

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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1985-2005

The next issue of Jewish Socialist is our 50th

To celebrate this event we invite our readers to send greetings, contributions, reflections and hopes for the future (but no comments about 50 issues in 20 years)

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JOIN THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

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

The group works and campaigns with other organisations sharing some or all of our aims and always welcomes new members who support our political principles. All members receive a regular internal discussion bulletin, a frequent newsletter detailing meetings and events and can participate fully in our annual conference and in any aspect of the group's work.

For further information write to:

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JEWISH ★ SOCIALIST

STATE TERROR AT THE CHECKPOINT

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EDITORIAL

World to win together

'May you live in interesting times,' was an apocryphal Chinese curse. Cursed or blessed, our times have certainly been interesting. Since we first launched Jewish Socialist we have witnessed the end of Apartheid, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and what looked like steps towards peace between Israel and its neighbours, offering some redress and hope for the Palestinian people. In Britain we welcomed the downfall of the Tory government.

Was it too good to be true? As old campaigners put banners to rest, and the young found new concerns and interests, we were soon disabused of any illusions. The collapse of 'Communism' did not remove the problems of capitalism. East Europeans discovered new freedom to be unemployed, fall victim to sex-traffickers or, like the Roma, be targets for racism. Bosnia endured Europe's first war, and worst war crimes, since 1945. 'Ethnic cleansing' entered our vocabulary, becoming a cliché. Israel/Palestine fell into a new downward spiral of bloody atrocity and reprisals.

Switch on the television: more people killed in Iraq, and Tony Blair demanding support for 'a new war'. Israel's apartheid wall blocking the way to peace, not to more bombings. At home, workers and communities are dumped by capital moving freely in search of profit, while politicians and media focus on curbing rights and benefits, and blame asylum seekers and immigrants, thus encouraging resurgent Nazism. Globally we are warned of environmental disaster, but the world's richest and most powerful government refuses to co-operate internationally in avoiding this.

Yet we also see hope. Not in any 'saviour from on high', in heaven or government, but in 'ordinary' people of all ages recognising that, whatever our diversity, we share one world, and together we can change it.

Worldwide anti-war protests, from Rome to Rio, Tokyo to Tel Aviv, New York to London, showed a new political awakening. It is a century and a half since the first efforts to build an international movement with the slogan 'Workers of the World Unite!' We have had no shortage of betrayals and disappointments. But gatherings like the European Social Forum in London bring together new hopes and new generations to declare: 'Another world is possible!'

We share that hope. As socialists, we must consider how we can contribute, wherever we are, and with whatever means, to making that vision reality. As Jews, aware of our people's history, but also knowing we are not alone, we join those fighting every kind of prejudice and discrimination, which divide and oppress people. That means not least opposing 'our own' pillars of reaction, when they uphold war and oppression, whether from Israel, London or Washington.

'Not in my name', as survivors of 9/11 said of Bush's war, means we must be able to speak in our own name, with our own ways of discussing and communicating knowledge and ideas, not depending on the rich and powerful. Jewish Socialist is part of this. So whether you are welcoming an old friend, or meeting us for the first time, we hope you read, enjoy and find something you can relate to in our magazine. And if you feel inspired to strengthen this relationship, to join us, or contribute in any way, we look forward to hearing from you!

Klezmer for beginners



Back in the old country weddings used to last for days and the klezmer band played continually. They played horas for the dancing and would just vamp for quieter moments.

On a grey Sunday afternoon in Jacksons Lane Community Centre in Archway, London members of the Red Herring Club took part in a klezmer workshop led by Ronan Kriwaczek and Nick Ammar. This is the second workshop Rohan has taken with us. On this occasion some of the expenses were met by the Jewish Music Institute. Rohan and Nick both play and teach klezmer. Rohan plays in a duo with pianist John Human as well as with Dr Aspergers' Klezmer Tonic. Nick plays with Oy Va voi.

We were a disparate bunch with varying levels of expertise. Our instruments ranged from cellos to descant recorders. We were a real orchestra with woodwind, brass, keyboards and strings. Each instrument had its own signature key and Rohan darted about to ensure we all (at least) started on the same note. There was no music

script. We had to learn our tune by ear and although the version we played back to Rohan wasn't the same one he was teaching us, we were praised for our improvisation - 'genuinely klezmer' we were told. At one point our woodwind ensemble crept into another room to rehearse away from the overwhelming brass and battled instead against some gospel singers next door.

We finished the afternoon with a performance. We started with a 'vamp' similar to an oompah) and gradually each section joined in. Some of the more expert were coaxed into solos. The Hora rolled on and we repeated and repeated until the soloists lost their shyness and we were all able to start and finish on the same note. There is truly nothing more invigorating that you can do in a public place than play in an orchestra, and for some of us this was our first experience. We hope to set up further sessions. In a few years time we may be appearing at a wedding near you. Be warned. We can go on for days.

Ruth Lukom

WISEWORDS

That's free enterprise, friends: freedom to gamble, freedom to lose. And the great thing -- the truly democratic thing about it -- is that you don't even have to be a player to lose.

Barbara Ehrenreich

Barbara Ehrenreich is a writer, critic and leading member of the Democratic Socialists of America.

New year new demo

By calling its 2004 demonstration over the Iraq war on October 17th, the Stop the War Campaign has at least avoided the controversy that it sparked in 2003 when its national demonstration coincided with Rosh Hashanah - the Jewish New year. The campaign was warned well in advance of this date clash but chose, unlike their counterparts in New York, to go ahead on that date nevertheless. Attempts to mitigate the damage seemed possible when the rally organisers initially acceded to a request for a platform speaker from the Jewish Socialists Group - the only Jewish group affiliated to the campaign - but this was overturned by STWC officers before the rally day, causing more anger among Jewish anti-war activists.

These activists showed great restraint in not releasing this information before the rally, in order not to undermine it, but immediately afterwards they sent a four page letter to all members of the STWC Steering

Committee and its officers setting out their criticisms and their concerns. They said that STWC have made themselves an easy target for those in the Jewish community who want to label them antisemites and who oppose Jewish involvement in radical movements for social justice and against oppression and occupation in the Middle East.

The activists demanded a proper explanation of these events and assurances about what response STWC would make in the future. The STWC did not answer the letter but eventually sent two of its officers to a meeting with Jewish anti-war activists some months later. At that meeting these officers committed STWC to providing a full written reply to the original letter. That was the last we heard. This is not a useful or productive way to treat grassroots activists.

• Join the JSJ contingent on the anti-war demonstration in London on October 17th.

• See Weapons of Mass Engagement page 6.



Vanunu invited

The Jewish socialists Group welcomed the release of Mordechai Vanunu, Israel's nuclear weapons prisoner of conscience, who was freed after ending an 18-

year sentence, much of which was spent in a tiny cell in solitary confinement. His release was welcomed by human rights and peace activists around the world, including in Israel itself where a welcome party, mainly comprising young activists, stood to greet him by the gates of the jail.

The JSJ has however, condemned the continuing restrictions on Vanunu, who despite being freed from prison, remains effectively under house arrest, unable to obtain a passport, use the Internet or a mobile phone and banned from talking to foreigners. His supporters are mounting legal challenges to this new abuse of his human rights.

On the day of his release a petition signed by 300 Israelis was published in Ha'aretz which expressed their 'deep appreciation of the courageous act of Mordechai Vanunu'. It added that 'The inhuman punishment imposed upon him was a shame to those who tried him, but also to us who did not protest enough against it.' It condemned 'the witch-hunt that is being carried out against him'.

The JSJ has invited Mordechai Vanunu to London to talk about his experiences.

The Wall must fall

London was treated to a carnival of education on the Apartheid Wall last Remembrance Sunday, 9th November. We were responding to a call from the Palestinians for an international protest against the wall being built across the Occupied Territories.

November 9th is a significant date for many reasons. This was when the Berlin Wall fell and it is also the anniversary of Kristallnacht, a date of true infamy for Jews who still remember our history. While others were remembering the dead of the increasing wars this country engages in, we were making a stand against the continuation of war by other means. A crowd of about 80 people, from the Jewish Socialists' Group, JustPeaceUK, Jews for Justice for Palestinians and the International Solidarity Movement gathered at the Clock Tower in Golders Green, an area with a large Jewish population. Our banners reflected the places which had been – and were being – divided by walls: Qalqilya, Tulkarm, Bethlehem, Berlin, Warsaw, Vilna.

Unable to intimidate us from appearing by their threats, the right-wing thugs from Betar and Herut had gathered on the green opposite to taunt us under their hastily scribbled banner of 'Jews for Justice for Jews'. There was a gender imbalance: more women on our side, mostly men on theirs. Enraged by our presence their shaliakh (ideological leader) kept coming over to shout the greatest insults he could imagine: 'Antisemites! Nazis! How dare you come to Golders Green?' As if, like the occupied territories, once a place has been colonised by right wing Jews, it becomes the Holy land and others are only allowed on sufferance.

Undeterred we stood our ground, singing specially composed songs to familiar tunes: Sharon, stop the Battle for Jericho, Another Brick in the Wall, Ten Green Olives. Our words rang out, giving us heart and infuriating the opposition, who took to driving round the monument with their ubiquitous Israeli flag, preceded by our car which proclaimed: 'The Wall Must Fall'. We handed out our leaflets that nailed the Israeli government lies about the Wall. The slogan on our leaflet was 'Walls create ghettos – remember?'

The police had their work cut out keeping the opposition in line. At 11 o'clock, after the laying of the Remembrance Day wreaths, we left in convoy, but not before the war party showed their true colours, by punching one of our number in the face, thus exposing their creed which so mimics that of their hero, Sharon. We showed them that no territory is uncontested, neither the public highways nor the byways of our minds.

We travelled down on towards the centre of London, alighting at Chalk Farm tube station. The Betar shaliakh had followed us religiously. From there we marched down the road, stopping to leaflet and entertain the crowd with uplifting songs. Members of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), who organise courageous missions to the Occupied Territories to help protect the Palestinians from the Israeli army, provided street theatre, showing the reality of the occupation and its denial of freedom of movement. We met up with our colleagues from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and with the colourful and lively musicians from Rhythm of Resistance. PSC chose in its vibrant banner to concentrate on the symbol of Apartheid.

This was a protest with a difference; it was about connections, about hope, about joyful, inspirational singing and about informing a public aware mostly of suicide bombings but not of the grievances that produce the phenomenon.

We sang and we loud-hailed the throng, reminding them of the anniversary of Kristallnacht as well as that of the destruction of the Berlin Wall. We were assailed by uneducated young Jews who told us that Israel was their country; that without Israel Jews would not have been able to escape from Germany. Clearly they were unaware that most Jews had been trapped in Germany only to perish there. They claimed that all Palestinians were terrorists and deserved everything handed to them. Racism is alive and speaking with the voice of our Jewish youth. We were by now at least 100 people and the atmosphere was uplifting.

After a symbolic destruction of the wall, we travelled on to the public piazza at

Covent Garden, where we entertained some more people and by now we were really fluent. People were queuing up to take postcards of the new contours of the Palestinian territory to send to governments, and were reading our literature intensely. If they knew nothing up to now, they certainly had a steep learning curve on the day. We attracted the crowds by our colourful display and we all felt buoyed up by the experience.

The finale took place on the steps of Trafalgar Square. We added one more song to our repertoire, an almost direct translation of Tsi Darf Es Azoy Zayn? – Kasriel Brody's haunting Yiddish song of the Vilna Ghetto, translated as Need it be this way? People sang their hearts out and lifted our spirits. We argued with Americans, with French people and showed the world that if it is up to us, ethnic cleansing will fail. The ISM outdid themselves in their final performance and, with our people standing in a tableau of banners, we erected the PSC's cardboard wall.

In a rousing finale we symbolically destroyed our temporary wall to an almighty cheer. More than 400 people were in the square to witness our performance.

Everyone who took part recognised that something important had happened. We had shown in one small corner the advantages of unity and had given people a chance to envisage a different future from the one that has been mapped out by Sharon and his generals.

The day was crowned with an excellent packed evening of talks and discussion at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), on the present impasse of the Road Map, and the politics of the settlements and the Wall given by Jeff Halper from Israeli Coalition Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), Israeli architect Eyal Weizman, and Palestinian academic Karma Nabulsi. These are people who have studied the contours of the expansion of territory by the Israelis and showed with maps and slides how difficult it will be to unravel the new geography. The day was about a new approach to protest. We showed the importance of joint international work within which the seeds of true engagement can come.

