinary by the dark times through which they lived.

One particularly impressive figure was Arnold Paucker, an octogenarian retired academic, former director of London's Leo Baeck Institute. Born in Berlin, he fled to Palestine as a teenager after Hitler came to power, and served in the British Army there before making his home in north London. Along the way, he'd been friends with the biographer Isaac Deutscher, the philosopher Isaiah Berlin and the historian Chimen Abramsky, and studied at Jerusalem's Hebrew University under Martin Buber. In the quiet of an academic seminar room, with his tweed suit, white hair, heavy accent and sparkling eyes, he transported us to the campfires of totalitarian Europe's resistance fighters. He spoke movingly of his friendship with International Brigade volunteers who fought Franco in Spain, with Yugoslav partisans who fought Nazi occupation, with Communist rank and file soldiers in Hitler's army who found both small and larger ways to resist fascism.

Other conference papers spoke of the lies Jewish Communists told themselves about their Jewishness in order to hasten the coming of that proletarian dawn in which all ethnic identities would melt away like dew. But other papers spoke about the bravery

of rank and file Communists who endured the terrors of Hitler and Stalin, or of dissidents who painfully inhabited the gap between their Marxist commitment and the brutal reality of Stalinism.

At times, contending histories and contending memories clashed in the conference debates. One Polish delegate had kept his academic post through the anti-Jewish purges of 1968, while another had fled to Paris. The former lost his job when Communism fell; the latter returned in triumph as a leader of Solidarnosc. Behind their scholastic arguments over events in post-war Poland could be heard the reverberations of conflicting personal histories, conflicting political biographies.



The urban fabric of Leipzig likewise bears witness to these contending narratives. Place names honouring the pantheon of socialist heroes – among those still left are Clara Zetkin Park and Rosa Luxemburg Strasse – become sites of struggle over memory. The former Communist Party, now the Party of Democratic Socialism, unsuccessfully resisted Georgi Dimitroff Platz, named for a Bulgarian anti-fascist and Communist, being renamed in honour of Eduard von Simson, a Jewish jurist and politician and native of Leipzig.

Like Alan Bennett's Leeds or Walter Benjamin's Paris, Leipzig's central streets are connected by a network of arcades (passagen), covered shopping alleys built mostly in the 19th century. Some are now dark and dusty, passages into a period of history which neglected Leipzig's heritage as a city of commerce and trade. Others are bright and shiny tourist meccas, spruced up by the post-reunification heritage industry, passages into the future that official Leipzig imagines for itself. The arcades provide alternative pathways for traversing Leipzig's cityscape, connecting streets which would otherwise run parallel, never meeting. They also connect different narratives of the local urban past. In rescuing the memory of rank and file Jewish Communists (and Jewish victims of Communism) erased from official accounts, the stories told at the conference were also passages, arcades, connecting parallel histories, alternative pasts and futures.

MONKEY BUSINESS

Private financing of schools gives carte blanche to funders with a religious agenda to substitute myth and superstition for intellectual honesty, says **RALPH LEVINSON**

The name of Emmanuel College, Gateshead must have sent a flutter of recognition through many Jews when the news broke that this institution was openly teaching creationism. Emmanuel College, named after the late Chief Rabbi, is an orthodox Jewish school (in Bushey) and Gateshead yeshiva is where ultra-orthodox Jewish youth go for their own brand of indoctrination. But the Gateshead school is, in fact, a City Academy which, according to its website, infuses 'biblical revelation' of the fundamentalist Christian kind through all aspects of its teaching. That Emmanuel College is an avowedly Christian school is probably incidental as government policy on faith schools in general and the inability of Ofsted to smell rats when they are staring them in the face, raised a whole lot of problems. But there is more at stake than the government easing the way for more faith schools to enter the state sector. What this furore over the teaching of creationism shows is that the free market approach to funding education will create a golden opportunity for fundamentalists of all kinds to have an impact on the curriculum.

The senior staff at Emmanuel College, together with its governing body and main funder, Sir Peter Vardy of Reg Vardy cars, say that Darwinian evolution is one faith (sic) position and they are simply redressing the balance by exposing the students to another point of view. Then the students are free to go away to make up their own minds. All very open-minded and reasonable but it is devious language. This notion of balance is one that has afflicted education in England in recent years, although it has respectable roots in the educational philosophy of liberal thinkers such as J S Mill, Jeremy Bentham and Matthew Arnold. During the Thatcher years the term was used as a rhetorical trick to root out dangerous left-wing teachers and is now enshrined in Sections 406 and 407 of the 1996 Education Act.

In effect, it was the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), and the major reforms of the late 1980s and early '90s, which presaged the National Curriculum, that were intended to stifle discussion of controversial issues in schools. The legislation was aimed at the left, as witnessed by Norman Tebbit's tirades against Marxists in the education system. Teachers might have to teach controversial issues but they must at all times be prepared to put the opposing point of view. This has resulted in a nonsense where teachers have become tentative about taking a position on anything (paranoia about Section 28, which doesn't even apply to schools, pervades the teaching profession) and has let the far right loose to purvey its own brand of

rubbish provided there is some hand-waving towards a notional opposite viewpoint. This is ludicrous. Should we afford the same value to racist views as to anti-racism? If we teach that violent robbery is morally dubious must we also point out that it can be construed as a wholesome, socially productive kind of activity? Rather than balance, we should emphasise intellectual honesty, evidence and the political nature of the curriculum.

And that is where creationism comes in. There are no circumstances under which creationism can be described as any kind of theory even though American Christian fundamentalists use the sinister term, 'intelligent design'. Creationism is a mindless distortion of a myth written by inspired poet-priests. The myth, as narrated in the Old Testament is, I would happily advocate, a complex, deep and troubling work of literary genius. But it is no more a scientific explanation of our natural world than Hamlet, Godzilla or Acid House Freaks. There is no evidence or supporting theory to justify it. When Darwin's theory of Natural Selection was combined with Mendelian genetics in the last century, an extraordinarily powerful scientific theory was generated, able to underpin and predict phenomena in such diverse disciplines as palaeontology and molecular biology. That there are raging disputes between scientists, all within the Darwinian paradigm, trying to explain speciation, for example, attests to the way evolutionary theory probes, but never claims to own, the truth. Evolutionary theory is science and is based on the facts of nature. Creationism is no science (it defies credulity to even call it a faith) and has no facts to support it – it claims to be the truth.

For teachers in the school to claim they are teaching creationism and evolution as alternative faith positions is a con trick and it is no accident that the school's current head, previous head and funder all support the Newcastle-based Christian Institute whose madcap position has worried many Christian clerics. Creationism is a puerile lie and comes with the fundamentalist baggage of xenophobia, homophobia, the dismantling of the welfare state including state-funded education and is an attack on pluralism. As the school's benefactor, Peter Vardy says, we are living in 'Christian England' so what's wrong with teaching Christian beliefs? The Prime Minister was unconcerned. In the House he said reports that the school was teaching creationism were 'somewhat exaggerated' and that the school was producing 'very good' exam results. So never mind truth, let's put our faith in exam results. And in a

Daily Mail article of breathtaking cynicism, the Tory journalist Melanie Phillips commended the school and its teaching of creationism (taking care not to admit *she* took creationism seriously) and lodged a tirade against scientists who support 'the doctrine that says the only questions worth asking are the ones that science can answer' (Daily Mail, 15th March 2002). Not even the most scientific of scientists would claim this but never mind reason and truth. Phillips quotes the headteacher as saying that 'to teach children that they are nothing more than developed mutations who evolved from something akin to a monkey and that death is the end of everything is hardly going to engender within them a sense of purpose, self-worth and self-respect'. And then adds: 'To which many parents would say, amen'. This is totalitarian propaganda for adults who should be wearing nappies. What is so remarkable, of course, is the self-consciousness that has come about with evolution but people who can't cope with complexity don't want to know that. The nonsense continues: 'But our illiberalist secularist missionaries cannot tolerate such a choice. They think no children should be taught any alternative to scientism.' For someone who has been attacking liberals with such vehemence, this is a strange use of language and again she purposely conflates scientism with science. The same edition of the paper has a headline: 'So do they look indoctrinated?' of an image of wholesome-looking white sixth formers with their wholesome-looking headteacher. Not a turban, skullcap or black face amongst them.

We should not be surprised at Blair defending the school. After all, he has chosen faith-based schools as the preferred system of education for his own children and has welcomed more faith schools in the education Green Paper, Building on Success. The government has enhanced state funding for faith schools by reducing the capital costs of their school building by 5%. This probably sticks in the craw of the present education minister, Estelle Morris, not known as a supporter of these schools but who has had to make mollifying noises asking faith schools to show how they would 'promote inclusiveness'. Given the Ofsted report on Emmanuel College, that clause could no doubt be conveniently overlooked. The Green Paper was drafted under Blunkett. Before he was in government Blunkett was a radical opponent of independent education. Blair's evangelical zeal has obviously been inspiring to his ministers.

Expanding faith schools has important consequences. Religious schools are the only option in some areas, even for children who do not wish to go to one, and there is no adequate safeguard against the teaching of fundamentalist religious bilge. Indeed shortly after Emmanuel College was exposed, the headteacher of another government-funded faith school – the John Loughborough school – also said he taught



Art, not science: William Blake's God Judging Adam

creationism. There is no knowing how many faith schools out there can now legitimately downgrade all that is secular and democratic and, instead, advocate medieval nonsense. With examinations eschewing any form of critical thinking, schools can concentrate on exam technique, whatever their philosophy, provided they pay lip-service to the National Curriculum.

Faith schools have had a good press in the last 10 years or so and have become more and more popular with parents. As funding has leached out of comprehensive schools, the middle classes have been doing all they can to get their children into faith schools that have a supposedly good reputation. Faith schools have a lower proportion on average of pupils on free school meals. Bolstered by excess income for parents who can send their children for private tuition, the exam results of faith schools have also been better although a closer look at the demography suggests that faith schools in wholly deprived areas do no better than the schools around them. Some produce better results than average, some worse. The evidence that faith schools are any better than any other schools is far from convincing.

At least with faith schools one might expect a touch of religious fundamentalism to creep in. What is disturbing about Emmanuel College is that it is designated a City Academy. The government provides the capital to support this type of school provided it can be matched by private money. Thus an entrepreneur like Peter Vardy can use his considerable wealth to peddle his reactionary views through as many schools as he can provide

CREATIONISM IS A PUERILE LIE AND COMES WITH THE FUNDAMENTALIST BAGGAGE OF XENOPHOBIA, HOMOPHOBIA, THE DISMANTLING OF THE WELFARE STATE INCLUDING STATE-FUNDED EDUCATION, AND IS AN ATTACK ON PLURALISM.

for, all equally supported by public money. It is no surprise that he plans to open up to 15 more City Academies in the north east of England. These schools will have more funding from his munificence than surrounding state comprehensives. Their buildings will be modern and attractive, the most sophisticated resources will be brought in, there will be an emphasis on teaching science and technology, smart school uniforms will be the order of the day, the school will have a 'Christian ethos' and all that insinuates. And parents do not have to pay fees. No surprise that parents in areas such as inner city Middlesbrough will queue up at the gates.