Diana Neslen

The struggle continues

A further mass protest against the wall was organised in Trafalgar Square recently by Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Among the speakers was Jewish Socialist editorial member David Rosenberg, who was speaking on behalf of Just PeaceUK. In his speech he said: 'JPUC is a secular organisation. Our commitment to Palestinian rights to self-determination, to a state, is nothing to do with Jewish ethics or saving Israel's moral soul. It is purely about human rights.'

The Israel/Palestine issue is, above all, an issue of rights, not religion. And opposition to what Israel is doing must be based on rights not religion. It is about what the Israeli government and army are doing, not about what Jewish people think or do. Antisemitism is as much an enemy of the Palestinian struggle as it is an enemy of the Jews, as it weakens the possibility of joint struggle. We must fight it together.

Sharon's government and Israeli leaders before him have often called on diaspora Jewish communities for unconditional political and material support. We will not give it. We are not satellites of

SKIF, Melbourne's Jewish Socialist youth movement



SKIF is a Melbourne Jewish youth movement that is committed to upholding the values of Jewish socialism, the unique ideological framework that emerged from the struggles of the Jewish working classes in Eastern Europe. SKIF – Sotsialistisher Kinder Farband – was set up in 1926 by the Jewish Workers Union, the Bund.

The movement believes that the fate of Jews is inextricably bound to the fate of all people and that democratic socialism is the most desirable avenue for the true emancipation of Jews, wherever it is that they may live. SKIF has weekly meetings and holds camps in the winter, spring and summer holidays.

SKIF's democratic socialism is embodied in the ideological principle of khavershaft, adapted from the Austrian socialists' motto, 'Freundshaft', literally meaning friendship. At SKIF today, we uphold this ideal through stressing co-operation, awareness of the struggles faced by all the peoples of the world and solidarity with oppressed people, whoever they are and wherever they live.

While khavershaft forms part of SKIF's world view, it works at a personal level as well, to promote empathy and respect for others –

important character traits in any child growing up and into the wider world.

Another important ideological principle for SKIF is doykayt, broadly translated in the Bundist slogan, 'Here and now!' Doykayt, embodies our belief that Jews everywhere must work to link their struggles with others. It upholds the ability and rights of Jewish people to build strong communities wherever they live. Doykayt values each Jewish community equally, opposing the hegemony of any one community over others, and encourages all Jews, everywhere, to open their minds to the world around them and to view their Jewish identity within the context of their common humanity.

SKIF is opposed to the incitement of any national emotions that foster Jewish chauvinism, threatening the involvement of Jews in building solutions to the struggles of all people and in doing so, threatening the fate of the Jewish people. The existence and continuing vibrancy of SKIF, other Jewish youth groups and community institutions, and the general acceptance of Jewish people, vindicates Doykayt and its tenets.

SKIF's Jewish identity clearly influences its ideological principles. However, Yiddishkayt, isn't merely a background to our activities, it is a principle in itself. We recognise the shared heritage of the Jewish people, and aim to increase awareness of Jewish history and secular involvement in traditional Jewish celebrations and activities.

The Holocaust also provides a strong focus for examining our shared Jewish identity. In addition to an event during the year to commemorate the heroic Warsaw ghetto uprising, we give time at camp to engage in sombre reflection of some of these darker moments of Jewish history.

Yiddish culture and language figure prominently. The richness of Yiddish culture provides an important link to our history and through song and stories we immerse ourselves in Yiddishkayt, although a grasp of the Yiddish language is not a prerequisite for attending SKIF.

Underlying the ideological principles is a steadfast pledge to have fun and provide a safe environment for Jewish youth to revel in being Jewish, in Melbourne, here and now!

Joshua Osowicki

Email: chavershaft@hotmail.com

Killing fields

Jewish Socialists travelled to Broxbourne in August to support a campaign against eviction of a Romany family and to be part of the dedication of a field in memory of the Romany Holocaust during World War Two and the continuing racist oppression they are suffering in Europe today.

The Smith family had been living on the site for 15 years. Romany and non-Romany travellers were there to support the campaign. An exhibition of the Gypsy genocide stood in the field alongside symbolic graves

commemorating those killed in Auschwitz and more recently in Kosovo and the Czech Republic. As the field was dedicated, a bender tent was burnt in memory, and music was played by East European Roma. The event was addressed by several speakers including Dave Landau of the JSG and longstanding activist for Gypsy rights Grattan Puxon.

Another longstanding gypsy rights activist, Donald Kenrick, who is also a member of the JSG has recently published *Gypsies: from the Ganges to the Thames*, Hertfordshire Press £9.99 (+75p p&p) email UH Press@herts.ac.uk

Israel. We Diaspora Jews have our own needs, our own outlook and our own interests which are different and often completely opposite to the interests of the Israeli state.

Many diaspora Jews understand better than Israel the lessons of Jewish history – that the fight against oppression is universal and indivisible. The struggle for Palestinian self-determination and a commitment to a secure future for Jews in the world

go hand in hand, and we pledge ourselves to fight for these goals.'

The protest was an impressive display of unity between Jews and Palestinians against the Wall and against the occupation, although it was marred by the maltreatment of a small group of protesters who combined their banner slogans against Zionist occupation with slogans protesting the oppression of gays by the Palestinian authority.

The Stop the War Coalition must continue to champion Iraqi freedom and justice – but must also start acting like a democratic movement, says MIKE MARQUEE

This year kicked off with a confirmation that British troops would remain in Iraq for at least another two years. Clearly, neither the occupation nor the resistance to it will be short-lived. To what extent they become dominant or even determinant issues in British politics will depend, in part, on how the anti-war movement responds.

From September 2002 to the anti-Bush protests in November 2003, this movement has consistently brought large numbers of people into the streets. The punditocracy is always reluctant to acknowledge the power of unofficial actors, but in this case it was the unofficial actors who transformed the agenda. The millions who took part in the protests stopped seeing themselves as mere spectators to the history of their times and decided to participate in making that history. In a society where so many forces encourage us to gawp voyeuristically at public life, it must be significant that so many took action who had never before considered themselves political players.

It was the visible growth of this movement that forced Blair to contrive ever more extravagant rationalisations for war, including the notorious 45-minute claim. The war-making process was exposed to a degree of public scrutiny rarely seen before, the ramifications of which are not yet exhausted.

Contrary to claims made by pro-war critics, there were few illusions in the anti-war camp about the despotic nature of Saddam Hussein's regime. The opposition to the war arose from a democratic and internationalist spirit. At the base, the movement is knowledgeable, thoughtful and nobody's fool. Neither the 'success' of the initial military campaign nor the capture of Saddam has answered its fundamental objections to the invasion. The unfolding events – the failure to locate any 'weapons of mass destruction', the corporate plunder of a desperately weakened economy, the emergence of an armed resistance that shows no signs of abating – has confirmed the movement's broad analysis.

However, we failed to stop the invasion, and we have been unable to stop the ongoing war. We came closer than anyone expected and that's cause for hope, but we shouldn't underestimate the powers we were up against (not just Blair or the neo-Cons in Washington but an imperial machine determined to seize a huge historical advantage) or overestimate what we represented. Perhaps the most significant contribution of this movement will prove to be that it inhibited further acts of overt military aggression by the imperial superpower. For the moment, the US is unlikely to strike elsewhere, though that does not mean that the new phase of imperial aggrandisement that opened after 9/11 has come to a halt. It does mean that a great deal still hangs in the balance.

A social movement is by nature amorphous. It involves people to differing degrees and in different ways. Its rhythms are uneven. Its borders are not static. It stretches from full-timers at the organisational centres to those who attend a single demo or read with sympathy a leaflet or article. It has both formal and informal expressions. To 'speak for a movement' is a giant claim. To even hope to fulfil such a role, some humility is required.

Which brings me to the Stop the War Coalition. First, it's necessary to acknowledge the essential role the STWC has played. Without the focus it provided, without the resources at the national centre, without the initiative it displayed, we

WEAPONS

wouldn't have had the sequence of mass demonstrations that have had a huge impact on the political equation. However, at national level, the STWC suffers from a severe democratic deficit. (The mishandling of the issues arising from the coincidence of the September 2003 demonstration with Rosh Hashanah was symptomatic of this.) It's a deficit that will be difficult to overcome as long as the SWP remains organisationally dominant.

The visible standing together of the various strands of the movement – student, trade union, leftist, 'Muslim', 'peacenik', 'anti-capitalist' – has been powerful. It's made the movement as a whole more than the sum of its parts. But the STWC leadership has drawn the wrong lessons from this remarkable experience. First, they seem to believe that open discussion and criticism will undermine that 'standing together'; second, that this unity is best fostered through private negotiations among a small group of people largely unaccountable to the constituencies they're supposed to represent.

Muslim participation has been an indispensable asset to the anti-war movement and has already had a marked social impact. Unfortunately, the debate engendered by this participation has often been simplistic. On the one hand, leaders of the STWC appear to assume that Muslims must be wooed as a homogenous bloc (to be mobilised by Muslim 'leaders'), and that any debate or discussion about the relation of religion and politics, or any criticism of fundamentalism, is dangerous to the unity of the movement (an extremely patronising view of Muslims). On the other hand, there are some who identify Islam in general with fundamentalism and reaction, and effectively reject Muslim participation as such. The anti-war movement is hampered here, as elsewhere, by crude counter-positions. Muslim identity is neither inherently reactionary nor inherently progressive and Muslims do not form a homogenous single community. Indeed, a feature of the last two years has been the intensity of debate and the increasing political competition *within* Muslim communities. Those communities are ill-served by an approach that suppresses honest, democratic discussion across 'ethnic' boundaries.

The anti-war movement is not a fixed entity, a single constituency, that can be converted into an electoral tool or channelled into a predefined political groove (which is not to say that the movement does not have to discuss electoral or political strategies). Any movement worth its salt is going to be bigger than a single organisation. While the STWC has provided a vital hub it has never been the whole story. In many respects, the anti-war movement has not yet tapped its potential well of active support. If it is to survive and succeed in altering the course of events, it will have to put down roots and reach new layers of the population.

The Stop the War Coalition enjoyed extensive formal trade union support, and trade union leaders were prominent on anti-war platforms. Even the TUC General Council spoke plainly against the invasion. However, anti-war campaigning at branch and workplace level has been limited. Ironically, in

OF MASS ENGAGEMENT

the USA, where the history of official trade union collusion with imperial policy is a long and painful one, there has been greater activity. US Labor Against the War commands the support of large numbers of trades unionists, has held a well-attended national Labor Assembly for Peace and has pledged to sustain an anti-war presence within the labour movement. We have had nothing like that here, nor anything like the local Labor Against the War committees – open, non-sectarian and activist based – established in major US cities.

The international mobilisation on 15 February was unprecedented in its scale and scope. But we need to do more than just celebrate it. We need to analyse and consolidate it. The simultaneous presence in the streets of so many millions in so many venues all protesting against a single injustice suggests a nascent internationalist consciousness, highly variegated, speaking in a host of local accents, but clearly discernible. Yet, despite this historic global convergence, we hardly know each other. Our internationalism is too often abstract. What's needed is not some grandiose global framework, but a multiplicity of concrete links, multilateral and bilateral. In particular, we need more contact with the anti-war movement in the USA. Ironically the Bush-Blair 'special relationship' is not mirrored on the left, and that weakens us on both sides of the Atlantic.

Building opposition to an ongoing occupation is bound to be a more difficult task than mobilising against an imminent and avoidable war. Having failed to prevent the invasion, many people feel there is little point in further protest. A sense of powerlessness is always the nemesis of mass movements. But the antidote cannot be promises of a quick fix. We need to mount a sustained and focussed campaign against the occupation.

This campaign needs an armoury of arguments. The movement must offer more than glib replies to those who opposed the war but now feel some form of Anglo-American occupation would best serve the interests of Iraqis. Yes, the interests of Iraqis do come first, and a Manichaean anti-imperialism sometimes seems to forget this. But who determines what is in Iraqis' interests and how? What evidence is there that this occupation can be anything other than a repeat of past imperial disgraces?

To some extent, the facts on the ground speak for themselves. Civilians killed, injured and terrified, villages and suburbs raided, houses and crops destroyed, hooded suspects paraded through the streets, thousands detained without charge or trial. The occupying authority barricaded from the populace, facilitating the appropriation of the economy by multinationals, attacking trades unions, unable or unwilling to provide power, water, employment, education.

The occupation is the outcome of an unjust military aggression and is without democratic legitimacy. The idea that this action can be converted retrospectively into something responsive to the needs and rights of Iraqis is fanciful. We know that the US and Britain are not in Iraq for the reasons that they have claimed. Their conduct there will continue

to be governed by the same priorities that brought them there in the first place. The welfare of the Iraqi people has never been high among these. Far from being ameliorated as time goes by, the occupation has become increasingly brutal and arbitrary. That is not merely because of the arrogance of the neo-Cons, or some cultural gap between the West and the Middle East, but fundamentally because occupiers are never accountable to the people whose land is occupied. The chain of command ties the soldiers on the front line not to the Iraqi population but to the ruling elites in Washington and London.

Whatever fig-leaves the occupiers adopt, this anti-democratic dynamic will remain an intractable reality, the same reality that led to the formation of the anti-colonial movements that transformed the face of the planet in the 20th century. In the long run, a campaign against the occupation will have to ask people who opposed the war to take another step and identify imperialism as an objectionable system.

However, we are unlikely to make headway in that effort if our anti-imperialism appears to be an 'anti-imperialism of fools'. We cannot just put a plus where imperialism puts a minus. As we've seen repeatedly, one of the tragedies of imperialism in our era has been the way it has licensed destructive political and social agents which it has then turned against. The answer to the imperial fundamentalism of Bush and Blair is neither a counter-fundamentalism nor an isolationist relativism. We – the people of the west and of Britain and the US especially – do have a responsibility to the people of Iraq. A campaign to end the occupation should incorporate demands for mammoth financial reparations and for grass-roots international solidarity that facilitates Iraqis on the ground and is not in any way an instrument of outside interests.

Resistance to the occupation is continuing. How effective or widely supported it will be and what political colour it acquires remain to be seen. In a sense all our efforts over here are tied to the realities on the ground in Iraq, so we must acquaint ourselves with them. We can't rely on the mainstream media. We need to seek out multiple sources of information, fashion our own links, organise delegations to Iraq, meet a spectrum of individuals and groups there, and report widely when they return.

Somehow, we need to create standing reminders of the brutal realities and underlying injustice of the occupation – something that plays the kind of role that the red ribbon played in Aids awareness. It's not hard to imagine this occupation becoming accepted as a fact of life, like the conflict in Northern Ireland, a running sore that most people in Britain are prepared to live with. In that context, non-violent direct action – targeted, imaginative, persistent – will be a vital tool. In particular, those corporations doing business in Iraq should be exposed as plunderers.

Finally, the movement should prepare for the long haul. The likelihood must be that we are facing a struggle of many years against an aggressive force commanding huge resources. The lesson of the last two years is that we also command huge resources, human resources. Let's not squander them.

Mike Marqusee is former press officer for the Stop the War Coalition and was a founder of Media Workers Against the War. He is Secretary of Iraq Occupation Focus

DEMONISATION

HENRY ASCHER challenges the Israeli ambassador to Sweden

I don't think I've ever taken part in anything as improbable as this. After an intensive day's work I arrive at the launch of an exhibition at Stockholm's Historical Museum. Somebody shouts that the Israeli ambassador has destroyed one of the works in the exhibition. Suddenly he is standing beside me.

'They make heroes of mass murderers. That is unacceptable. It encourages mass murder,' says the ambassador angrily.

The installation *Snow White and The Madness of Truth* by Gunilla Sköld Feiler and Dror Feiler consists of a pool of blood-coloured water with a boat containing a picture of the female suicide bomber, Hanadi Jaradat.

A text mixes excerpts from the story of *Snow White* by the Brothers Grimm with quotes about Jaradat from Israeli newspapers. It describes how shattered she was when a brother and a cousin were killed by Israeli forces, how she murdered herself and 19 other people and the suffering caused by her suicide action. Could this possibly be seen as a homage to a suicide bomber? Dror grew up in Israel and the couple have friends and relatives there. They see it as their second home. Can they possibly be antisemites?

'We know exactly what the Nazis did,' says the ambassador at my side.

'Now we know what the Arabs do. They are instigators of terror everywhere, everywhere. Particularly in Israel. The Arabs, the Palestinians, absolutely, yes.'

'Mr Ambassador, do you mean to say that all Palestinians and all Arabs are terrorists?' I hear myself ask.

All of them,' he replies.
I take a deep breath.

'Excuse me,' I say. 'That makes me sad. It is just that kind of generalisation, which my grandparents were subjected to in the Germany and Austria of the 1930s.'

Does he hear me? Perhaps he pauses a bit and gives me a puzzled look. I try to gather my thoughts. Does the ambassador not know that incitement to racial hatred is forbidden in Sweden, precisely to prevent the Nazi deeds from having a chance to be repeated? I must talk to him.

'Mr Ambassador, how can you, as representative for a country that calls itself democratic, censor a piece of art in this way?'

'It is not a piece of art. It is an obscene insult to the murdered Jews, to my people.'

'And who gives you the right to be the judge of what is art and what is not?'

Somebody shouts: 'What about the occupation?' 'There is no occupation,' he answers.

'But your government kills Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza. Are their lives worth less than the Israeli victims of suicide bombers?'

'They attack us.'

'You mean to say that every Palestinian that your army has killed, every woman and child, has attacked Israel?'

'Every one of them.'

The action of the ambassador and my discussion with him give me no peace of mind. Why was he so provoked? The installation describes Hanadi Jaradat in a chain of inhuman violence, which turns her into a murderer whose victims in turn risk becoming perpetrators themselves.

The text of the installation says: 'And now many people cry: Zer Aviv's family, Almog's family and all relatives and friends of the dead and wounded.'

Maybe that was too much for the ambassador. To him suicide bombers are evil, bloodthirsty and brainwashed. Period. They are not human and need not be treated as such. How tempting it is to simplify when the truth becomes uncomfortable and complex. Dividing people into good or evil – those who are for us and those who are against us – does make life much simpler. To reflect on whether the expulsion, oppression and occupation contributes to the desperation of the Palestinians and gives rise to suicide bombers is painful. It is, of course, easier to see them simply as murderers and to call critics antisemites than to consider what they really say.

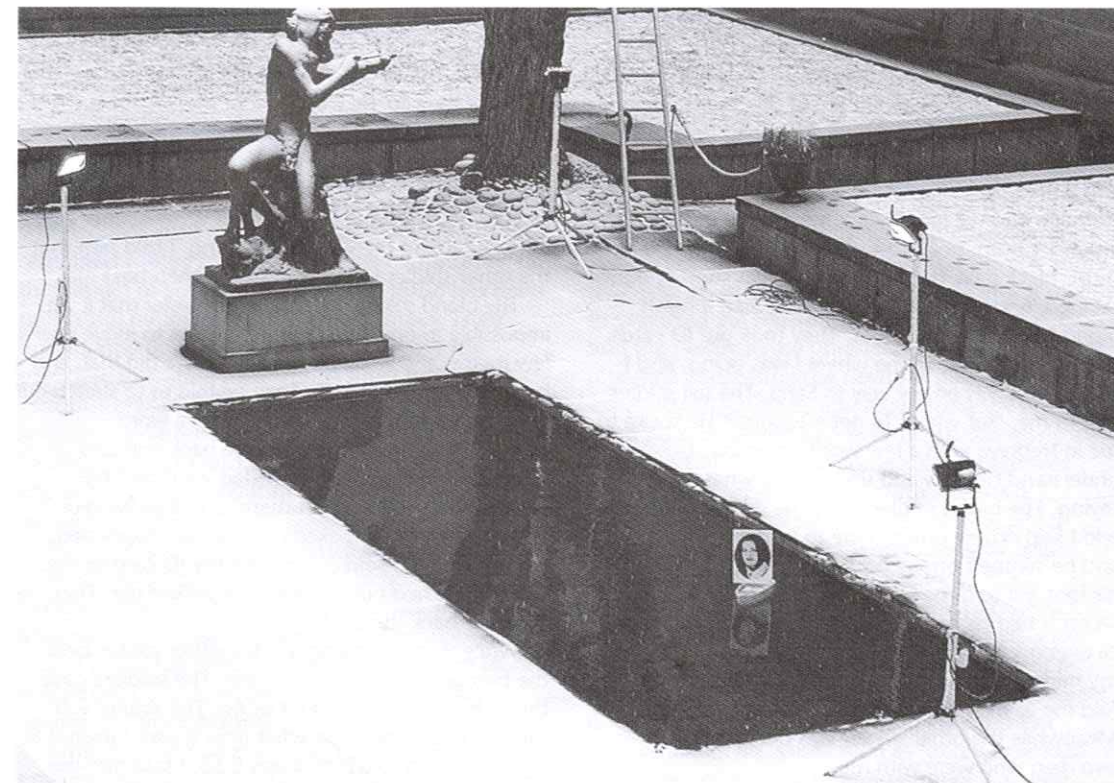
The dehumanisation of opponents has a price. It changes oneself. The oppression of the Palestinians creates a mentality which, like a cancer, pervades society. The ambassador destroys pieces of art rather than discussing the issues they raise. Israeli soldiers shoot suspects instead of bringing them to court. If the Palestinians are not human, one does not need to deal with them according to Jewish ethics.

The dehumanisation of opponents has often

Below and right: *Snow White and The Madness of Truth* by Gunilla Sköld Feiler and Dror Feiler, the installation that touched nerves in the Stockholm Historical Museum



DRIVES THE VIOLENCE



been used in history. The cruel colonial empire of Britain and the apartheid system in South Africa are examples. Zygmunt Bauman writes that the dehumanisation of the Jews by the Nazis was a precondition for the genocide.

No, I am not arguing that Israeli politics is equivalent to the Nazis. I won't oversimplify. But anyone who demonises his opponents has lost one of the most important human qualities: the ability to understand the situation of others.

'Sweden is antisemitic, and Swedish newspapers daily contain antisemitic articles,' claims Ambassador Mazel.

He has insinuated on television that the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, KG Hammar, who advocates a boycott of goods from the Occupied territories, is antisemitic and that Anna Lindh was an immature girl. Such statements trivialise antisemitism and insult those who have suffered from antisemitism in history. In addition, by watering down the term, we face the risk that nobody will listen when we warn of real threats.

To try to understand is not to excuse. But if we understand what drives violence, then we can

create efficient cures without at the same time becoming dehumanised. *Snow White and The Madness of Truth* is an attempt at such understanding.

Such an analysis probably leads us to the conclusion that the occupation, the oppression and the building of the Wall create increased Palestinian desperation and more, not fewer, suicide bombers.

The politics of Ariel Sharon also leads to greater suffering for the Israelis themselves. Thereby any attempt at intellectual analysis becomes a threat against the Israeli State.

The exhibition *Making Differences* works for tolerance, understanding, atonement and remembrance. There is every reason to support Israeli efforts for peace and to condemn the ambassador's attempt at sabotage and censorship.

Ambassador Zvi Mazel cannot discuss the piece of art, only destroy it.

Henry Ascher is Head Physician and Professor of Child Medicine of the Rosengren clinic in Gothenburg, a clinic for hidden fugitives. He is the child of refugees from Nazism. His father's entire family died in concentration camps.

TO THE AMBASSADOR, SUICIDE BOMBERS ARE EVIL, BLOODTHIRSTY AND BRAINWASHED. PERIOD. THEY ARE NOT HUMAN AND NEED NOT BE TREATED AS SUCH. HOW TEMPTING IT IS TO SIMPLIFY WHEN THE TRUTH BECOMES UNCOMFORTABLE AND COMPLEX. DIVIDING PEOPLE INTO GOOD OR EVIL DOES MAKE LIFE MUCH SIMPLER.

NEGOTIATING NO MAN'S LAND

For 25 years, Southall Black Sisters have campaigned on the dangerous territory at the intersection between race, gender and class. Their new anthology, *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers*, describes how their unique politics has simultaneously given a voice to the most powerless members of their community and inspired international campaigns

Their name sounds parochial and their work with women suffering from domestic violence has remained rooted in their own local community, but the impact of Southall Black Sisters (SBS) has been profound, nationally and internationally. Their unwavering commitment to secularism – the principle that state institutions must be free of religious bias in order to serve equally those of all religions and none – propelled them to establish Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF) in 1989, in the wake of the declaration of the fatwa against Salman Rushdie.