What then should be done? The response by some groups is to call for legislation against teaching creationism in the curriculum. This is a retrograde step because the National Curriculum has been over-prescribed, particularly in science, with damaging effects on teachers' autonomy, professionalism and job satisfaction. Controversy has virtually disappeared from science teaching. There needs to be less prescription, as has been happening in the last few years, and we should do nothing to halt this. What is needed is appropriate professional development in helping teachers to deal sensitively with issues like creationism that students may declare as a belief. Far better for it to be discussed in the open than suppressed because of time, leaving it to schools like Emmanuel College to promote.

Linked to this, there needs to be a much more forceful debate as to what science education and education in general should be about. The multiculturalism/anti-racism debate of the mid-1980s has petered out, possibly as a result of the de-professionalisation of teachers brought about by the ERA and the introduction of the National Curriculum and Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Contemporary government debate is about *how* teachers should teach; *what* they should teach has moved out of the public domain. The talk is about technocratic targets and competences.

Meanwhile private companies take over our schools and our Local Education Authorities. Railtrack is a good model for what will happen to education in the next few years. If one good thing has emerged from the creationist debate, it is to focus attention on the curriculum as a politically contested area which the right have dominated for so many years.

Where there does need to be great pressure on the Government is on the funding policies for schools which militate against pluralism and democracy and, under the blessings of the state, will now further polarise the education sectors in what is already the most inequitable education system in western Europe.

A higher proportion of Jewish parents are sending their children to independent and Jewish schools than ever before. This is effectively disenfranchising secular Jews and those Jews who cannot afford to provide a socially exclusive education for their children from their own community. We also know that these schools are not really accountable. Who knows how long before another Emmanuel school is purveying creationism to the children of Bushey?

Historian **TONY KUSHNER** looks behind New Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett's call for minorities in Britain to 'be more British' and discovers a long tradition of similar sentiments

For the last 16 years I've been teaching a course, *The Making of Englishness: 'Race', Ethnicity and Immigration from the 1840s to the Present* at the University of Southampton. I'm now teaching the first generation of students who not only can't remember but who were actually born after the inner city disturbances of 1981. But the speed of change in approaches to so-called 'race relations', as well as to immigration and asylum policies, has been spectacular in recent years. As a contemporary historian, it's been hard to keep up. Nevertheless, even taking into account the massive flux of the last two decades, the recent interventions of Labour Home Secretary, David Blunkett, have been remarkable.

I suspect not many readers of Jewish Socialist are regular readers of the Daily Mail, so I may need to fill in a few gaps. The Mail was notorious for briefly supporting Mosley in 1934. Less well known, however, are its attacks on aliens/refugees/immigrants from its beginnings as the first mass circulation paper in Britain in the late 19th century. Indeed, the Mail's anti-alienism was one of the few consistent features of British society during the 20th century.

This is not the place to explore the Mail's vicious antisemitism aimed at 'so-called refugees', in this case east European Jews in 1900, or its flirtation with fascism and hostility to refugees fleeing Nazism in the 1930s. Instead, I'll fast forward to February 1989 and the Rushdie affair. On 24 February that year most of the front page of the Mail was devoted to a banner headline: 'Be British, Hurd tells Immigrants'. Douglas Hurd, then Home Secretary, was reported as issuing 'a direct warning to Britain's 750,000 Muslims', telling them to 'respect our laws and customs'.

Forward again to February 2002, when a spookily similar headline dominated the front page of the Daily Mail: 'Migrants must learn to be British'. Plus ça change? On one level, the sense of déjà vu makes the long-term student think that, in 'race' and immigration, nothing ever really changes. On another level, though, something should make us stop and take note.

Firstly, the February 2002 headline relates to the comments of a *Labour* Home Secretary, not a member of Margaret Thatcher's Cabinet. If Thatcher's personal political rottweiler, Norman Tebbit, who coined the infamous cricket test in 1990, can nod in approval of

NEW LABOUR OLD RACISM?

David Blunkett's more formal version of it, then a disturbing shift has taken place. As a citizen of Sheffield in the 1980s, the idea of the leader of the Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire having the Chingford Skinhead as his cheerleader might have been a way of whimsy. Now it seems to be a political reality.

Secondly, things *have* changed in relation to 'race' and immigration since Hurd, Thatcher and Tebbit. For all the crudity of pronouncing chicken tikka masala as the new national dish, in April 2001, Robin Cook, then Foreign Secretary, at least forced apoplectic rage in the Mail and its readership in his 'astonishing declaration' that 'the British are not a race'. The Mail saw Cook's intervention as 'one of the strongest defences of multiculturalism ever made by a Government minister'.

More significantly, the 1999 Macpherson Report on the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, for the first time in such a national enquiry, attacked institutional racism across major British organisations, especially, but not exclusively the police force. The Conservatives had vetoed such an enquiry, but Labour, especially Jack Straw, had allowed it to take place. Surely the tendency to blame the victims of racism and discrimination – the basis of much legislation in the 20th century – was over. Apparently not, as Blunkett has shown.

We can only explain what is going on by looking at both the long-term tendencies and the specific circumstances that generated his remarks. It could be argued that the riots in the northern towns in spring and summer 2001 and then the trauma of 11 September 2001 led to a knee-jerk reaction.

Much more attention has been paid to the elements of the reports on the riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford that blamed the separation of 'whites' and 'Asians' than to either the problems the two groups of people share – social deprivation in its many guises – or to the specifics of racist violence and discrimination faced by non-white groups in these towns. Likewise, the comments of a few extremist Islamists in Britain have made better copy than the more complex responses of most Muslims in Britain.

It would be easy to explain away Blunkett's comments and the new anti-terrorist legislation as being the product of specific circumstances which, in calmer circumstances, can be corrected and smoothed over. Such an analysis, I believe, is flawed and simplistic. Blunkett, in calling for minorities in Britain to be British, is drawing upon a much longer tradition. Moreover, his tendency to blame minorities for the problems they face day-

to-day reveals the internal contradictions in much liberal thinking on 'race'. It has been seen most clearly in terms of immigration control, which from the 1905 Aliens Act through to Labour's new White Paper on immigration, nationality and asylum (February 2002) has argued that less minority presence means improved 'race relations'. But it has also underpinned debate about minorities who have actually settled in Britain.

In the late 1970s, thanks to agitation from Black educationalists, the debate in Britain about the under-achievement of African Caribbeans and Asians at schools was shifted away from their own internal failings and towards the system as a whole. Multiculturalism at school level was not just about minority students but about all students needing to be prepared for a society that was diverse. Under the impact of Thatcherism, however, the Swann Report (1985), whilst headed 'Education for All', watered down the anti-racist and multicultural thrust of the initial enquiry. Yet again, the focus shifted from society as a whole to minorities themselves as the 'problem'.

For a brief moment the Macpherson Report put the whole emphasis on anti-racism. This initiative has not been totally lost in the three years since it was published but with Blunkett's initiatives we see the potential dangers. There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with immigrants and refugees being offered the chance to learn English. As the co-author with Katharine Knox of an exhaustive study of refugee movements into 20th century Britain, I found that almost all groups coming in have welcomed the possibility of having educational opportunities. It is also clear that they have resented such measures being *forced* on them, often at the expense of their own languages and customs, as a form of conditional acceptance. The loss of Yiddishkayt is just one of many casualties, and the smattering of Yiddish words in popular culture is no compensation. Power relations need to be addressed. What minority groups (never without their own internal dynamics and divisions) need is the security to form their own complex identities and not to be told by Home Secretaries, whether Conservative or Labour, how to behave. Jews and others can assert the dangers of being asked to conform to some imaginary concept known only to readers of the Daily Mail and their new hero, David Blunkett.

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I'M STANDING

So, you are a socialist invited to take a place on a government commission under pressure to recommend privatising the health service. The offer receives a polite but principled rejection. Then your council asks you to sit on a committee expected to axe local groups. Again, the answer is a firm no. But when a court issues a summons to be on a jury, of course you agree. Really? Even though you are likely to join a panel whose verdict will help keep Britain the second most punitive nation in western Europe?

Now hardliners question advice to jurors that they should find defendants guilty only if they are certain. And the UK jails more people than ever, including record numbers of women. Over 75% of prisoners are convicted of non-violent offences. The number of inmates has rocketed from 28,000 to 68,300 in nine years, and for women by 127%. Ethnic minorities comprise 18% of the prison population – three times their proportion of the general population.

Thousands of inmates are crammed two or three to a cell designed for one. Over half of prisoners are reconvicted within two years of their release, and that figure rises to 75% for young male offenders. Small wonder as the government has slashed prison education. Hopeless in custody, many inmates turn to drugs, or suicide – 82 last year, among them 8 women, 11 under 21s and 42 remand prisoners. The report on Dartmoor prison – where men were held in a cage and exercised in pens like dangerous animals – showed the real conditions of captivity.

Ah, cry pro-jurists, service is not just a citizen's duty, it's a rare chance for ordinary people to have their say. Strange, though, few democrats and no freedom or justice organisation offered to back my fight for the right to refuse to join a jury. Next, they'll demand compulsory voting. Only when I

won my appeal on political grounds did anyone ponder they might have followed the same course.

Those who didn't offer an overt rebuke advised me to dodge the draft by citing work pressures. Here lies a ploy which mocks the idea that juries reflect our mixed-class, multicultural society, a claim exposed as hollow in the all-white jury that tried Leeds footballers after Asian student Sarfraz Najeib's brutal assault. The system fell into greater disrepute when a woman alleged to have been raped was told she would have to give evidence again in a retrial after several jurors watched a darts match on television rather than consider their verdict.

It is worth celebrating campaigners' success in forcing David Blunkett to drop curbs on the entitlement to trial by jury. Preserving the status quo, however, or even making juries more representative, will still leave critics like myself opposed to collusion with a process tilted against the poor. Remember the Blair pledge: 'Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'? Each new prison costs as much as two hospitals or 60 primary schools. Yet Blunkett plans alternatives to 'soft' community service – part-time prison, Big Brother electronic tagging and voice recognition technology – rather than tackling the poverty gap that breeds crime. The Home Secretary will continue to treat the symptoms and not the disease, fuelled by the call from England's highest judge, the Lord Chief Justice, for jail sentences up to five years even for first offenders who steal mobile phones. Lord Woolf should instead extend his liberalism on other issues to speak out for the real dispossessed – thousands from jobless or low-income families denied adequate schooling and doomed to hardship and imprisonment.