WAF quickly developed into a creative coalition of feminist activists from a wide range of backgrounds – Catholic and Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, atheist – who developed a way of opposing simultaneously oppression from within their communities and discrimination against their communities.

From *Homebreakers* to *Jailbreakers* documents how Southall Black Sisters have hung in there, supporting distraught women, fighting their cases through the courts, demanding that social services and the police protect them, arguing publicly with community leaders who try to demonise them, and challenging politicians and the justice system.

Unlike so many radical campaigners of the 1970s and '80s who have joined the establishment, given up exhausted or collapsed into lowest common denominator front organisations, Southall Black Sisters, set up 25 years ago to offer advice and support to women in their west London community, still provide an articulate political voice to women caught violently between the demands of their own communities and the racism of the surrounding society.

How have they survived? How have they maintained the integrity of their politics along with the energy to campaign imaginatively and effectively? While the wider feminist movement has atomised, and most of what remains of the left is arguing with itself, Southall Black Sisters have developed a political culture which genuinely combines the personal with the political. They don't just meet up to share out the work or discuss the ideas they have in common: they know from experience that political struggle takes a toll of individuals and their organisations, and that everyone engaged in such a struggle needs support. The result is a network of relationships within and far beyond SBS which nurture several generations of activists and have enabled them to develop a responsive but sophisticated theoretical analysis and maintain the energy to campaign for social and

political change.

Events organised by SBS are welcoming: they are open and discursive; people really listen to each other; they laugh, they eat and they get to know one another. This is a startling contrast to, for example, the Socialist Workers' Party, currently dominating the Stop the War Movement and other significant activity on the left, who pack out meetings, to ensure that their positions will win and decide before hearing any discussion, which resolutions to support or oppose. SBS's way of operating is more demanding, intellectually and practically. It means negotiating the territory that connects the personal and the political; the practical and the theoretical; it means addressing the needs of newcomers and experienced activists, and facilitating the move from powerlessness to powerful. All this territory is contested, shifting, and sometimes dangerous.

From *Homebreakers* to *Jailbreakers* is a collection of essays by members of SBS, which explore, practically and theoretically, the issues they deal with day to day. These range from deciding how they can help women paralysed by the risk of losing everything, in some cases even their lives, for contravening the rules of *izzat* or family honour, to deciding whether, and on what terms they should participate in government policymaking on issues such as forced marriage. The book reflects the interdependency of their work on the ground in their own community – for example Meena Patel's moving essay, 'Silent witnesses: domestic violence and black children' – and their global political analysis, represented, for example by Pragna Patel's lucid exploration, in 'Rama or Rambo? The rise of Hindu fundamentalism', of the shifting relationship of Hindus in Britain with an Indian subcontinent increasingly riven by communalism.

SBS have been accused of exposing the Asian community to racism by 'washing their dirty linen in public'. As committed anti-racists 'that slippery intersection between race and gender, no man's land,' is an uncomfortable place to be. Should women suffer in silence in order to protect their community? Or do they have an absolute right to be protected from violence, to live in safety, like anyone else? Should you use racist immigration laws to exclude violent men? Or do you campaign for gender oppression to be grounds for asylum.

In her chapter, entitled 'Jumping through hoops: immigration and domestic violence' Poonam Joshi says that while women and children make up most of the world's refugees and displaced people, the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers are men. In other words, women, by and large, have to continue living in terrifying, life-threatening situations and often the threats they face are not even recognised as such. Joshi describes one of SBS's most significant victories when, in 1999, the House of Lords recognised gender-related persecution for the first time. This was the outcome

For 25 years, Southall Black Sisters have campaigned on the dangerous territory at the intersection between race, gender and class. Their new anthology, *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers*, describes how their unique politics has simultaneously given a voice to the most powerless members of their community and inspired international campaigns, says **JULIA BARD**

From *Homebreakers to Jailbreakers*: Southall Black Sisters edited by Rahila Gupta, Zed Books, £14.95

A version of this article was first published in Red Pepper.

I am a plumber and I work in Nablus. I stay in the city during the week, and go home at weekends to be with my family. I generally go to Nablus on Saturday morning. Last Saturday the army was in Nablus and I did not try to get into the city.

Yesterday, I heard that the army had left Nablus, so I decided to try and go in. I went with two students from my village. As we came near to the Sarra checkpoint, a man told us that the soldiers were not letting anybody cross to Nablus. We decided to go around the checkpoint. We started climbing up the hill at 7.30.

When we were around 500-600 metres from the road where the checkpoint is, we saw two soldiers about 2 metres away from us. They had been hiding behind the bushes. As we were passing they got up and aimed their rifles at us. They kicked us in the stomach and we fell down. One soldier was tall, around 1.80m, heavy set, dark skinned and had short, black hair. The other soldier was shorter, light skinned, and was also heavy set. He had longish blond hair and brown eyes. They took our ID cards.

The soldiers asked me where I was going, and I told them I was on my way to Sarra. The tall soldier said to me, 'For what? To get weapons?' He spoke to me in Hebrew, with a few words in Arabic. I understand Hebrew and understood what he was saying. The blond soldier asked me if I had a weapon and I said no. He ordered me to lie down on my back, and he stepped on my neck and pressed down with his foot. He told me I was about to die. After about 30 seconds had passed, he lifted his foot and kicked me all over my body, mostly in my abdomen. I covered my midsection, with my hands to protect myself. He told me to move my hands and continued to kick me. Meanwhile the other soldier was beating the other two men who were with me.

Then the two soldiers beat Mazen 'Az a-din, who was one of the people with me. The blond soldier grabbed his arm and twisted it behind his back, and the other soldier kicked him in the abdomen. Then they told him to lie down on his stomach, and the dark-haired soldier put his rifle to the back of Mazen's head and said that he was going to shoot and kill him. The soldier counted to three, and on three, the blond soldier fired into the air. They did the same thing to me.

Then they beat us in the back of our heads with the butt of their rifles. They ordered us to walk a few metres and then they told us to sit down. Then they

kicked us again. Then they told us to get up, and the dark-haired soldier punched me in the face and asked me if it hurt. I told him that it did, and he told me to show him where it hurts. I showed him, and he hit me with his rifle under my chin.

Then they told us to walk. We walked about 20 metres and saw three men handcuffed to an olive tree. The dark-haired soldier told us we had one minute to remove the plastic cuffs from the hands of the other three, so they could tie our hands. The blond soldier took the clip of a kippa he had in his pocket and gave it to me to use to open the handcuffs. He told me that if I broke the clip, he would shoot me.

I tried to open the cuffs and bent the clip in the process. I tried to straighten it out and the blond soldier asked me why I broke it. He told me in Hebrew to sit on the ground. The other soldier came over and asked me why I was sitting. I told him that the other soldier told me to sit. He then beat me.

The blond soldier told the other soldier that it was impossible to open the cuffs. He told us to move over a few metres and lie on our stomachs. We did that, and he stepped on our backs. Then he told us to stretch our arms out in front of us and not to say a word.

A short while later, they came back and told us that we were free to go provided we didn't tell anyone that we had seen them, and that we didn't describe how they looked or what had happened. The dark-haired soldier held out my ID card to me. When I reached out to take it, he kicked me. Then he gave me back the card.

While that was going on, the other soldier beat the two guys who were with me. The soldiers gave them their ID cards and let us go. The soldier with the black hair asked me what time it was. I looked at my watch and told him it was 8.55. I told him the time in Arabic, and he said, 'OK, OK.'

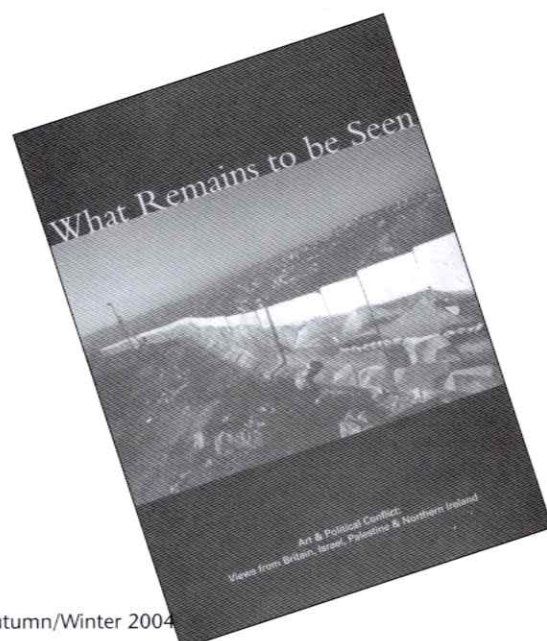
The soldiers took their helmets and told us not to free the other three guys, and that, if we did, they would shoot us. The soldiers also told us not to tell anyone that they were there, otherwise they would come and shoot us. The soldiers headed towards the checkpoint. We went back to our village and the other three guys remained there, tied to the tree.

This testimony was published in: Abuse of Palestinians at the Sarra Checkpoint, Nablus District, 27-31 December 2003, by B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.

Website: www.b'tselem.org

Cover picture

The cover image of checkpoint guards was taken by Miki Kratsman as part of his *Machsom* (Roadblocks) project. It is featured in an excellent collection of photographs and text edited by Gordon Hon, *What Remains to be Seen: Art and political conflict – views from Britain, Israel, Palestine and Northern Ireland*. This book is published by Multi-Exposure, PO Box 2935, London NW1 8LF.



Testimony of Muhand Hassan, 19, single, resident of Jit, Nablus District, (Occupied West Bank)





of a case of two Pakistani women who had been falsely accused by their husbands of adultery, who claimed asylum on the grounds that if they returned to Pakistan they would be prosecuted under Shariah law and further persecuted by their relatives.

SBS locate this victory within the context of British asylum policy, which, says Joshi, 'remains unethical and opportunistic ... While the West applauds the free movement of capital, it abhors the free movement of labour.' She continues: 'We need to look no further than the government's immigration policies to understand how class, race and gender bias operates under New Labour. We condemn their immigration laws as racist and do not campaign for concessions for women at the expense of men.'

This balancing of gender oppression and racism was one point of tension with Justice For Women, a group SBS worked closely with in their campaign for the release of a number of women who had killed their partners after years of violence and threats. Nevertheless, the importance of making different kinds of alliances without compromising their politics is a thread that runs through the book, and which also presents a significant challenge to the rest of the left.

During SBS's participation in the campaign to support the Lufthansa Skychef catering workers, many of whom were Asian, supporters on the picket lines chanted slogans in Punjabi and Hindi. The police started to get paranoid, as they couldn't understand the chants, so they demanded that the demonstrators only chant in English. SBS supported the right of people to chant in their own language, only to hear the men chanting at women who crossed the picket line: 'Slag! Prostitute!'

Rahila Gupta, in her fascinating chapter entitled 'Walls into bridges: the losses and gains of making alliances' explores the issues this raises. She honestly ascribes situations like that on the Skychef picket line to SBS's failure to overcome their difficulty in establishing themselves in mainstream Southall politics, and a resulting failure to forge strong links with working class Asian women involved in trade union struggles.

However there were other alliances in which SBS gained support and did not compromise its sophisticated, person-centred politics. Gupta describes how, in the course of their campaign to free Zoora Shah, an Asian woman who poisoned her abuser after 12 years of sexual slavery and violence, SBS campaigned within the Women's Institute and the Townswomen's Guild for changes in the law on provocation. 'The WI gathered 43,000 signatures, while we managed approximately 2,000,' writes Gupta. This though was, explicitly, a short term alliance to campaign for a single issue as was their courting of the orthodox, religious Muslim establishment. Gupta says: 'We recognised that support from them, the "community leaders", would weigh heavily with the home secretary, Jack Straw.' They had no illusions that the conservative clerics (or the WI for that matter) would come to share SBS's secularist, 'women's rights are human rights' perspective, but knew they were ready, for their own reasons, to express compassion for women trapped in violent marriages. Gupta says: 'We received some support for Zoora from the Muslim religious establishment on the basis of the racism of the British state and the criminal justice system – that they would have been more lenient towards a white woman facing the same charges.' They worked with them on that specific issue, while analysing whether their politics was being compromised or whether they were gaining in understanding of the complexities of the religious establishment.