Paul Collins

THE PRAYER OF THE POLITICAL BIGOT

BY STEVE COHEN

'In the beginning God created states and borders. And the borders were without form. And God said: let there be visas. And there were visas. And God saw the visas, that they were good and he divided visa nationals from non-visa nationals. And this was the first day.

And God said let there be waters between the borders and let there be immigration officers in the midst of the borders and let the waters and the officers divide peoples from peoples. And he told the immigration officers to go forth and multiply. And this was the second day.

And God said let there be passports and let these passports provide a way over the waters for some peoples and not other peoples. And the peoples denied a way he called economic migrants and bogus and illegals. Those granted a way he called Europeans and Americans and Australians. And this was the third day.

And God said let the states bring forth housing officers and welfare officers and social workers

so that economic migrants and the bogus and illegals be denied housing and welfare and social work. And this was on the fourth day.

And God said let there be brought forth prisons, induction centres, accommodation centres and detention centres. And let the prisons and the centres be spread over the face of the earth. And the earth he called a Fortress. And this was the fifth day.

And God said let us make immigration officers in our own image. And so he gave the officers power over every living thing that moveth upon the earth and trieth to move between the borders. And this was the sixth day.

And on the seventh day God ended his work and rested. But the immigration officers continued their work of imprisoning, excluding and deporting. And the housing officers and welfare officers and social workers continued their work of denying housing, welfare and social work. And God said this was good.'

SOLIDARITY FOREVER

ISRAEL/PALESTINE



PHOTO: International Solidarity Movement

Before my trip to Palestine over Christmas, as part of a visit by an international solidarity movement, I feared the antisemitism I might encounter. Durban and the rising 'new' anti-semitism among young Arabs in France made me consider trying to pass as a Christian pilgrim to Bethlehem. I could not have been more wrong. Our reception from Palestinians themselves, young and old, officials or villagers, was especially positive when told we came as Jews in solidarity with them.

The 30 visitors from Britain, like those in the French contingent, included a number of Jewish people – between a quarter and a third. But, compared to the American delegation, we were largely invisible Jews. The Americans came in three groups; two Christian Peace Teams from Michigan and Colorado, including courageous nuns and priests, and a group from JUNITY, recruited from various Jewish peace/solidarity groups in the USA.

We had all come to Palestine to engage in non-violent direct action in support of Palestinian civil resistance to the occupation. We lay in front of tanks, visited Arafat holed up in his Ramallah quarters, observed checkpoints and dismantled road blocks in the villages around Salfit on the West Bank. We observed the effects of house demolitions, visited a range of projects, including emergency medical centres, and went to pay our respects to the families of recently murdered Palestinians. And we marched with Palestinians and Israeli protesters on both sides of the green line, and through some checkpoints.

It felt good, despite the horror of what we saw and knew to be happening around us, and even though we knew that our efforts were largely symbolic. The roadblocks were restored almost as quickly as we created a pathway for cars and trucks, some with the instant device of the IDF removing the vehicles' keys as they reached the flattened roadblock. However much we challenged the army at checkpoints to explain themselves, we knew, and they knew, that once we were out of sight, they could go on treating Palestinians like animals.

What was good was the sense of dialogue, building understanding and trust on the ground between people. It was a heady feeling.

Just being there and demanding the occupation's end, Jews and Christians from overseas, and brave Israelis, broke down barriers and showed 'ordinary' westerners had not forgotten Palestinians. This makes a difference to a people whose voices are never heard and who are daily humiliated, close to despair and feel abandoned by western powers. What did matter was Palestinian media covered our efforts. The short news shot of our action in Ramallah had people all over the West Bank coming out for days afterwards to welcome and thank us for our solidarity. Even the Ramallah 'lads', who vied with one another to brag to us about how far they would go to defeat the Israelis, were pleasantly surprised and openly pleased to find that some of us were Jews.

What also counted was that we saw how confused and equivocal many of the Israeli conscripts were

Irene Bruegel describes the vital importance of international observers and campaigners in the occupied territories

THE POLICE STARTED CHASING THE FLEEING CROWD, PUSHING PEOPLE BRUTALLY, MAKING SOME OF THEM STUMBLE AND FALL INTO THE MUD AND HITTING THEM WITH THEIR STICKS. THE CROWD STARTED TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE CHECKPOINT BUT THEY CAME AFTER US, SHOOTING NEW WAVES OF TEARGAS.' YEHUDITH HAREL

about their role - this before the mass refusal of reservists to serve the occupation. And some prejudices against all things Israeli were shaken by the speed with which police pounced on burly settlers who came to attack us and our banners. With four police manhandling each of them, the settlers hollered loud that 'their' police were betraying Israel in not arresting us, rather than them.

Israelis face prison not just for refusing conscription, but even for going into parts of the West Bank in support of Palestinians. So they also need backing from outside internationals. Increasing numbers are involved in humanitarian actions over the green line. Israeli doctors are helping in the emergency hospital recently established in Salfit. And we met other Israelis taking food and medicines and opposing Bedouin cave homes being demolished south of Hebron. These groups challenge the grotesque equation of opposition to the occupation with antisemitism and a desire to drive the Israelis into the sea. One outcome of our visit to Palestine is to work to build support among British Jews for such solidarity with Palestinians.

We have established a network of Jews - Jews for Justice for Palestinians - to discuss various types of solidarity action that can have resonance for both 'concerned' Jews and Palestinians.

We are thinking of resurrecting those blue tins to collect money for trees for Palestine - olive trees this time to replace those uprooted by settlers and settlements. We would also want to encourage more

Jews to go as Jews on solidarity visits to Palestine.

It is early days yet. We are clear that we want to work with and through other organisations, explicitly as Jews, and yet with the independence and status to criticise Palestinian actions as well as Israeli. The challenge Jewish Socialist makes to the mainstream voice of British Jews needs to be broadened beyond those who identify themselves as socialists. There are also layers of the left and civil libertarians who oppose the occupation and repression of Palestine, but who cannot see their own family background as Jews is at all relevant to their politics. My own short trip to Palestine has shifted me from that viewpoint. We saw before our eyes how a new, possibly bloodier, form of apartheid is taking shape in Israel/Palestine, squeezing the Palestinians into abject submission or exile. Neither white liberals nor white revolutionaries brought down South Africa's apartheid regime. Yet the bravery of whites - many of them Jews - who stood against their own society, sometimes at great cost, helped sustain the movement through the hardest times. Drawing strength from these links, some 250 South African Jews recently issued a declaration of conscience on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 'Not in my name'. The parallels are there for British Jews to develop their own place in a wider movement of solidarity with Palestinians.

Further information about solidarity delegations from www.rapprochement.org. Jews for Justice for Palestine: jfjusticefp@yahoo.co.uk

Elizabeth Carola, an experienced non-violent direct activist, decided to go and see for herself what military occupation really means

I had several reasons for joining the International Solidarity Movement delegation to the occupied territories last December. This was the third delegation but the first really big one. A critical mass of British people decided to go in the weeks leading up to it, and the energy and sense of purpose was infectious. I wanted to avoid Christmas, though Bethlehem - near Beit Sahour, where the Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement (PCR) and the delegation are based - was perhaps not the best place for that. I wanted to weave together all fragments of information, speculation, fantasy and fact I had into an understanding of what was really happening there. And I also wanted to be in Palestine as a Jew, visible and ambassadorial, to just talk to ordinary people, show solidarity and break down misconceptions. A lot of my work, in Asian east London, involves such consciousness-raising, chatting to Muslims, dispelling myths of Jews as alien, horned Zionist beasts (ok, I'm exaggerating, but only slightly). It feels like valuable, necessary work and that's the spirit in which I went.

There were also reasons for not going. Some of the Women in Black who had been there in the summer of 2001 talked about the Israel Defence

Force (IDF) tactic of severe reprisals in villages and areas visited by the delegation then. Also, as an environmentalist trying to limit my carbon debt, I don't hop on planes without a good reason.

But it was the right thing. No amount of reading was as consciousness raising as being there, and it was obvious that people wanted us there. I'll give three examples from my stay.

The power of pacifism

On Christmas day, internationals formed a human shell around Palestinians in a march through the checkpoint separating Bethlehem from Jerusalem. Fiery beacons and Arabic songs lit up the dusk. As we neared the checkpoint, the people behind us surged forward. Months of frustration and rage, together with a sense of protection from the internationals, combined to give them confidence. The soldiers linked arms and moved in. It could and would have erupted into mass violence and shootings. But the PCR people, our delegates and some Israeli activists at the front remonstrated with the soldiers as we edged them back, probably 50-80ft, towards the checkpoint box. 'You don't have to be violent. It's not

DAILY INFORMATION SHEET, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2002 HASSAN RURUS, 43 YEAR-OLD TAXI DRIVER SHOT DEAD BY ISRAELI SOLDIERS. TWO-YEAR-OLD TABARAQ UDEH DIED BECAUSE SHE RAN OUT OF MEDICINE - THE INFANT SUFFERED FROM CEREBRAL PALSY AND EPILEPSY BTSELEM ISRAELI HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION

necessary.' Edging them back all the while.

This felt like a victory. They were nonplussed at hearing Hebrew from the peace campaigners. Eventually IDF reinforcements arrived, making further progress impossible, so we sat down. After an hour of Hebrew, Arabic and US civil rights era songs and chants, Ghassan, one of the PCR activists and an amazing negotiator, announced that we would decamp, but return a few days later.

The power of fear

On our arrival at the Gaza checkpoint, the French bus was allowed through but the English speaking delegation was detained for two hours before having their passports returned, stamped: Gaza entry/Gaza exit. Delegates swiftly took action, proceeding, passports in hand, past the checkpoint booth into a 500-metre zone between the territories. It took the commander (at the minimally staffed booth) almost a minute to realise what was happening but when he did, he went completely out of control. He began shrieking: 'Pigs! Animals! Filth!' People were shoved to the ground and their cameras wrenched away, some smashed on the concrete. 'My men are on their way and they will shoot first, ask questions later. They are dying to take out filth like you.' (In the event, his soldiers were more restrained, linking arms to prevent us from progressing, one rolling his eyes at his shrieking bosses.)