The reason for all this effort and heartsearching is that it changes people's lives. It literally liberated the women who had been terrified and provoked into retaliating against their husbands. It also raised awareness in the wider society of the double powerlessness of women in minority communities who are often abandoned by the institutions that are set up to help them. Because whatever SBS's theoretical view of the state – in the form of the police, social services, the education system and so on – in practice they have demanded that the state protect black women on equal terms with anyone else.

Pragna Patel's chapter, 'The tricky blue line:

black women and policing' looks at the opportunities, or otherwise, opened up by New Labour's legislation on criminal justice. Here again, says Patel: 'The dilemma for SBS has centred on the question of how far we can engage with the police without compromising our autonomy. We are aware that change occurs by maintaining pressure from the outside as well as influencing from within, but the question of how far we can go without being co-opted is vital.' She continues: 'With a few exceptions, our cases reveal a profound unwillingness amongst local rank-and-file officers to accept the charge that the police are institutionally racist and sexist, or that they need drastically to transform their operational culture of complacency and arrogance. Yet the problem for us is that without some kind of engagement, however ineffective, we close off even the remote possibility of influencing police policy in the post-Stephen Lawrence climate. There are no easy answers.'

Southall Black Sisters were invited to participate in the Home Office Working Group on Forced Marriage. Along with other women's groups, they argued that there should not be a specific law against forced marriage, which they believe would open a door to racial harassment, but that this should be incorporated into a national strategy on violence against women and children. They see the situation of Asian women in a wider and changing context: not as a personal problem but as a political – and in some cases as an international – issue.

Hannana Siddiqui, who represented SBS on the Working Group, dropped out in the end because the committee insisted on recommending mediation between women and girls forced into marriage and their families or community elders. This, said SBS, was a concession to the powerful that would leave the powerless exposed. 'Would you want a reconciliation meeting with someone who had beaten you to a pulp?' asks Siddiqui in 'It was written in her kismet: forced marriage'.

The conflicts and dilemmas that SBS are grappling with, and the challenge of campaigning for social and political change, have a direct impact on people's lives. 'No matter how much our heads have been bowed down in casework, we have continued to campaign and pursue groundbreaking legal decisions,' says Rahila Gupta. The converse is also true: no matter how often they have appeared on demonstrations or been interviewed on Newsnight, they have continued to offer a lifeline to ordinary women who have no other source of support.

That dialectical progression has meant that SBS's practical work – the welfare advice, advocacy, emotional support and the campaigning that emerges from it – is always underpinned by an understanding of the context which has produced the need for it. This has meant that their politics has been both responsive and consistent; it has developed from within their locality but has spread far beyond it. This was the driving force behind Woman Against Fundamentalism, a remarkably creative and diverse coalition, whose members understood that their very diversity was a resource, informing their activism both in their own communities and in the wider society. I was one of them, and I can remember the excitement and liberation of being able to explore how we could

simultaneously oppose attacks on our communities and the undermining of the rights of the powerless within our communities. These were sensitive issues that I could analyse with other women whose experiences paralleled those I had struggled with in my own community.

WAF's analysis was predicated on the same fundamental concerns as those motivating SBS: that women's rights are indivisible; that they have the right to control their own lives and bodies, regardless of whether they belong to minorities or to the majority; that the state has a duty to meet their needs and to protect them from victimisation and that it should not ask or allow religious or communal leaders to explain away their oppression as 'their culture'.

Their definition of fundamentalism as religious authority coupled with state or communal resources and power, is as valid today as it was then, and although WAF's active days are in the past, most of its members, like SBS, are still activists who continue to inhabit that difficult ground between gender oppression and racism. WAF always refused to supply 'a Muslim woman' when the press wanted a quote, arguing that all fundamentalism – whether it was Christian or Muslim, Hindu or Jewish – had at its heart the imperative to control women and that any of its members could talk about all manifestations of fundamentalism. We would not collude with a racist press, for whom 'fundamentalist' was (and remains) a barely coded racist term for Muslim.

One issue that preoccupied both WAF and SBS was religious involvement in schools. Christianity had always had a privileged position in community schools as well as benefiting from large amounts of taxpayers' money that, since the start of compulsory education, has been handed over to various churches so they can run their own schools. SBS had fought a brilliant campaign against the opting out of a girls' comprehensive school in Southall, where the Sikh establishment was poised to move in and transform it into a religious school. Due largely to SBS's publicity and lobbying, the parents voted against opting out, and the school remained under the control of the local education authority.

Today the Southall community has changed. Now immigrants and asylum seekers are coming from eastern Europe, the Horn of Africa and other places that no one in Southall would have imagined 25 years ago, as well as from the Indian subcontinent, now facing the threat of nuclear conflict and communal violence. SBS now works with women from all those places as well as those from their traditional constituency. The success in saving their school for everyone is poignant. All the newcomers to Southall, along with any dissident members of the Sikh community, would have been marginalised had the school become a religious one. And as Blairite education policy argues for more religious schools, and tries to hand more state funding to churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious establishments to run our schools their way, and as hegemonic left-wing forces beyond New Labour seem hell bent on forging uncritical alliances with Islamist organisations and establishments, the campaign to 'keep God out of the classroom' as a prerequisite to religious freedom and equality, is more urgent than ever. As is the slogan initiated by SBS: 'Our tradition, struggle not submission'.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Shalom Charikar was a longstanding member of the Jewish Socialists' Group, who came from the Bene Israel community in India. He died last year at the age of 72. This is an extract from an article published in the first issue of Jewish Socialist, headed 'Confronting racism – a role for Jews'.

Indian trade unionists demonstrating in the 1960s

Let us look at a speech made at a political rally not so long ago: 'It often occurs in nature that an animal is fascinated or hypnotised by the danger which threatens it and thus fails either to escape or to defend itself while it still has the power. There is a weird parallel in the fate of nations; whole peoples will watch disaster approach until it engulfs them, apparently unable to stir out of a kind of horrified trance... You and I stand at such a time, at such a place. All about me I hear it as you do. In your town and mine, in Wolverhampton, in Smethwick, in Birmingham, people see... what they dread, the transformation... of towns, cities, areas that they know, into alien territory.'

That was the inimitable Enoch Powell, Member of Parliament and (then) a Cabinet Minister. He went on: 'It is when he looks into the eyes of an Asian, that the Englishman comes face to face with those who would dispute with him the possession of the land.'

I have not quoted from the first public speech by Enoch Powell on the subject of Black immigration since it is very hard for a Black person to repeat words that prophesy 'rivers of blood' – our blood – and then continue with rational, unemotional arguments. But what was the specific Jewish response to that particular speech made in 1968? The Jewish Chronicle in its editorial condemned it. Labour MPs, including Jewish Labour MPs, also condemned the speech as one intended to heighten racial tensions and provoke acts of violence against Black communities. I recollect its condemnation by Christian church leaders. I also remember the sudden spurt of violent attacks on Black people that followed. But a specific Jewish response? There was none and to me, and other Black Jews, this silence by the Jewish leadership

was audible. For an official Jewish reaction we had to wait a month. The question was raised at a meeting of the Board of Deputies of British Jews – not as part of its agenda but from the floor. A statement was issued condemning the speech adding that the lack of restraint on immigration was an excuse for provocation and racial attacks. This, then, was the belated conclusion of the Jewish establishment after the immigration controls of 1962 and 1965.

The next event I would like to recall is the Ilford by-election of 1978 preceded by Margaret Thatcher's speech on the dangers

of being 'swamped by an alien culture'. Again one looks for a Jewish response. The Jewish Chronicle saw no reason to report or comment on this speech by the then leader of the Opposition. A month later Sir Keith Joseph addressed a meeting in Ilford. Supporting her speech, he added that Britain was really the place for the English, Scots, Welsh and Ulstermen and a sanctuary for those fleeing persecution. On this basis, he asked the Ilford voters to support Margaret Thatcher. He was criticised by Labour MPs, and his approach was commented on by the Jewish Chronicle and by the Board of Deputies – no doubt to satisfy the non-Tory members of the Board. But the only criticism advanced was that Sir Keith Joseph should not have asked Jews to support a political party as Jews. And there the criticism ended. Following some correspondence in the Jewish Chronicle, Sir Keith Joseph replied reiterating his support for Margaret Thatcher's swamping speech and adding that it was not a question of colour but of numbers!

Whatever criticisms one may have of Keith Joseph's politics, Jews who are ministers in any government are not there as Jews, but as individuals who represent certain interests and support the policies of that government. But when a minister writes in a communal journal asking for political support on the basis of spurious fears of being swamped by an 'alien culture' then it is legitimate to question the basis of their personal thinking. Can this really be representative of Jewish thinking today? Is it his contention that control over immigration would eradicate all racism? Do Keith Joseph and others believe that the Aliens Act of 1905, which controlled Jewish immigration, resulted in the elimination of antisemitism in Britain? Perhaps Sir Keith Joseph should read the Runnymede Trust's submission to the GLC Police Committee which reported attacks on Black people in Bristol, Cardiff and Liverpool – riots that continued for days – in 1918. Were these riots due to fears of being swamped by numbers. Race hate and race violence, against Blacks and against Jews, do not rise or fall according to numbers. They rise and fall according to the extent to which people's prejudices are inflamed and made respectable by politicians and newspapers. Is this what Keith Joseph, addressing fellow Jews – knowingly or otherwise – sought to do?

A pattern seems to emerge. We know that the Jewish establishment is capable of actions and demonstrations when it feels they are called for. There is ample evidence for this in the 1950s, 1960s and again in 1977. Can it be that where the immediate victim is somebody else, the Jewish leadership feels it can stand aside and watch fascist attacks on other ethnic minorities? Can it also be that where racist comment and racist provocation comes not from the National Front, but from within the Conservative party, the Jewish leadership, for personal and political reasons finds itself reluctant to take a stand supporting other ethnic minorities who are being attacked?

What do ordinary Jews – no doubt influenced by

the leadership's views – have to say in the columns of the Jewish Chronicle? Every six months or so, extreme right-winger Harold Soref will find some excuse to write to the JC and expound his own brand of thinking and his views do receive some support from readers. Two such letters were published last August. E.

Isaacson from Hendon writes: 'Jews may be divided into three classes: a) by religion but not by race; b) by race and not by religion; and c) by race and religion. Categories b) and c) are ethnic minorities. Jews who belong to category a) who are not particularly numerous do not' – in other words they do not belong to the Jewish ethnic minority. So some Jews are a separate 'race' – a very special ethnic minority. And I, and others like me, who anyway, 'are not particularly numerous' (the numbers game again) do not belong to this group. So according to Isaacson of Hendon and other Jews of his ilk, somewhere on the ladder of 'racial excellence'



stands the Jewish 'racial' ethnic minority – no doubt somewhere near the top of the ladder, presumably. Other Jews – from Karachi, Bombay, Cochín, Persia, Yemen and Morocco – are not of the same 'race' so do not belong to the same 'ethnic minority'. But anyway we are 'not particularly numerous' so we do not count at all.

Another letter was from Louis Gordon of London SW3. He writes: 'Like Harold Soref and most Jewish people in this country, I want the Jewish community to remain – officially, legally and socially – where they have always been, namely in the first division of Britain.'

So that's where the Jews in Britain have been since the time of the Plantagenets right down to the 1930s! Whatever his idea of the history of the Jewish people in this country, here is an example of a Jew who believes he has finally 'arrived'. I am quite sure he would not wish to include Black Jews in his 'division', but frankly, that's one division I have no desire to join.

A STAR OF INDIA

These are not just my memories of Shalom, but reflect the feelings of everyone in the Jewish Socialists' Group who knew and loved him.

Shalom was drawn towards the Jewish Socialists' Group at a time of furious debate in the Jewish community about the relationship between Jews and black people. Some extremely right wing Monday Club types like Alfred Sherman and Harold Soref were writing to the Jewish Chronicle saying Jews should not ally with Blacks because 'we' were in the first division and 'they' were in the third division. At that time – in the early 1980s – the JSG was alone in taking a strong anti-racist message into the Jewish community and argued for it in the Jewish press. Shalom, for whom the 'we' and 'they' were one and the same, joined us and became a hugely significant member.

He spoke at public meetings held by our Jewish Cultural and Anti-Racist Project in the 1980s and we reprinted one of his speeches in the first issue of Jewish Socialist magazine. That speech typified Shalom: it was analytical and historical but also emotional; it was rooted in his powerful commitment to humanity and to working with other progressive people to oppose imperial arrogance, chauvinism and racism, and to create a just world where all human beings were equally valued.