Delegates tried to move forward and soldiers began firing shots into the air, then at slightly lowered angles. It all happens so fast you don't know what to think. You shut your eyes, think, 'They won't shoot us. We're internationals.' But as I write, three months later, that is just what they have done.

Soon we were outnumbered and sat, as he stalked around, grabbing individuals and describing their punishments. 'We're gonna shoot your legs off.' 'We'll smash your face.' Some delegates wanted to press on. The commander listened to our negotiations then screamed: 'Some of you want to go back! Well I'm telling you: Think for yourself for once in your worthless life, instead of following orders, and go back!' We did in fact go back shortly afterwards on to the bus, whose Palestinian driver was fined \$100 for transporting us.

The power of witness

Checkpoint watch. Neta, an Israeli activist now living in Ramallah with her Palestinian husband, had said: 'It's at checkpoints where terrorists are made.' I saw this after a day with International MACHSOM Watch, at the Kelendia checkpoint near Ramallah. I went with two people from the Colorado Peace Team. The brief is to harass the soldiers as they harass the people coming and going with their shopping, kids and families; to record each detention, interrogation, exchange. The army's presence inside the Palestinian Authority patrolling roadsides against backdrops of boulders and stone



Belgian Jewish leftists join a demonstration in Jerusalem

verges painted with the blue and white Israeli flag is itself a massive provocation. But added to this is the continual humiliation of (mostly) men as they try to shop, go to work, study. They randomly divide groups, detaining some and holding others, sometimes for hours. They use cynical, laconic humour: 'Those of you from Hamas can go'; force people to lay the contents of their bags alongside the grimy road; separate families; turn vehicles back so only pedestrians can pass. Checkpoint watch must have roomfuls of files on this harassment. But from all accounts, the presence of Israelis/internationals at the checkpoints does, at least partially, check the soldiers' behaviour.

There are still layers of antisemitism in the British left and I felt it on the delegation: people using 'Jewish' and 'Israeli' interchangeably; an intolerance towards the Israeli peace camp; a sense of holding it to higher standards than similar British campaigns. Several Jews on the delegation talked about this and it became the partial impetus for forming Jews for Justice for Palestinians soon after our return.

It has felt powerful and educative to be visible on recent British demonstrations as a Jew, to stand with JustPeaceUK with their banner of an intertwined Israeli and Palestinian flag. On one Whitehall demo in March, the chants changed tenor considerably when kids at the front progressed from '2-4-6-8, We don't want a Zionist state' to 'From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free', and then, for a while, 'Kill the Jews.' Someone pointed out to them that there were, in fact, quite a number of Jews on the demonstration. At which they apologised profusely and stopped. They are like the kids I see every day at work - confused and naïve. It brings home the urgency of Jewish visibility in this movement.

The situation has worsened but the spring delegation has been to the occupied territories, where they formed human shields around targets (including Arafat's compound) in Ramallah and Bethlehem. The stakes are becoming higher but the work is even more important. Their decision to go will have been a starker, more frightening process.

Participating in that delegation was to enter a commitment I can't now renege on. Whatever else my activism consists of in the future, I will go back.

Further information

The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People. 64 Star Street, P.O. Box 24, Beit Sahour, Palestine
Website: www.rapprochement.org/
International Solidarity Movement:
Email: info@palsolidarity.org
Website: www.palsolidarity.org/

Israel's social, health and education services have been savagely cut to finance settlements and a military budget that compares with Russia's, says
MAXIM GHILAN

Welfare and warfare

The Israeli Government has passed its annual budget for 2002. It will cost over \$10 billion (45 million Israeli shekels); \$1.5 billion have been cut, overwhelmingly from social services. Reductions included payments to the unemployed, people with disabilities, families with many children, hospitals, education and cultural affairs. Tax reductions to cities and towns in the underdeveloped Negev desert area were also cancelled.

The army and war budget (ironically called 'defence' budget) was also cut by \$0.25 billion. But in the last 18 months, it had been raised twice – an additional \$3 billion dollars. It is now approved for \$10 billion – a military budget comparable to that of the Russian Federation. The infrastructure budget, which covers a proportion of the expenses for settlement in the occupied territories, was not cut. Prime Minister Sharon stated it would be raised.

All wages were frozen in the public sector, where about half the working population is employed (military workers included). The rich, however, are not touched. Bank directors earn up to \$10,000 dollars a month after tax. Office and industrial workers, up to about \$1,250 a month.

Left-wing Knesset member Tamar Gojansky, interviewed by the army radio station, Galei Tzahal, calculated that the total military budget, over \$10 million, could be covered by taxing the rich. Israel is one of the few capitalist countries that does not tax the stock exchange, where employers do not participate in social security payments, do not have most of their income taxed and even obtain hefty tax cuts to encourage them to hire new employees. Yet there are around 300,000 men and women out of 6 million Israelis,

almost permanently out of work.

Unemployment is highest among Israeli Arabs, Oriental Jews and Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Official statistics speak of half a million Israeli children below the poverty line, but specialists say the real figure is much higher.

University students have to pay heavily in spite of foreign Jewish donations to the universities. Consequently, higher education is mostly reserved for the middle and upper classes. The level of primary education keeps dropping. Jews were once considered 'the people of the book'. In Israel, they have become, as a whole, intellectually weak if not crassly ignorant. Russian youngsters are much better educated in comparison.

Demonstrations are being held in protest. All classes and sectors of Negev citizens protested. So did disabled people, many of them in their wheelchairs. Histadrut trade union Secretary-General Amir Peretz threatened to leave Ariel Sharon's National Unity Government but did not. SHAS, the orthodox oriental party, also threatened to leave but also stayed.

Israelis are starting to pay for Palestinian despair and for their rapacity and land-grabbing in the territories. Unfortunately payment is forced only upon the poor. After the Government passed the budget cuts and banks reduced interest by 2%, Israeli shares rose in the New York stock exchange: the affluent simply transferred their investments from shekels to dollars. The poor who have neither, and the middle classes whose income is only in shekels cannot, of course, do likewise.

From: Israel and Palestine Strategic Update, edited by Maxim Ghilan. Further information from: infomaxim@yahoo.com

Disabled by poverty

Relief that Israel's new state budget brought smaller welfare and social security cuts than feared shows how far ministers have spun the need to put arms before the poor. It will bring little comfort to Yoav Kraeim, 25, who has cerebral palsy, whose father told him on his barmitzvah that the boy might have been better dying at birth.

Kraeim is among 600,000 disabled Israelis, 142,000 of whom cannot earn a living so qualify for state help. Most of them, disabled through natural causes or workplace injuries, receive a monthly government stipend of 1,740 shekels (\$398), reported Dan Williams, the Reuters correspondent in Jerusalem. This is a pittance compared with the allowance for the 6% seriously wounded serving in Israel's security forces – who receive living expenses, a car, education subsidies and extensive medical treatment.

'Being "war wounded" is the best deal for a disabled person,' said Sammy Smootha, Professor of Sociology at the University of Haifa. 'Life is not easy for those who have to make do with the standard funding.'

Kraeim is leading disabled activists who go out daily to block traffic and clash with dour police outside the Knesset. They want a rise to the minimum wage of 3,200 shekels. Their plight, they say, contrasts with the situation of disabled people in Britain, who receive more than twice as much basic monthly support, though average per capita income in the UK is only a third higher than Israel's. Another demand is for transport and nursing subsidies 'instead of having to choose between going out soiled or staying home clean'.

The Treasury, citing the cost of suppressing the Palestinian uprising, said: 'In these difficult... times ... there is no possibility of meeting this ... demand, and thus there will be no way of moving

toward a solution to the problem.'

Kraeim asked: 'Why should we of all people get less than what is needed to live?' Ilan Ghilon, a left-wing lawmaker disabled by childhood polio, said: 'It's time we stopped making this distinction between the "hero" and the "weak".'

According to Smootha, disabled people in Israel suffer from the nation's cultural stereotype. 'In this young country, the ideal is still the fighting pioneer – rugged, good-looking and most important, healthy.'

Israel's better-treated disabled people are provided for by the Defence Ministry. Yair Ron, paralysed below the waist by a Syrian bullet during the 1973 war, described the ministry's benefits as 'generous, lavish even.' But, he adds: 'Sometimes my wife and I will find ourselves in a situation where our interlocutor addresses her exclusively, as if my wheelchair invalidates me.'

Laws passed in November, at Ghilon's instigation, give disabled people the right to install access ramps at their homes. 'Amazingly, in some communities, the move was opposed by the disabled people's neighbours.'

Reuters warns that there is no guarantee that legislation which is more friendly to disabled people will be enforced. Despite a law requiring all public buildings constructed after 1972 to be adapted for wheelchair access, implementation has been patchy.

Even at the Labour and Welfare Ministry, the base for disabled peoples' rallies, a special outhouse had to be erected as protesters found the doors in the building's toilets too narrow for them.

But Ghilon remains positive about hopes for fairness and dignity. 'I'm not pessimistic about our prospects for getting justice and respect,' he said. 'It's when you hit rock bottom, and there's nowhere left to go, that real change comes.'

PAUL COLLINS
reports on
disability rights
campaigns in
Israel

DRAMA OUT OF A CRISIS

DOUG HOLTON
describes a
recent visit to
Palestine with
his fellow
writer, Liz Ryan

Iman Aoun of Ashtar Theatre in Ramallah, is a committed and talented theatre practitioner. The mother of two young children, she is also a determined, courageous and resourceful woman. Some time ago she had a dream which she shared with the great and the good of European theatre. Now, with a bit of help from her friends, she is on the way to realising the dream.

Would it be possible to bring European practitioners to Palestine in significant numbers? They could find out for themselves what life is like for artists and other people living under a military occupation. It would be possible for Europeans to exchange ideas with their Palestinian counterparts. Each could learn about others' methods and traditions and put them to the test. This is lifeblood to artists – lifeblood that has not been permitted to flow through Palestinian veins in recent times.

It is what brought 10 Europeans to Palestine last

December. We were there to help fulfil Iman's dream by setting up a series of cultural exchanges, enabling Europeans to visit Palestine to express their solidarity and to work with and for Palestinians.

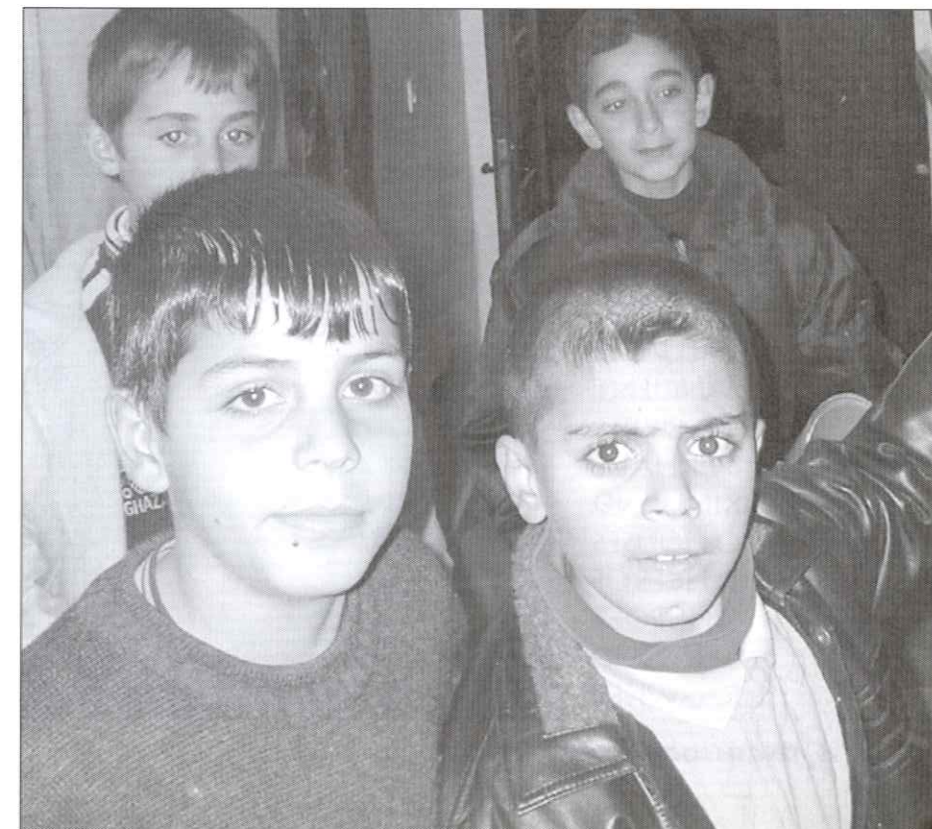
The first Liz and I saw of other members of the delegation was in the arrivals hall at Tel Aviv airport. We had plenty of time to get acquainted. Two Italian colleagues had decided to be open about the reason for the visit. (The rest of us had agreed, albeit reluctantly, to be less forthcoming.) The Italians spent some time enjoying the company and fairly limited conversation of airport security officers. There did not appear to be any purpose behind the interrogation other than what was to become all too familiar – doing everything possible to make Palestinians, and anyone who exhibits the slightest interest in their welfare, feel like criminals. As far as the authorities were concerned, we were on the wrong side and they

seldom passed up an opportunity to remind us.

Eventually, with a collective sigh of relief, we were on our way to Ramallah and friendly faces. Our hosts could not meet us at the airport because Palestinians are not allowed to travel anywhere the Israelis do not want them to.

We were to face similar experiences. The following day, a journey from Ramallah to Bethlehem took four hours, rather than 45 minutes. The Israelis had blocked all but one of Ramallah's exit roads, on which they had set up a checkpoint. Hundreds of people were forced to file past at a snail's pace. We left our driver and crossed the checkpoint on foot. He caught up with us some hours later. He had to leave his ID card at yet another checkpoint and pick it up again on the way back because it was the wrong colour.

This was a minor inconvenience. We heard the story of some female students at the university in Ramallah. They were 18- and 19-year-old undergraduates. Before the current intifada started in September 2000, they were forced to travel home to Gaza via Jordan. Why? No reason other than spite. Now things have changed: they cannot go



Opposite page: children in Dheisheh refugee camp, Bethlehem
All photos: Liz Ryan

13TH APRIL 2002
THE KHALIL
SAKAKINI
CULTURAL
CENTRE WAS
BROKEN INTO
THIS MORNING
... AT 10:50 AM.
THE ARMY
ARRIVED IN 2
TANKS AND
FOUR
ARMoured
PERSONNEL
CARRIERS. THEY
DETONATED
THE SECOND
FLOOR IRON
DOOR AND
BROKE IN. ALL
OF THE
WINDOWS
OF THE
TWO FLOORS
HAVE BEEN
SHATTERED.
THE BUILDING
IS A BEAUTIFUL
MODEL OF
TRADITIONAL
PALESTINIAN
ARCHITECTURE,
ORIGINALLY
BUILT IN
1927 AND
RENOVATED
IN 1995. IT
HOUSES
VALUABLE
ART WORK,
VALUABLE
ANCIENT
MANUSCRIPTS
BY KHALIL
SAKAKINI, AND
IT ALSO HOUSES
THE OFFICES OF
THE POET
MAHMOUD
DARWISH.

home to see their families at all. If they do, they will not be allowed to resume their studies in Ramallah.

In this context, what sort of art would Palestinians produce? The short answer is excellent. This is crucial to a people desperately trying to make sense of the nonsensical situation into which they are forced. To hold on to decency and a civilised society in the face of overwhelming odds. To preserve your culture when everything you hold dear and anything associated with your cultural identity is being systematically and cynically dismantled.

Ashtar Theatre Company is named after the Ancient Canaanite god who provided protection in time of danger. The company was founded in 1991 by Iman Aoun and Edward Muallem for productions and training in theatre skills. Its object is to stimulate cultural awareness and develop artistic values throughout Palestinian society. Among other approaches, Ashtar uses forum theatre, a method developed by Augusto Boal to involve people in making decisions and taking responsibility for their own actions. The method is used in western Europe for work with ex-offenders and children, as well as people suffering all kinds of oppression. Besides dealing with issues such as domestic violence, sexual harassment at work and more familiar uses of Boal's methods, Ashtar has adapted it to the Palestinian situation. They warn children of the dangers of being tempted into crime and information-gathering by Israeli security agents.



The third generation of young dancers at the Ibdaa Cultural centre has produced

Just outside Bethlehem is Dheisheh Refugee Camp, home of many of the children who might be vulnerable to such temptation. Most Europeans understand a refugee camp to be a temporary haven in an emergency. Here the emergency has been a humanitarian disaster for 52 years since Israel's creation. Now about 11,000 people are crammed into Dheisheh, with one qualified doctor to care for them. Until 1995, the Israeli army had sealed off all but one entrance and exit the size and design of a football ground turnstile. Dheisheh's children are brought up with a background of deprivation and harsh repression. Several have been killed in the present intifada. At 12 they become 'legitimate' targets for Israeli snipers. Little wonder their parents worry for their future.

Local people created Ibdaa Cultural Centre in 1995 to try to come to terms with the future. It now caters for 800 youngsters and provides employment for 25 families. Ibdaa seeks to provide an environment for young people to 'develop their creative and leadership skills through social, cultural and educational activities' that might otherwise be inaccessible. 'Ibdaa strives to empower the children and instil in them confidence and strength to face their difficult future while educating the international community on the Palestinian refugee issue.'

At Ibdaa the project we became most acquainted with was a dance troupe that has performed throughout Palestine and the Arab

world. It uses traditional forms to explore modern themes. The troupe includes pieces called 'Political Prisoners', 'The Tent' and 'The Will', and depicts the refugees' history and aspirations. I shall never forget the inspirational 'Children of Heaven'. There is no need to explain the subject matter. Ibdaa means building something from nothing. Nothing is what they have; something inspiring is what they have built and continue to build.

Bethlehem presents a sad picture today. The people depend for most of their income on tourism. This is currently non-existent in Palestine, so they are forced to scratch a living as best they can. The International Cultural Centre is five minutes' walk from Manger Square. It is devoted to strengthening the Palestinian sense of identity by cultivating artistic talent and facilitating cross-cultural contact.

I am reluctant to encourage tourism to Israel. But I think it is worth noting that the centre promotes authentic and ethical tourism. Whereas most tourists have little contact with ordinary Palestinians. The centre has an imaginative way of redressing the balance, providing a genuine experience and demonstrating what life is like in occupied Palestine. It offers tourists the chance to retrace the steps of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, staying with Palestinian families on the way. Donkey travel is not obligatory.

The Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre is housed in an old Ramallah mansion and focuses on nurturing and developing the visual arts. It also provides a valuable amenity for local people by holding regular varied exhibitions, concerts, literary events, film screenings and lectures. More details of the centre's work can be found on its website: www.sakakini.org. Look out for Sharif Sarhan's remarkable 'Artists Against Occupation' project. *[Since this article was written the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre has been smashed up by the Israeli Army. See quote on the left. During this intifada the Sakakini has worked underground, gathering testimonies about daily life under siege, letters and drawings by children, appeals to the media, and an open letter to George Bush. All these documents may be found at: www.intertech-pal.com. The other website featuring these documents has been hacked by the Israelis: www.alnakba.org/siege/*

Our final visit was to the Popular Art Centre in Ramallah, founded in 1987 by the celebrated dance company El-Funoon to provide a focus and forum for local dancers, musicians and artists. It has developed into a major centre of cultural excellence. We met members of El-Funoon. Some of the more experienced members were not allowed to travel abroad as practitioners of their stature would expect to in any civilised country. One young dancer, after her class, had to walk home over the hills in pitch darkness, at risk from natural and human hazards. That did not stop her attending regularly.

We learned a lot about Palestine. 'Surely, it can't be as bad as I've been led to believe,' I remember thinking. It is worse. I now have a better idea what it is like to be treated as the child of a lesser god in your own country. I now know more about the suffering of the Palestinian people and the courage and determination of people like Iman Aoun. I now know how little the Palestinians have and how much of lasting value they have built. Perhaps I



have a better idea what Ibdaa means.

I hope we can help Iman's dream come true by making it possible for many artists to visit Palestine.

Iman has another dream. It is to be able to raise her children in peace and justice. I remember her little girl bursting into terrified and uncontrollable tears when she heard an Israeli helicopter gunship flying close overhead. They will go on doing so unless we join together and make them stop.

We were evacuated from Ramallah in the aftermath of the Jerusalem bombings. Everyone knew the Israelis would attack. It was considered better if we were not stuck inside Ramallah. The Palestinians had enough to worry about without taking on our concerns about missing flights.

The journey from the Palestine National Authority compound to Jerusalem was in an armoured-plated Embassy Range Rover. With us were two Daily Telegraph-reading diplomats and Itzak, the driver, who knew where you wanted to go before you did. The journey illustrated the contrasts. We took only a few minutes to reach Jerusalem.

We were waved past checkpoints and guided by Palestinians who may have hoped that in some way, by some small act of kindness, they could persuade the British to recognise and give a damn about their plight. We travelled on roads built for the exclusive use of illegal settlements and Sharon's legions.

Doug Holton is a playwright, a member of the National Executive Council of The Writers' Guild of Great Britain and co-ordinates the British arm of the 100 Artists to Palestine project. He can be contacted on dougwrite@hotmail.com. The project seeks participation as well as practical and financial help.