We all learnt so much from Shalom. His Indianness and his Jewishness gave him a long and wide view of history and politics. That view was a challenge to many of the received wisdoms in both the Jewish community and the wider society.

One JSG member writes: 'I've still got my notes of Shalom's fascinating talk to the Jewish Socialists' Group about the Bene Israel and their history. He didn't just add to our knowledge but added a whole

dimension to our understanding of Jewish history.'

That depth of understanding was behind his involvement in setting up Jews Against Apartheid, who held imaginative and powerful events such as Passover seders outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square. Shalom was chair of JAA, which drew a lot of Jewish people into the Anti-Apartheid Campaign and was a powerful Jewish statement of solidarity with the struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa.

When he became ill and couldn't get to evening meetings, he was very generous in his financial support for the group and the magazine and phoned regularly to stay in touch with what we were doing.

All of which makes him sound very serious and worthy, which he wasn't. Our children loved Shalom because he gave them the courage to break the rules and have fun. I remember a JSG day out in Syon Park. It was a lovely warm day but it had been raining the night before and there were muddy puddles all over the park. Shalom's eyes lit up and, like a Jewish socialist Pied Piper, he led our twins off on a tour of the puddles, encouraging them to roll in them and get as muddy as they could. They loved him because he was such a free spirit. And that's why we loved him, too: because he was sceptical but never cynical; analytical but never smug or self-seeking.

Shalom's death is an immeasurable loss, not just to his friends and family but to the world he worked so hard to change. We feel as though this good, thoughtful, intelligent, radical and humorous person has been taken away too soon; that he hadn't finished what he wanted to achieve. But I know his legacy of courage in challenging oppression and his commitment to social justice will continue in all whose lives were touched by him.

JULIA BARD spoke at Shalom Charikar's funeral

FEAR AND MISERY

In contrast to the screaming headlines of the tabloid press over immigration and asylum, the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report on Asylum Removals displays the chilling banality of evil, says **STEVE COHEN**

Tuesday 20th January 1942 was a bright, snowy day in Berlin. It was a picturebook setting, particularly in Wannsee, a gracious, affluent suburb to the southwest of the city. Here, on this date, 15 men met at a villa to wine and dine – and discuss the implementation of mass murder.

In May 1963 Hannah Arendt, herself a refugee from Nazi Germany, published her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. This was an account of the 1961 trial in Israel of the Jew-killer Adolf Eichmann whom the Israeli secret service had kidnapped in Buenos Aires a year earlier. Eichmann, who had achieved the middle rank of SS-Obersturmbannführer, attended the Wannsee Conference in his role as head of the SS's 'Jewish Affairs' bureau. Arendt subtitled her book with the telling and frightening phrase, 'A Report on the Banality of Evil'. She explained that Eichmann, a man central to the killing of 6 million human beings, was not particularly abnormal, a devil figure, or clinically psychotic. Instead, as he argued in his defence, he saw himself as a functionary, a loyal administrator whose role was to follow orders without question – the orders of SS-Obergruppenführer Heydrich (the instigator and lead player at Wannsee), who received them from SS-Reichsführer Himmler who, in turn, was immediately answerable to the Führer Adolf Hitler. The moral content of the orders was irrelevant to Eichmann. His main role at Wannsee was minute-taker – an important role as this required expertise in sanitising the language of mass extermination.

Eichmann did not stand alone in his banality. Indeed the significance of the banality of evil does not reside in the individual but in the ways it becomes collective and thus highly political. The entire Nazi enterprise was dependent on the unquestioning bureaucratic banality of those operating its machinery – from the clerks who collected and collated the list of victims to the engineers who designed the death camps, to the civil servants within the transport system who ensured that the trains to the camps ran on time. Another group can also be added – the millions of onlookers, who saw the trains pass and remained silent.

Modern immigration controls are not fascism. Removal centres are not extermination centres. It would be ludicrous and out of all proportion to suggest otherwise. However in their profound racism and their brutalisation of those deemed unwanted here, controls are certainly a step towards fascism. Well before the gas ovens were in operation, the dehumanising of their Jewish and Gypsy victims had been legitimised through mass deportations at the hands of the Nazis – deportations that were the responsibility of Eichmann, as head of the Jewish Affairs section of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, the Head Office for Reich Security.

The defence of 'obeying orders' is used today to justify the unjustifiable. The head of the Immigration Service Union, is quoted in the *Independent* (15th October 1986): 'All we do is implement the rules. My members merely carry out what we are told to do'. And what they are told to do includes the division of families, exclusion of refugees, detention of those

charged with no offence, and forced deportation of those guilty of no crime other than being unwanted. Whether a particular individual stays or goes becomes irrelevant. Central to the exercise is humiliation and degradation. Examples are given in the May 2003 report on Asylum Removals by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee. This includes evidence from one of the Home Office's sub-contracted security firms about the case of a child subjected to the deportation process 'who had recently undergone a splenectomy and was under continual medical supervision with tubes and wires coming out of various parts of his body'.

A central feature of the banality of evil is the banality of the language in which the evil is expressed. This is crystal clear in the language of the Wannsee Protocols, the minutes of the Wannsee Conference which decided or confirmed (historical debate continues) the mass liquidation of European Jewry and the methods of its liquidation. These protocols are reproduced in Mark Roseman's book *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution* (Metropolitan Books, NY 2002). They provide a summary of the discussion and the genocidal decisions made. A film, *Conspiracy*, starring Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich and Stanley Tucci as Eichmann, chillingly fictionalises the banality of the conversation that might have ensued over cigars and claret. The Protocols themselves are a virtual parody of the apparently amoral (but in fact deeply immoral) administrative mentality. The meeting starts with the statement by Heydrich that previous mass deportations 'to cleanse German living space of Jews in a legal manner' had been 'insufficient' and had 'drawbacks'. There are then sober and calm distinctions made between the quarter Jew (to be vetted), the half Jew (to be sterilised) and the full Jew (to be murdered). There are reflections on how to deal with the Jew married to the Gentile and with the Jew decorated in the first war. Heydrich proposes: 'Jews should be put to work in the East. In large single-sex labour columns. Jews fit to work will work their way eastwards constructing roads. Doubtless the large majority will be eliminated by natural causes. Any final remnant that survives will doubtless consist of the most resistant elements. They will have to be dealt with appropriately.'

The representative of the German administration in Poland (Staatssekretar Buhler) argued that the final solution should commence in his territory as 'transportation does not play such a large role there nor would the question of labour supply hamper this action.' However there are competing interests. Others contend that 'the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia will have to be dealt with first due to the housing problem'. So it goes on.

Of course, British immigration controls are still at the deportation stage. Blaming the refugee for housing shortages has hitherto justified removal not extermination. But linguistically the operation of controls is redolent of the banality of evil. Take the vocabulary of the 'illegal' migrant. In all other areas of the law it is the activity that is illegal – but under the terminology of control it is the person who is

reduced to being 'an illegal'. And with bureaucratic-speak it's a short step, down the slippery slope of dehumanisation, from being illegal, to being non-human to being sub-human or – in Nazi language – to being untermenschen and therefore disposable without moral consequences to the disposer.

Banality is what defines the already mentioned Home Affairs Committee report on Asylum Removals. It is not hyperbolic to describe this document as the Wannsee Protocols of British immigration control. The report itself has had its own 15 minutes of fame, or infamy, in the tabloid press. This resulted from its very first paragraph – which suggested that unless even tougher controls were enacted then there would be 'social unrest' accompanied by the rise of 'extremist parties with extreme solutions'. The day following the report's publication the Sun had the banner headline 'Asylum tearing UK apart'. The Daily Express claimed 'Britain facing asylum anarchy' (8th May 2003). However, what actually most characterises the report is not this apocalyptic vision; rather it is the way the vision is discussed and sanctioned in the dull, cliché ridden bureaucratic tones.

The report is significant because it deals with what inevitably is and must be the brutal and potentially violent endgame of all immigration control – forced removal. Karl Marx's colleague Frederick Engels, in his book *The Origin of Private Property, Family and the State*, defined the state as consisting of those institutions which ultimately maintained it through force, that is 'the bodies of armed men (and) also material adjuncts, prisons and coercive institutions of all kind'. Engels coined this famous phrase about 'armed men' in 1884, 21 years before Britain implemented its first immigration controls – the 1905 Aliens Act. He therefore hardly had in mind immigration restrictions as being part of the repressive arm of the state. However over the last century these have become a central part of state repression. This is the part that sanctions the use of physical restraints to arrest the so-called 'illegal', the policing of detention centres for those imprisoned without charge or trial, and the forcible manhandling of those deported. And it is this central part that the Home Affairs Committee, and most of those who gave evidence before it, sanitises in the language of boring, banal euphemisms.

One of the report's startling features is its naming of those sections of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the Home Office which deal with the enforced imprisonment and removal of unwanted human beings. Some of their names are Orwellian, for instance, the Management of Detained Cases Unit, the Removals Co-ordination Unit and the Detainee Escorting and Population Management Unit. Orwell himself wrote (in 1946): 'In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible.... Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.'

Perhaps even more striking is the language of sub-contractors in the realm of force or threats of force. When Engels wrote of the 'bodies of armed men' he was referring to men in the direct employ of the state – soldiers, police, prison officers and so on. However, a substantial degree of immigration control is enforced by private security firms, many of which are part of multinational companies and

all of them essentially mercenaries in a war against immigrants, migrants and refugees. Several of these gave evidence before the Select Committee. These were Wackenhut UK Ltd (which manages Tinsley House Removal Centre at Gatwick and the detention centre at Manchester Airport), Premier Detention Services Ltd (which runs Dungavel House Removal Centre in Scotland), UK Detention Services (which is responsible for Harmondsworth Removal Centre), Loss Prevention International Ltd (which 'escorts' deportees overseas) and Group 4 Falck Global Solutions (which runs Campsfield House Immigration Centre, Oakington Reception Centre and Yarl's Wood Detention Centre).

Evidence was given that the latter company is listed on the Copenhagen Stock Exchange. Imagine a part of the SS being floated as a publicly owned company in the period of mass deportations prior to the death camps. Now, for the price of a share, everyone can be a stakeholder in immigration control. The oral and written evidence of all these security institutions showed a common, fundamentally amoral, attitude towards their role as agents of immigration repression. For instance the representative from Wackenhut UK Ltd implicitly adopted the 'obeying (Home Office) orders' justification. He described his firm as 'a demand-led organisation who respond to the challenges and tenders put out by the Immigration Service' and that 'the efficiency of targets' was not its responsibility but that of the Home Office.

Just as the Wannsee Protocols were obsessed by the most efficient way of 'disposing' of European Jewry so the UK Detention Service was concerned to show that it had 'increased the throughput' from detention to deportation. The Director of Operations of Premier Detentions Services Ltd spoke in similar sanitising vein when he boasted that 'a new facility at Logford House' would contain 'design features...which are specifically geared to improving the processing procedures for removal'. The Wannsee Protocols in its penultimate paragraph declared that 'the final solution should be carried out....without alarming the populace'. This touching regard (unnecessary as it so happens) to the possible sensitivities of the local population at seeing the machinery of evil again finds a resonance in the Home Affairs Committee report. The Chief Executive of Loss Prevention International asserted that it would be 'more humane to remove more people on chartered aircraft because it can be done out of the public eye'. Indeed – look away, walk away, hear no evil, see no evil, appears to be the dominant advice given to their own employees by all the security mercenaries, so the chain of denial can go lower and lower. The representative from Loss Prevention International Ltd claimed that employees had no idea how those they had 'escorted' to certain countries were treated by the authorities: 'Down in Lagos, for instance, the agreement that we have there is that we actually hand the returnee over to the ground staff of either British Airways or Virgin Atlantic, the two airlines flying in there. Standing right next to them are the



Nigerian immigration officers who watch that process, then we walk away from it.'

The banality would often be farcical if the issues were not so serious. Children incarcerated at Dungavel are described by those running it as enjoying 'a very positive experience'. Those administering Harmondsworth describe themselves as 'envious' of the quality of the food provided to the detainees and the representative from Wackenhut UK Ltd agreed that 'a comfortable tummy solves a lot of problems'. But all the time it is the banality of language as well as thought that predominates. So Group 4 describes the control and punishment of its prisoners this way: 'We are able to incentivise detainees in terms of good behaviour and conforming with the regime that is actually on offer at the centre but there is an appropriate system of sanctions ... good behaviour is a sign of good citizenship, disruptive behaviour is the contrary.'