Liz Ryan's website is at: www.abchood.com-lizryan

Doug and Liz Ryan visited Palestine in their personal capacities. The views expressed in this article are strictly their own.

Children in Bethlehem beneath posters of 'martyrs' killed during the latest intifada

PUT NOT YOUR FAITH

JEFF HALPER
Co-ordinator of
the Israeli
Committee
Against House
Demolitions
(ICAHD) calls
for international
support for the
Palestinian
people and the
Israeli peace
camp



When Salim Shawamreh, a Palestinian whose house has been demolished three times, and I visited the UK recently, we came with two clear messages. First, we are not on different sides, and we certainly refuse to be enemies. We are on the same side, the side of ending the occupation and achieving a just peace that addresses the right of the Palestinians for self-determination. This is the only side that will finally lend Israel the security and regional acceptance it seeks.

Second, a just peace will not emerge between the Palestinians and Israelis without international intervention. The Palestinians cannot shake off (that's what intifada means) the occupation by themselves. Nor will peace come from within Israel. Although probably 70% of Israelis have no interest in maintaining the occupation and would like to see it end, there exists no political mechanism for translating this passive desire for separation into government policy. Because of a unique system of elections whereby one votes solely for a political party and has no representative in the parliament, the Israeli government consists of some 10 small single-issue parties with no common agenda. If, indeed, a common agenda does exist uniting the Labour and Likud parties with the settlers and the extreme right, it is this: a Palestinian mini-state must be established to take the three million residents of the occupied territories off Israel's hands – thereby preserving Israel as a 'Jewish state'. But the mini-state must in no way threaten Israel's *de facto* control over the entire country.

If, then, the attitude of the Israeli (Jewish) public is: 'The hell with the Palestinians. Let's just get out of the West Bank and Gaza, build a Chinese Wall separating us and get on with our lives', the

government is pursuing exactly the opposite policy trying to actually defeat the Palestinians so that they accept a truncated, dependent bantustan that leaves Israel in control. The contradiction is easy to explain. The Israeli public is tired of the violence, the threat to its personal security, the negative effects on employment and the economy, the hopelessness of it all. The government believes that the Palestinians have already been defeated, and that with a little more pressure the Palestinians – with or without Arafat, who is indeed 'irrelevant' in this scenario – will submit to Israel's dictates.

The belief that victory is only months, perhaps weeks away, derives from Israel's reading of the political map. This begins and ends with the US Congress, Israel's trump card. As long as that body remains uncritically and almost unanimously behind Israel, Israel can thumb its nose at all the other international actors. American administrations may be more or less critical of Israel's policies (Bush's father was the most critical since Eisenhower), but they are loath to tangle with Congress, the Jewish lobby and the Christian right over this issue. Europe, until now, has no independent policy of its own towards the Middle East. As Chris Patten recently said, Europe's policy is whatever the US doesn't veto – even though Europe has a more immediate stake in Middle East stability than the US. The American veto neutralizes the UN and human rights bodies, and the Arab world has little leverage, even if it chose to use it. In this reading the Palestinians are isolated, with nowhere to go.

In this view, the only countervailing force, the only player preventing an outright Israeli victory, is the Palestinian Street. The 18-month campaign to put down the Intifada in fact goes far beyond that

IN PRINCES

modest goal. Attrition, combined with concerted military attacks, will, the Israeli government believes, break their resistance once and for all. Once the campaign to delegitimize Arafat succeeds and he leaves the political stage, quislings can easily be found to sign onto the mini-state-qua-bantustan.

The Palestinian Street receives support from the critical Israeli peace camp – ICAHD, Bat Shalom, the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, Gush Shalom, Yesh Gvul, Rabbis for Human Rights, Ta'ayush, New Profile, the Alternative Information Center (see Israeli Peace Camp contact list), even certain elements of Peace Now. But there is only one force of major proportions capable of mounting an effective campaign for a just peace, and that is the international civil society of political organizations, NGOs and faith-based groups.

Just a few years ago a call for the intervention of the international civil society would have sounded naive. But we are reaching a critical mass in terms of numbers of influence. On my way to the UK, I participated in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, where 4000 NGOs came together to work for an alternative global agenda. Modern communications, growing networks of activists and the emergence in the last few years of increasingly effective human rights movements all offer new opportunities for working alliances of great influence. Only by generating international campaigns to end the Occupation and devising strategies of influencing public opinion and lobbying governments can we lend meaningful support to the Palestinian people in this, their most difficult hour since 1948.

Our activities should focus on two issues. One is accountability. If the Palestinians are to be held accountable for their 'terrorist' actions, then Israel

must be held accountable as well. Attacks on densely-populated civilian centers with F-16s, Apache gunships and heavily armed ground troops – such as the attacks on the Balata and Jenin refugee camps – Israel's policy of assassinations and the indiscriminate use of snipers all constitute state terrorism. House demolitions (8,000 since 1967), wholesale land expropriation, destruction of agricultural land and crops, impoverishment through economic closure, induced emigration and the constant expansion of illegal settlements, moreover, constitute structural violence inherent in occupation. Israel must be held accountable for all these violations of international law and human rights – and in particular violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention which protects civilians living under occupation.

The second issue is ensuring a return to negotiations that will give rise to a just peace. Unlike the Oslo process, new parameters of negotiations must specify the goal of establishing a viable and truly sovereign Palestinian state. They must also allow for an evolution in the area that could give rise to more viable political forms, such as regional confederation. At a minimum Israel's control over the future Palestinian state must be prevented (although the issue of Israel's economic hegemony in the entire region will continue to be a major issue).

We call on the international community to stand with us, the Palestinian people and the Israeli peace camp, in opposing the Occupation and working towards a just and viable peace.

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THE POLITICS OF SHAME

As the news from the occupied territories worsens, diaspora Jewish communities have become increasingly polarised. For a long time the Chief Rabbi avoided mentioning Israel in the mainstream media, preferring to focus on antisemitism. The message is that attacks on Jews here are the diaspora manifestation of the conflict in the Middle East.

This is supposed to unite us against perpetual adversity: if we campaign against the actions of the Israeli army we will be giving ammunition to Jew haters. On BBC radio (18th April 2002) Sacks said: 'In mainland Europe we've had many, many attacks on synagogues in France, Belgium and elsewhere. It's not that bad [in Britain] but when you challenge Israel's very right to exist you are certainly calling into question the Jewish people's right to exist collectively.' Twisting the knife of antisemitism to make the collective Jewish body writhe with the pain of exile, this characterisation of the situation of Jews dishonestly gathers contradictory Jewish experiences under the umbrella of Israel. Attacking a synagogue in France, terrifying and evocative of the Nazi period though it is, is not challenging 'Israel's very right to exist'. In fact,

while the attacks have a relationship with events in the Middle East, this is often more of a paradox than a parallel. Seeing antisemitism entirely through the prism of the Israel/Palestine conflict does not enable us to defend Jewish rights in the diaspora, and seems designed to prevent us from defending Palestinian rights, as the massive demonstration of nationalism and Israeli flag-waving in Paris in April showed.

But it is not only the religious and Zionist right that is trying to explain Israel's ruthless abuses of human rights through Jews' eternal persecution. Pesach, the festival of liberation from slavery came at the end of March, just as the brutality of the Israeli army spiralled beyond our nightmares. This generated a plethora of parallels. One of the more literary was by Michael Kustow. In an anguished article in The Guardian, he explained why he was not going to spend the festival in Israel. 'I'm staying in London,' he wrote, 'not only because I'm afraid of getting killed, but also because, as a diaspora Jew, I'm part of a conflict for which I can't avoid some responsibility ...

'To see your blood relatives going down a blood-soaked blind alley hurts. To see them inflicting pain and

pillage and ever-more ingenious humiliation on less powerful neighbours, who strike back with self-annihilating rage, hurts more. To realise that the most pitiless violence is the violence of the traumatised former victim, clinging to past wounds from generation unto generation, is the bitterest pill to swallow.'

The bitterest pill? No. The bitterest pill is that they are not helpless victims of their history; they are sentient adults who have taken a decision to destroy lives, communities and any prospect of peace. They are not programmed to cling 'to past wounds from generation unto generation' but are cynically using those 'past wounds' to justify besieging civilians in their towns, villages and refugee camps; burying them alive in the rubble of their houses; turning back their ambulances and leaving them to die or give birth in the street; looting their shops and stealing their personal possessions; smashing up their art, architecture and ancient religious sites.

The Zionist peace group Peace Now, along with some less Israel-aligned Jewish campaigners for peace with justice, have got themselves into some contorted positions in their attempts to express Jews' need to oppose these actions. We have been brought up not to 'wash our dirty linen in public' and it doesn't get much dirtier than what Ariel Sharon is doing in occupied Palestine now. And so an organisation arises in the USA

called 'Not in our name'. It is doing fantastic work, campaigning within and beyond the American Jewish community, developing practical links with the besieged Palestinians, taking an uncompromising moral stance opposing *as Jews*, what the Israeli state is doing. But that name assumes that the default position for diaspora Jews is to support Israel.

The consensus that Israel is the centre of Jewish life and the diaspora communities are mere satellites was broken in the 1980s in the wake of the Lebanon War and the massacres in Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps. Enough of us said 'Enough!' then to make the leaders of our community panic. Hizbollah, neo-Nazis and other assorted antisemites notwithstanding, we would speak out in defence of human rights as Jews. Now, with Ariel Sharon's help, the split in the community has grown and the claim of religious and Zionist community leaders that they represent a Jewish consensus is clearly hollow.

But critics of Israel who want to attract Jews to their view feel compelled to predicate their campaigning on shame. Shame because 'Jewish values' are humane. Shame that our oppression has not taught us not to oppress others. Shame that we have vacated the moral high ground. Shame, that Israel is violent, corrupt and ruthless.

Peace Now, in a 'Reaffirmation of the message of

Pesach' published in the Jewish Chronicle on 29th March, mentioned Palestinians only in relation to the moral welfare of Jews and Israelis. 'The Jewish State's betrayal of its moral foundation affects the whole Jewish people. When we suppress the Palestinian people's aspirations for justice, freedom, dignity, equality and self-determination, we deny our own self-image and heritage as a nation. In order to save both the Jewish state and the spirit of the Jewish people we have a duty to speak out against the occupation.'