Hannah Arendt describes how Eichmann at one point in his trial apologised to the judge for not being able to explain some obscure point. His apology consisted of the statement: 'Officialese (Amtssprache) is my only language'. Arendt comments: '...officialese became his language because he was genuinely incapable of uttering a single sentence that was not a cliché.' What bigger cliché could there be to sanitise, and ultimately deny, mass genocide than 'Final Solution'? And today it is the power of cliché, of officialese, of Amtssprache, that helps maintain the horrors of immigration controls by deadening the critical faculties not just of the perpetrators but also of the onlookers – onlookers who then look away.

The Nazi Holocaust that was planned at Wannsee triumphed because of the collusion of all those who 'obeyed orders' and all who looked away. Immigration controls are triumphant in just the same way. The strength of immigration restrictions reside in the fact that they are a total system. They are not simply about exclusion and deportation but

also about internal controls – which includes both the physical policing of migrants, immigrants and refugees and also their welfare policing through making entitlement to an ever increasing array of welfare provisions dependent upon immigration status. Though the Home Office is responsible for controls, it is only the hub of a vast wheel whose spokes stretch out through the country and internationally.

Paradoxically the fact that it is such a total system is also immigration control's source of potential vulnerability. There are numerous points at which controls could be completely undermined if those administering them refused to co-operate. But the ideology of obeying orders reigns supreme. This is again clear from the Home Affairs Committee report. For instance, the Chief Executive of Loss Prevention International

Ltd said: 'If it were not for British Airways and the support we get from British Airways, the number of scheduled flight removals that we would achieve out of this country would be virtually nil.'

The privatisation of detention and deportation itself depends on the active and unquestioning co-operation of warders, guards and escorts of the private security firms. The continuation of controls relies on the tacit agreement and support of the trade unions whose members operate the machinery. This is not so much an issue for the so-called Immigration Service Union, a pariah organisation existing outside of the TUC, and a rabid supporter of controls. It should be, an issue for legitimate bodies such as the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) which in its written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee describes itself as representing the majority of staff in the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND). However in its evidence the PCS made no principled objection to controls or their implementation – rather with the usual banality of language it criticised the IND's 'business plan' and 'the setting of unrealistic targets'. By 'unrealistic targets' it was referring to the forced and potentially violent removal of human beings. There is more than an echo here of the scenes in the movie Conspiracy which show the 15 gentlemen at Wannsee debating what (and who) were 'realistic targets' for extermination.

Co-operation and collusion extends into areas of welfare and involves a myriad of welfare and other professionals. Some of these are actively and directly involved in the detention and deportation process. The Chief Executive of Loss Prevention International Ltd gave evidence that: 'In the make-up of my team of detainee custody officers, I have psychiatric nurses, registered general nurses, paramedics.' By virtue of internal controls and the relationship between immigration status and entitlement to provisions and services, welfare agencies and local authority workers are centrally complicit in immigration controls. Written evidence submitted by Sheffield City Council to the Home Affairs Committee stated: 'The process of removals needs to be open and in order for it to be effective there needs to be close liaison between local authority asylum teams, private accommodation providers and immigration officials.' Oxfordshire Social Services Department also gave written evidence to the Committee which makes an explicit attack on 'economic migrants' for 'exploiting' the system and berates the Home Secretary for not having 'realistic objectives' for 'speedy removals'. There is no mention here of the fact that under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act and the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act virtually all care in the community provision administered by social services is dependent on immigration status – thus transforming social workers into agents of immigration control. Silence is the retreat of those who collude. And collusion within welfare goes far beyond social service departments. It extends into all those other areas of provision, not least benefits, housing, hospital treatment, and parts of education, where entitlement is a matter of immigration status.

Some people will say this is unnecessary exaggeration and that it is not helpful, to link the implementation of British immigration laws in any way to the atrocities of Nazi Germany. However

detention centres are not being compared to death camps. What is being compared is the bland, uncritical, banal mindset that leads to both. Other people may object that much of the above is obvious and that nothing can be done except to try and make the system more 'fair' and more 'humane'. Indeed many of the witnesses and much of the written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee called for the system to be operated in this way. This misses the point. Immigration controls can never be 'fair' to those they exclude and remove. And they can never be 'humane' – because in the last resort they depend on the bodies of armed men to enforce them. Others will object that controls, particularly internal welfare controls, are not the legal, moral or political responsibility of those administering them – that, for instance, it is not the responsibility of local authority housing officers that asylum seekers have no entitlement to local authority housing. It will be argued that such workers are only doing their job. But how does 'only doing their job' differ from the 'only obeying orders' justification? Again many professionals will assert that 'in the real world' it is necessary to 'work with' the enforcers of controls to try and get the best deal for those subject to them. This again misses the point. The best deal for those subject to control is to get rid of controls. In the meantime, the best result in individual cases can only be obtained, if at all, through clearly understanding

what controls represent – that is unremitting racism – and fighting them and their enforcers on that basis.

Hannah Arendt argued that what allowed both the banality and the evil to flourish was the unquestioning attitude of the perpetrators and the silence of the onlookers. The same political sentiment was expressed with utmost poignancy by Abraham Lewin in his diary written during the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto: 'The sun is shining, the acacia is blooming and the slaughterer is slaughtering' (quoted in The Jewish Search for a Usable Past by David Roskies, Indiana University Press, 1999). Today the sun continues to shine whilst human beings are deprived of welfare state provision, detained and deported – not because of anything they have done but because of a legal status (or lack of status) arbitrarily imposed on them. It is to the credit of those subject to controls – migrants, immigrants and refugees – that they continue to resist and campaign against this dehumanisation. Likewise it is to the credit of those workers within the system, particularly those given the task of enforcing internal controls, who are starting to question their own roles. Such questioning is not easy but it is necessary if we are not again going to go down the road to Wannsee.

Direct quotes in this article have been taken from the Minutes of Evidence of the Home Affairs Committee Report.

Obituary: Francis Koch-Krause

Francis Krause died last year aged 56 after spending some weeks in hospital. Right until the last week he was talking about politics, science, the environment and the problems of individual friends in the thoughtful way we had come to expect of him.

Francis was committed to a variety of political projects, all informed by socialist ideals. To a large extent his views were forged in the crucible of the discrimination he suffered as a person with dyslexia which affected his education. Where others would have been undermined by being marginalised, Francis was galvanised and was often on the front line when fascists tried to march and in supporting campaigns of migrants and asylum seekers.

His anti-racism and anti-fascism were influenced by his mother, a child in Nazi Germany in an anti-Nazi family. Her circumstances were a mystery to him. He knew she had to leave Germany but was never sure why and believed she was a Jewish refugee who hid her past because she was afraid of revealing herself as a Jew. Sadly he never found out what her antecedents were. He was very close to her but not to his father.

Throughout his life he had to struggle. Dyslexia was a shortcoming which he addressed by confronting it head on. When Francis discovered computers he made a heading for his notepad which emblazoned this fact for all to see. It was a way of showing how far he had come in the world.

His history, which he wanted to tell us more of whilst in hospital, had much to do with his joining the Jewish Socialists' Group after taking a leaflet about a meeting commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. He came to that meeting, got up and talked

about his family history and promptly joined the group. After that he became a permanent fixture in our anti-racist anti-fascist committee.

Francis was also passionately interested in environmental and ecological issues and crossed swords with councillors and MPs Margaret Hodge and James Fitzpatrick about a development close to where he lived. He developed ideas about the 'hydrogen economy' replacing the burning of fossil fuels but realised that a clean planet needed technological advance and the destruction of capitalism.

Francis rejected authority from the State or from leaders and apparatchiks on the left. He always challenged the conventional wisdoms of the left, asking difficult questions and trying to find new ways of approaching questions. He prided himself on his lateral thinking, drawing connections between apparently different disciplines and political, historical and philosophical events. Sometimes this led his thought to be more difficult to follow than Hegelian dialectics! But at other times he could illuminate issues in a new and informative way.

Francis achieved all this against the odds as he had to suffer from both the dyslexia of his youth and from illness later in life which affected his capacity for paid work.

Francis was a generous friend. When I was beginning to wrestle with the computer after a lifetime of phobia, Francis was on hand with little tips, books to read and ideas to follow.

We have lost a comrade and a friend. His legacy of struggle and commitment leaves all of us saddened and diminished at his far too early departure from this world.

Diana Neslen



The Siege of Sydney Street involved cops, robbers, revolutionaries and the upper echelons of the State. CHARLIE POTTINS describes how allegations of terrorism fuelled demands to keep out immigrants

Early one morning in January 1911, two gunmen were besieged in an East End street by 1,500 police and a detachment of Scots Guards. Watched by crowds, the battle lasted all day, with a field gun brought up, and Home Secretary Winston Churchill directing operations. Only after the house caught fire and part of it collapsed could the forces of order move in to find the charred bodies of the two gunmen, Latvian immigrants Fritz Svaars and Joseph Sokolow. Police never caught the alleged ringleader they were looking for, nicknamed Peter the Painter. The Siege of Sydney Street was the climax of a wave of 'anarchist' terror that shook London, fuelling demands for laws against immigrants. But the violence had been bred under the brutality of Imperial Russia, and the Czar was Britain's ally.

The story begins as a normal Saturday morning in a quiet north London suburb. Tottenham, 23 January, 1909. At just after 10.30am, driver Joseph Wilson pulled up outside Schnurmann's rubber factory on Chesnut Road, and dropped off 17-year-old Albert Keyworth, back from the bank with cash for the week's wage packets. As Keyworth stepped out with the canvas bag, containing £80 in coins, two men who had been loitering by the factory gate came up on either side of him. One of them, Jacob Lapidus, jumped on the young clerk's back, throwing him to the ground. Wilson, who had been about to drive off, braked and leapt out to drag the assailant off, but he too was soon knocked on the ground. Lapidus's accomplice, Paul Hefield, a big man who had worked at Schnurmann's, where he was nicknamed Elephant, drew a pistol and fired. Wilson scrambled away. Grabbing the wages bag, the robbers ran. The ensuing chase was like the Keystone Cops, except the robbers fired real bullets and killed people.

Running east down Chestnut Road and side streets, Lapidus and Hefield headed towards the Lea Valley meadows, pursued by police from Tottenham Police Station opposite the factory. Wilson got back in his car, and picked up PC Tyler and PC Newman. Other police

officers joined the chase on their bicycles, waving truncheons. One brandished a cutlass. People came out of their houses to see what was happening. Each time the police drew close, the robbers opened fire, forcing them to fall back and take cover. At Mitchley Road, seeing one of the men stop to reload, PC Newman told Wilson to run them down. The robbers faced the car, took up a crouching position, and fired, holing the radiator, shattering the windscreen and wounding Wilson and PC Newman. Tragically, they also hit 10-year-old spectator, Ralph Joscelyne, in the chest. The boy died soon afterwards.

Police at other stations were phoned to join the chase, and a messenger was sent to fetch firearms. As the two headed for a footbridge over the railway, Tyler and Newman tried to head them off, but Hefield shot Tyler in the neck. PC Newman grabbed a pistol from someone in the crowd, and fired at the fugitives, but they escaped over the bridge. PC Tyler died later in Prince of Wales hospital.

At Stone Bridge lock and again at Chalk Bridge the two desperados exchanged fire with their now armed pursuers, who were also joined by several teams of footballers who had been playing on the Lea marshes. As the chase continued past Banbury reservoir some duck hunters took potshots at the new exotic game, riddling Jacob Lapidus's cap and making his forehead bleed. Still the two ran on, through a gypsy camp, firing wildly to deter pursuers, till they reached Salisbury Hill farm, where they took cover behind a haystack. They kept firing, forcing the pursuers to hit the ground, and wounding labourer William Roker in both legs. Then seeing a number 9 tram coming down Chingford Road, Lapidus leapt over the hedge and on to the platform, telling the driver to stop while Hefield caught up.

The hijacked tram moved off, Lapidus holding a pistol to the conductor's head and Hefield trading shots with the police, duck-shooters and others



pursuing them. A woman and child managed to get off when the tram pulled up at a road junction, but 63-year old passenger Edward Loveday was shot in the neck as he lurched forward. Lapidus thought he was trying to grab his gun. The police had commandeered another tram, and a horsedrawn cart, which was gaining on the fugitives until Hefield felled the horse with a single shot.