Other Jews who have a more questioning attitude to Zionism are nevertheless also grappling with the impact of Israel on their situation. The Jews for Justice for Palestinians campaign, includes people who courageously speak out against the abuses of human rights being perpetrated by Israel and have joined international delegations in the West Bank (see page 15) in order to stand between the Palestinians and the Israeli army. Yet when they orientate themselves towards Jews in Britain, they assume that their priority will be to save their own skin. In an otherwise unambiguous statement of opposition to occupation, JFJP's public statement includes: 'We appeal to you to lend your name and your voice to this call. It is needed to help to counter rising antisemitism and the claim that opposition to Israel's destructive policies is in itself antisemitic.'

On the one hand, this gives the impression that Jews will only show support for the Palestinians if there's something in it for them. On the other, it draws on an old-fashioned view that if 'we' behave badly, 'they' will hate us. This is more of an advertising campaign than a political perspective. It may attract Jews to support the Palestinians, but it won't explain how being a member of an ethnic minority *here* relates to challenging naked state power *there*.

Ariel Sharon's actions may be providing cover for fascists and fundamentalists, indeed, fuelling bitterness amongst communities who, quite wrongly, take up antisemitic positions. But antisemites are responsible for antisemitism, not Jews. Do we hold Mugabe responsible for racism or Margaret Thatcher responsible for sexism? It is dangerous to respond to antisemitism as if it were an extension of the war in Palestine and it does a disservice to the Palestinians in their desperate struggle for peace and justice. Nationalism is being tested under the most extreme conditions in the Middle East and its fault-lines are becoming horribly clear. If there is any time left to make a difference, then Jewish socialists' political contribution must be to draw on our long history of minority-ness in the diaspora and from it forge a practical prospect for coexistence that does not allow political power to be predicated on religion or ethnicity.

Though the Holocaust is still within living memory, the lessons that Jewish people draw from it are many, contradictory and often horribly predictable: look after yourself; look after others; there is no end to our persecution; we must act to end persecution; we will arm ourselves and never again go like lambs to the slaughter; we will never take up arms and always oppose violence...

It's time to grow up. Hitler, Pharaoh and all the rest of them are part of our make-up but we are fully fledged adults, not pre-programmed puppets of our history. We just need to do what is right – right for the Palestinians; right for all the people challenging those who oppress and impoverish and murder and would rather destroy the world than relinquish their power.

CHARLIE POTTINS tells the story 13 leading Russian Jews, murdered on Stalin's orders 50 years ago

On 12th August 1952, 13 members of the Jewish People's Anti-Fascist Committee were executed in Moscow's Lubyanka prison. Among them were the poets Itzik Feffer, Leib Kvitko and Peretz Markish, the writers David Bergelson and Shmuel Halkin; Solomon Lozovsky, a former general secretary of the Red Trade Union International and government minister, and Benjamin Zuskin, a leading actor at the Moscow State Jewish Theatre. The theatre's director, and chair of the Jewish People's Committee, Shlomo Mikhoels, had been murdered on 13th January 1948, in a hit and run accident outside Minsk believed to have been arranged by the secret police.

The Jewish People's Anti-Fascist Committee was launched with official backing in April 1942 to win worldwide Jewish support for the Soviet war effort. Stalin approved this turn although he had signed the death warrant for the two men who first proposed enlisting Jewish energies against the Nazis – Victor Alter and Henryk Ehrlich, leaders of the Jewish Workers' Bund from Poland. Alter and Erlich had defended left wing opponents of Stalinism but worse, from the Kremlin's point of view, they were 'premature anti-fascists', having proposed anti-Nazi resistance while the Soviet government was loyally maintaining its pact with Hitler.

In 1943, Shlomo Mikhoels and Itzik Feffer toured the United States, Mexico, Canada and Britain, addressing enthusiastic Jewish audiences, Feffer in his full uniform as colonel of the Red Army. They raised millions of dollars for the Soviet war effort, as well as fervent political support. The Jewish People's Committee had its own Yiddish newspaper, *Eynikayt* (Unity). Bergelson wrote regularly for it, and for the New York *Morgn Frayhayt*. Soviet Yiddish writers and poets were published in English too.

Jewish people rejoiced at Soviet military triumphs. 'The Red Army liberated Auschwitz,' they told each other. The Jewish People's Committee persuaded Soviet authorities to provide a list of decorated Soviet Jewish war heroes, both to refute antisemitic jibes and to raise Jewish morale. When Foreign Minister Gromyko, referring to Jewish suffering in Europe, gave the Soviet Union's blessing to Zionist aspirations and the UN's November 1947 Palestine partition resolution, the rejoicing seemed complete. The USSR was the first power to recognise the new State of Israel in 1948, and helped it with arms.

Yet even during World War II, harsh winds were forming that would blow asunder Jewish hopes in the Soviet Union. From 'socialism in one country', official ideology moved on to waging the 'Great Patriotic War'. Although surviving purged Red Army officers were released to lead their units in battle, old Czarist heroes and generals came back into favour in patriotic literature. Historians rediscovered that Czarist Russia's expansion and conquest of subject peoples was 'progressive'. Even while Red Army troops were chasing German invaders out, special detachments were sent to deport peoples like the Crimean Tartars and the Chechens, accused of being 'collaborators', and living in the wrong place. Call it collective punishment, or 'ethnic cleansing', it set a brutal precedent, even if the world was too busy

MIDNIGHT IN MOSCOW

celebrating the defeat of Hitler's fascism to notice its sinister reflections.

In 1946, the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee launched a drive against writers who did not conform. Beginning under party secretary A A Zhdanov, this became a drive against 'rootless cosmopolitans' accused of grovelling to western culture and belittling Russian achievements. In 1949 Pravda reported a speech by Anatoly Sofronov of the Writers' Union, denouncing 'an anti-patriotic group of theatre critics', 'rabid ill-intentioned cosmopolitans, people without kith and kin', who had been 'undermining the foundations of culture for a long time' by criticising patriotic plays. In contrast to criminal trial reports where papers always gave the 'real names' of the accused, Jewish novelist Ilya Ehrenburg was told to make his characters' names more Russian. It became obligatory to claim that Russians had made all important scientific discoveries and inventions, and that 'foreign' science was inferior. Such ignorant boasting detracted from genuine Soviet achievements, rendered the propaganda ridiculous and obstructed vital work in science and medicine (see box below). But it was a golden opportunity for jealous mediocrities and humbugs to rise up, and denounce their colleagues and critics as 'unpatriotic'. What right had cosmopolitans 'without kith and kin' to hold influential positions, barring the way to genuine Russians?

A witch-hunt began, parallel to the anti-

Communist witch-hunts in the United States, where coincidentally many of those victimised for alleged 'un-American activities' came from the same ethnic background as Russia's 'rootless cosmopolitans'. Russia's witch-hunt spread through colleges and factories, army bases and hospitals. People were accused of plots, dismissed from posts, and arrested. Jewish choirs and drama groups were disbanded. Books vanished from shops and library shelves as their writers disappeared from their homes. In the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan, a vast library of Yiddish works was destroyed. The plates for a Black Book on Nazi atrocities were smashed. The Jewish People's Committee had published an English edition during the war, but evidently it was for export only.

Unlike blacklisted Americans, many of Stalin's victims did not live to tell their tale. The Jewish People's Anti-Fascist Committee was disbanded in November 1948, as were other wartime bodies set up to win support in the West. Not satisfied with liquidating the Jewish Committee, Stalin had 15 of its members arrested, taken to the Lubyanka punishment cells and tortured to make them sign confessions. One, hospital director Boris Shimeliovich, refused to confess to anything despite being given 100 lashes every day for a month. Yet rather than proceed to a show trial, as they had done with Bolshevik oppositionists and Red Army officers in the 1930s, the Stalinist authorities took four years trying to break the resistance of the Jewish prisoners

Lenin's embalmers

Lenin, leader of the Russian Revolution, only wanted a simple burial but after his death in January 1924, so many mourners were delayed by the bitter winter weather that the Kremlin ordered that Lenin's body be embalmed temporarily so they could pay their respects.

Weeks later, the queues of mourners were as long as ever, and Stalin, Lenin's successor, set up a Committee for the Immortalisation of Lenin's Memory. The young, Jewish biochemist Boris Zbarsky and anatomist Vladimir Vorobiov were asked to devise a way of permanently embalming the leader's remains. They worked night and day for four months to find a mixture of chemicals and a method of using them that would stop the body from decomposing.

They commissioned artist, Alexander Pasternak, brother of Boris, who wrote *Dr Zhivago*, to paint an accurate picture of Lenin's corpse so they could preserve it to look just as it had done in life. The Kremlin installed Lenin's remains in a pyramid-shaped mausoleum where, ever since, Lenin has been checked twice a week for deterioration. Every 18 months his body is taken to a laboratory beneath its mausoleum to be undressed, examined and dunked in preserving chemicals.

The two 'mausoleumists' fell out of favour with Stalin, though. Vorobiov died under mysterious circumstances in 1937. Zbarsky was purged in Stalin's 1952 antisemitic campaign and died soon afterwards. His son, Ilya Zbarsky, who was also a preserver of dead bodies, co-wrote a book called *Lenin's Embalmers* (The Harvill Press, 1998)

Nowadays Moscow's 'mausoleumists' earn most of their money preserving dead Mafia bosses.

Julia Bard

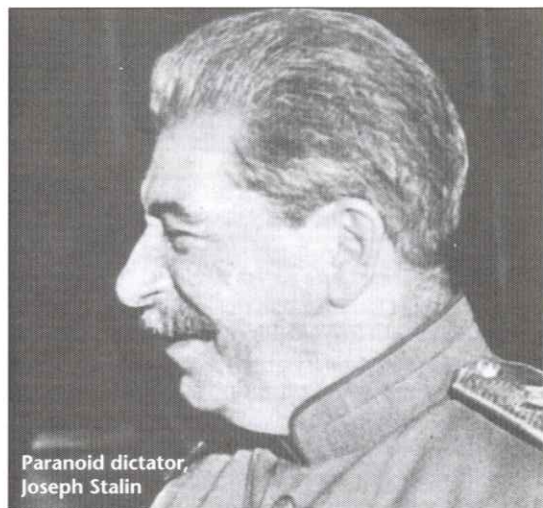


before a tribunal behind closed doors.

Everything was stood on its head. Jewish internationalism, once praised by Lenin, and a proven asset to the communist cause, was now 'rootless cosmopolitanism', a deadly enemy. Mikhoels and Feffer's tour in the West on the Soviet Union's behalf was portrayed as a trip to conspire with American millionaires. By extolling the mighty Soviet war effort they had betrayed state secrets! A proposal to settle Jewish Holocaust survivors and displaced persons in the Crimea was a Jewish nationalist plot to detach the region from the Soviet Union – the same Soviet Union whose representatives had so eloquently supported Zionist claims to Palestine!

'My nationalist tendencies came out in the following ways,' Feffer told the tribunal: 'I said that I love my people. Is there anyone who doesn't love his people? I wanted my people to have what all others had. And when I saw that everything was being closed down, everything being eliminated, this pained me and made me rise against the Soviet power. This was what motivated my interest in the Crimea and Birobidzhan.' He reminded the judges that US President Roosevelt had been to the Crimea (for the Yalta talks) but 'he did not ask for Mikhoels and Feffer' to brief him on the strategic peninsula!

One American who did ask after his friends Mikhoels and Feffer was black singer and Communist Paul Robeson, when he arrived in Moscow in 1949. Mikhoels was already dead, but Feffer was hastily fattened up, scrubbed, and brought from jail to the singer's hotel room. Signalling to Robeson that the room was bugged, Feffer managed to convey that Mikhoels had been killed and that he was facing death too. At his concert, Paul Robeson spoke about his Jewish friends, before singing the Yiddish Partisan Song, *Zog nit keynmol az du geyst dem letsten veg...* 'Never say that that you are walking your last road. The applause was huge. But on the reissued recording of the concert you can still hear the blip where Soviet censors cut out his little speech about Mikhoels and Feffer. Back in the United States, Robeson censored himself, confiding only to his son what he'd been told, and insisting to reporters that he had seen no sign of antisemitism or racism in the Soviet Union. Maybe Robeson's loyal Stalinism had been disturbed, but he was afraid to say anything that could be used by US warmongers or further endanger his friends. Maybe if the US government



Paranoid dictator,
Joseph Stalin

had not taken away his passport... As it was, Robeson's silence did not help his friends.

A book out last year, Stalin's Secret Pogrom edited by Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir Naumov, evokes the flavour of the hidden trial. Under interrogation one woman had stated that 'under Lozovsky, the [Soviet information bureau] had been turned into a synagogue'. But during the trial, prisoners retracted or altered confessions. Lozovsky said his judges knew how confessions were obtained. 'You took note of the fact that all of the accused testify using one and the same phrasing. So this means that someone conspired to come up with this language. Who? Those under arrest? I don't think so. That means that it was the investigators who conspired.' He compared General Alexander Cheptsov, who presided over the tribunal, to a Spanish inquisitor.

In fact, at the end of the trial Cheptsov asked party leaders to reopen the investigation. Party Secretary Georgy Malenkov was indignant. 'Do you want us to kneel before these criminals?' he demanded. 'Carry out the Politburo's resolution!' As one of the five-man defence council which oversaw the Soviet war effort in World War II, Malenkov knew the contribution made by the Jewish People's Committee. His daughter had married Lozovsky's grandson, Vladimir Shenberg, and the two men were close. But days before Lozovsky's arrest, Malenkov rushed through his daughter's divorce, saying he did not want 'a relative of an 'enemy of the people' in his house. After Stalin's death, Malenkov became party leader, then Prime Minister until he

was elbowed aside by Khrushchev. In 1957, accused of leading an 'anti-party group', he was sent off to manage a power station in Kazakhstan – a gentler end to that to which he'd helped consign Lozovsky. Vladimir Shenberg never contacted his ex-father-in-law again, but says of his behaviour: 'As a human being I cannot approve it, but as a political scientist I understand what he had to do.'

Of the 15 members of the Jewish People's Committee who had been tried, one died in prison. Another, Latvian-born medical scientist Lina Stern, who had gone to work in the Soviet Union in 1926, was exiled to Kazakhstan. The remainder were executed. Later that year, Stalin got his show trials in Prague, where former Czech Communist Party general secretary, Rudolf Slansky, and 13 longstanding party members (including three gentiles for good measure) went on trial accused of Zionism, Trotskyism, Titoism... Then on 13th January 1953, the Soviet news agency, TASS announced the arrest of a group of 'killer doctors', accused of plotting to murder public figures. Referring to 'Trotskyite conspiracies' including the death of Gorky, it claimed the dead Shlomo Mikhoels had orchestrated a huge terror plot in league with a Zionist espionage agency, 'the Joint' (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee).

All over the Soviet Union, Jews feared pogroms or the knock on the door from the KGB arranging their 'protective' arrest and deportation to Siberia. But then, on 15th March 1953, came the news that Stalin was dead. The charges against the doctors were dropped. The Jewish People's Anti-Fascist Committee was soon to be admitted innocent too. Khrushchev acknowledged publicly in 1955 that during the war 'the Committee were considered indispensable to the interests of the Soviet state, our policies and our Communist Party.' In his 1956 'secret speech' he attacked Stalin's persecution of nationalities. It was too late to save the murdered Jewish intellectuals or the victims of the show trials. Nor could references to Stalin's 'personality cult' satisfy Jewish people around the world, shocked and disillusioned with the kind of 'socialism' that could permit such a monstrosity.

A legendary sage, the Baal Shem Tov, said remembrance was the first step to redemption. Without an honest reckoning with the past, we cannot hope to restore faith in a socialist future.

and sadness has not destroyed my wealth. But my people, my faith and my maturity have not forged my freedom. Beneath the sword I cried 'I am a Jew! I am a Jew!'

The clever wrinkles of Rabbi Akivah, the wisdom of Isaiah's word, have nurtured my thirst, my love and together we have engaged with hate. The zest of the Macabean heroes and Bar Kokhba's blood seethes in mine. Atop the funeral pyres I have proclaimed. I am a Jew! I am a Jew!

And to spite the enemies who are already preparing graves for us, under the flags of freedom, will I yet have eternal satisfaction. I shall nurture my own vineyards and be the welder of my destiny. Upon the graves of my enemy I will yet dance. I am a Jew! I am a Jew!

Transliteration and translation by Chaim Neslen



FAMILY HISTORIES

George Bush Snr headed the Central Intelligence Agency. George Dubya shows us intelligence is not hereditary. That bruising from a pretzel shows dedication: fancy falling off the sofa for the sake of the 'year of the rollover' gag. Calling his war a 'crusade' then saying it wasn't against Muslims wasn't bad, but he couldn't keep a straight face when he said he couldn't imagine Bin Laden 'knowing the joys of Chanukah, or of Christmas'. Who writes his one-liners?

He might be wrong about Chanukah. One story making the rounds is that some elderly Yemenite Jews in Israel insist that they knew the Bin Ladens back in South Arabia, where they came from, and that they were a Jewish family that converted to Islam. These old people are bemused by the idea that Osama now appears to be a Muslim fundamentalist.

As Chanukah went by, Bin Laden had more oil in his lamp than to be captured. US forces celebrated the season of peace and goodwill by bombing friend and foe. While they seek fresh fields to cluster bomb, who is looking for Bin Laden? The FBI man on the case has quit. Couldn't CIA payroll tell him where Osama drew his money? What if he sought asylum under Israel's Law of Return? If conspiracy nuts have missed the 'Bin Laden-is-Jewish' story, I offer it as a late prezzie.

ARMS & THE MAN

Israel raises a song and dance after seizing a boat carrying arms allegedly bound from Iran to Palestine. Be funny if these included weapons Israel shipped to Iran in the 1980s. What goes around, comes around. A Palestinian reminded me once: 'Ben Gurion declared a state first, and dealt with the *Altalena* (an Irgun arms ship) afterwards.' But the Zionist watchword remains: 'Do as we say, not as we did!'

Meanwhile, Peter Mandelson tells a Balfour Day dinner in Jerusalem that his grandfather, Herbert Morrison, delivered arms 'for the Stern Gang' on his visit to Palestine in 1935. Mandelson's hosts must think he's

cabaret rather than cabinet. Abraham Stern did not start his terror group, Lehi, till 1940. Hagana brought in arms in 1935 in shiploads, not suitcases.

Mandelson's speech, released by the British embassy, doesn't mention gun running or the Stern Gang, but says Morrison (who was not Jewish) was so inspired by the Zionist pioneers he wanted to join them. What Morrison said was: 'I know the London Jew very well. But the Palestinian Jews were to me different; so different that a large proportion of them were not obviously Jews at all.' Take that how you want. As a wartime minister Morrison stonewalled rescue of Jewish children from Vichy France and said refugees who had come to Britain, even those who served in British forces, must leave after the war, otherwise they would cause antisemitism. Definitely a Zionist!

PEYOT PAYOUT

Amid the tears in Israel, some brighter news. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has promised to boost subsidies for *yeshivot* (religious seminaries) by 200 million shekels, hidden in the budget so orthodox leaders aren't seen *shnorrin*. Religious parties want increases linked to student numbers and inflation. In return, public representatives will have no control whatsoever. But the *yeshiva* business is very productive. A few years ago it raised funds by creating imaginary *yeshivot* and thousands of fictitious students. Offering exemption from military service and the job queue, as well as places for gunmen to rest, *yeshivot* could attract real numbers nowadays. The total *yeshiva* population has risen from 159,000 five years ago to 210,000 – enough to double the unemployed. The Israeli broadsheet *Ha'aretz* says Israel cannot afford this 'negative investment, a waste of the quality work force, and damaging to the GDP'. But that's old-fashioned economics. With talents that could shine in the City of London or Wall Street, today's *yeshiva bokhrim* are teaching Israel that you don't have to break stones or pick oranges to be 'wealth creators'.

IKH BIN A YID (I AM A JEW)

by Itsik Feffer, Yiddish poet, born Shpole, Ukraine
1900, murdered on Stalin's orders 1952

Der vayn fun doyesdikn doyer
Hot mir geshtarkt in vanderveg
Di beyze shverd fun payn un troyer
Hot nit farnikhtert mayn farmeg

Mayn folk, mayn gloybn un mayn bliyen
Zi hot mayn frayheyt nit geshmidt
Fun unter shverd hob ikh geshriyen
Ikh bin a Yid! Ikh bin a Yid!

Der kluger kneytsh fun Reb Akivah
Di khokhme fun Yeshayes vort

Hobn genert mayn dursht, mayn libeh
Un zi mit ha'as tsunoyfgeport

Der shvung fun makabeyer heldn
Bar Kokhba's blut in maynem zidt
Fun ale shayters fleg ikh meldn
Ikh bin a Yid! Ikh bin a Yid!

Un oyftsepikenish di sonim
Vos greyt kvorim shoyrn far mir
Vel ikh unter di fraye fonen
Nokh hobn nakhes on a shir

Kh'vel mayne vayngertner farlantsn
Un fun mayn goyrl zayn der shmid
Kh'vel nokh oyf sonims keyver tantsn
Ikh bin a Yid! Ikh bin a Yid!

The wine of generations, has strengthened me in
my wanderings. The angry sword of persecution