Now the conductor warned the gunmen they were nearing another police station, at Kite's Corner. They jumped off and seized a horsedrawn milk float, wounding the 19-year old milkman in the arms and chest. In Forest Road, Walthamstow, they switched from the slow milk float to a grocer's van, also horsedrawn. Lapidus took the reins while Hefield, with a gun in each hand, fired at the bicycling policemen. The van might have gone faster had they not left the brake on. Abandoning van and its exhausted horse they ran on, scrambling down the bank of the River Ching, but found themselves in an alley facing a 6-foot fence. Lapidus managed to get over. Telling his friend to get away, Hefield shot himself in the head, but was captured alive, and taken away for treatment.

Jacob Lapidus reached Oak Hill Cottage on the edge of Epping Forest. By the time police burst in he had only two bullets left, and used the last one on himself. He was dragged out into the yard and died in front of a crowd. Just £5 was found in a bank bag in the cottage. The rest of the proceeds of the robbery were never recovered. Some said Lapidus had hidden it up the chimney and it was found by the cottage owners but police said the robbers must have passed it to an accomplice just after leaving Chesnut Road.

Paul Hefield lingered alive in Prince of Wales hospital but did not talk. He died of meningitis brought on by his wound on 12 February 1909. As he was dying he whispered: 'My mother is in Riga.'

Seedbed of terror

The Baltic lands of the Russian Empire had been scenes of brutal Czarist repression and reciprocally violent resistance. In Vilna, in 1902, a Jewish worker, Hirsh Lekert, shot the governor, General Von Wahl, who had ordered the flogging of May Day demonstrators. The Jewish Workers' Bund applauded Lekert's courage and declared that in future it would support 'organised revenge' against tyrants. This was rescinded the following year, as contrary to the Marxist view on individual terror, but it reflected genuine mass feeling. Lekert remained a working class hero.

The Bloody Sunday massacre of peaceful demonstrators in St Petersburg on 9 January 1905 had its equivalent the same month in Riga. Strikes in Latvia that year were accompanied by peasant risings in the countryside. By autumn the Lettish Social Democrats and the Bund were running some towns. The Czarist regime unleashed wild bands of Cossacks to terrorise the country into submission. More than 14,000 people were killed. Military courts ordered executions – 57 in Riga – and imprisoned or

deported thousands of people. Jacob Peters, jailed for 18 months for agitating in the Riga shipyards, was tortured by having his fingernails torn out with pincers. Men and women were flogged – Yourka Douboff still bore the scars of the knout, a Russian whip, years afterwards. Where it could, the Czarist secret police, arming itself with the infamous Protocols of the Elders of Zion, staged pogroms, with police and troops helping the Black Hundred mobs. Refugees fled west. Others fought back. As outlawed militants adopted 'expropriation' – armed robbery – to sustain their underground activities and themselves, some turned professional. It became hard to distinguish between socialist and anarchist, anarchist and plain criminal, except that the political 'criminals', after what they had been through, were more bitter and prepared to go that bit further.

Britain's relationship with Russia at this time was contradictory. The two previously antagonistic empires had become allies. What's more, British capital was heavily invested in Russian industry under the regime's protection. On the other hand, English liberalism had not yet separated free trade from other freedoms, and there was sympathy for people struggling against Czarist tyranny. Thousands of immigrants from the old Russian empire, particularly Jews, had found a home here. Given the chance, most were hardworking, and law-abiding, the socialists and anarchists among them inclined to trade unionism rather than terror. But British and immigrant radicals raised funds to help the revolutionary cause in Russia with literature, and guns. Revolutionaries like Lenin spent time in London, and held congresses there. The Czarist secret police, the Okhrana, sent its agents to spy on them.

With the growth of an illiberal, anti-alien and antisemitic movement against the immigrants, which had already given rise to the 1905 Aliens Act, there was fear that Czarist agents might resort to provocations to turn the public and government against the refugees. In The Secret Agent, Polish-born Joseph Conrad took a real bomb incident, at Greenwich, and imagined behind it an 'anarchist' agent-provocateur employed by a sinister foreign power. After the cruel repression of the 1905 revolt, it was not always easy to tell what was provocation and what misguided adventurism and blind revenge against society. Rudolf Rocker, a respected anarcho-syndicalist, had to dissuade a group of young people in Stepney from a plan to blow up the Lord Mayor's show. 'I explained what a terrible blow it would be to all the people who had been able to find refuge in Britain.'

Rocker reflected later: 'There may have been a Russian police agent who had incited them for the reasons I feared. Or they may have been simply blind fanatics who had come from the unhealthy atmosphere of Russia, where every policeman and every public dignitary, Governor or Mayor, was an instrument of despotism and oppression. These conditions in Russia had given rise to such terrible things as the theory of unmotivated terror, directed against the entire bourgeoisie as a class, no matter whom it hit.'

In 1909 some Latvian refugees who had arrived in London began meeting, calling themselves Leesma

(The Flame). Among them were George Gardstein, Fritz Svaars, Yarka Doubhoff and William Sokolow, also known as Joseph. Nina Vassileva, a teenager working as a cigarette maker, became Gardstein's girlfriend and a member of the group. Luba Milstein, a skirtmaker, moved in with Fritz Svaars, to whom she had been introduced at the Jubilee Street Club. In the Autumn of 1910 a Russian called Peter Piaktow became a regular visitor. Soon he, Svaars and Luba took rooms at 59 Grove Street in Stepney, which became the group's meeting place.

The French police were interested in Piaktow, a mystery man, who seemed to exercise a strong influence on the Leesma group. Jacob Peters, a social democrat, was Fritz Svaars' cousin, and looked in from time to time, although he was sceptical about Fritz's 'anarchism', and denied joining his criminal activity. That autumn the group was joined by Max Smoller, a jewel thief who had done jobs with Joseph in Russia. Joseph told them about a jewellers shop in Houndsditch, where the East End meets the City of London, said to contain fabulously rich pickings – even Russian crown jewels. What temptation!

Friday night, 16 December 1910, it was erev shabbos, and a wild and windy night, so not many people were about. When Max Weil, who lived over his fancy goods shop in Houndsditch, got home at 10pm his sister told him she was worried about noises coming from the rear of the buildings. It sounded like someone breaking through a brick wall. Max went and found a policeman in Bishopsgate, William Piper, of the City of London police. Piper, a rookie cop, knocked at a couple of doors in Exchange Buildings in the cul-de-sac behind Houndsditch. At number 11, confronted by a suspicious-looking character, he extemporised, asking: 'Is the missus in?' When the man said no, PC Piper said he'd call back later, and retreated to find help. Meeting constables Walter Choat and Ernest Woodhams, he fetched them back with him, Woodhams to stand at the entry to the cul-de-sac, Choat to watch Harris's jewellers shop at the front. Piper went back to Bishopsgate

police station for reinforcements.

At 11.30pm, with policemen all around the Houndsditch jewellers and the cul-de-sac at the rear, Sergeant Robert Bentley knocked at number 11. It was answered by the same man Piper had spoken to earlier: George Gardstein, an immigrant from Latvia, where he was wanted by the police, now living in Stepney and frequenting the Jubilee Street club.

Bentley asked if anyone was working at the back, then as Gardstein partly closed the door, pushed his way into the room, followed by police Sergeant Bryant. They

asked to look around the back, and Gardstein, standing on the stairs, gestured towards the back room. As they stepped forward, the backdoor was flung open, and a man came in firing a pistol. Gardstein also opened fire from the stairs. Bentley went down, wounded, and Bryant staggered into the alley, with bullets in his arm and chest.

Constable Woodhams, running to his aid, was shot in the leg. Sergeant Tucker took two bullets, in the hip and the heart, and though helped to the end of the cul-de-sac, he collapsed and died. As the gang now made a run for it, firing at anyone in their way, Walter Choat tried to grab Gardstein's gun. Choat was wounded in the leg, and shot in the back by the second gunman – according to one witness it was Jacob Peters. The policeman went down, dragging Gardstein with him, and a third man, Max Smoller, accidentally shot Gardstein in the back. Kicking Choat in the face, the gang wrestled the wounded Gardstein from the policeman's grasp, and carried him off towards Middlesex Street (Petticoat Lane).

The people in the getaway were later named as Gardstein, 'Peters', Yourka Doubhoff and Smoller, all from Latvia, and a Russian woman, Nina Vassileva. Smoller, using the name Joe Levi, and Svaars, calling himself Goldstein, had rented premises at 11 Exchange Buildings, for accommodation. Number 9, supposedly for storing Christmas goods, was actually a way to break through the back wall into Harris's shop, where there was reputedly £25,000 worth of stock. Svaars was in a second shift waiting to take over the operation. He had rented cutting equipment and an oxygen cylinder from a man he met at the Jubilee Club, Italian anarchist Enrico Malatesta. Peter Piaktow, the mystery man said to have been the brains behind this plan, kept himself out of the messy frontline.

They took Gardstein to 59 Grove Street, where Peter Piaktow (nicknamed 'Peter the painter') and Fritz Svaars were waiting, and laid the wounded man on a bed in the front room.

Luba Millstein, the young Jewish skirtmaker who lived with Svaars, was asked to look after Gardstein, but she went and fetched her workmate Sara Trassjonsky. Disabled from birth, and brought up in poverty and domestic violence, Sara had been grateful to hang around the fringe of the Leesma gang, admiring Peter Piaktow, and cooking for them. Now she stayed and tended loyally to the dying man, even after she was urged to get away before the police arrived. Doctor Scanlon, locum to Dr Bernstein that Sabbath, was called to treat Gardstein but was unable to save him.

By Monday, the police had descriptions of several other members of the gang and, having seen the political literature in the homes they had raided, they called in Special Branch. Over the next few weeks they made several arrests, but three men still escaped the net: Fritz Svaars, William Sokolow, and Peter Piaktow.

The newspapers were in no doubt about responsibility for the outrages. No English criminal would shoot policemen, it was avowed, any more than the honest English worker would follow radical ideas. It was liberals who were letting in foreigners, the alien scum. The Times assured readers that it had nothing against a large proportion of the population of the Whitechapel

area, 'But it does harbour some of the worst alien anarchists and criminals who seek our too hospitable shore.' The Daily Mail said the wanted men belonged to 'the class of our demagogue's darlings, the lowest type of foreign immigrant'.

On Christmas Day, as good Christian families celebrated the birth of a well-known Jewish agitator, the carpenter from Nazareth, The People treated readers to a poem called 'The Lessons of Houndsditch':

But I think it's time to plead once more,
To get rid of this cursed breed,
Of alien Jews who seem to have been
The authors of the deed,
Remember Tottenham! Foreign Jews
Were the coward murderers there,
And it's pretty certain that aliens held
The guns on the Houndsditch stair.

This brought protests from many people, who declared that immigrant Jews were by and large decent working people, the most honest and least criminal section of the East End's populace. But the press continued insisting the Liberal government wasn't doing enough to protect the police or to keep out foreigners. Radicals and socialists were accused of favouring criminals, and attention turned to the Jubilee Street Arbeiterfreund (Workers' Friends) club, which some of the Letts had visited, though its co-founder Rudolf Rocker said they were never members.

On New Year's Day 1911 there was further excitement with the discovery of Leon Beron's body on Clapham Common. He had been battered to death with an iron bar, but stabbed afterwards, and two symmetrical gashes cut on his face each resembled an elongated letter S, which might stand for 'spy' – or so the papers suggested. Although he owned a few properties, Beron had stayed with relatives on Jubilee Street and spent his days hanging around East End cafés. Steinie Morrison, alias Morris Stein, who had been working in a Lavender Hill bakers, and was reportedly seen with Beron on New Year's Eve, was picked up in Cohen's Restaurant in Stepney, and later sentenced to life imprisonment for the alleged murder. Still protesting his innocence, he eventually starved himself to death in prison. Meanwhile, though the police insisted the motive for Beron's murder was robbery, the press and the public were convinced he had been killed as an informer, to discourage anyone helping police with the Houndsditch gang investigation.

Nevertheless, in the early hours of 3 January, acting mainly on information received from the gang's old landlord, Charles Perelman, Detective Inspector Wensley assembled a force of 200 from the City & Metropolitan police, all single men in case any were killed, and set off for 100 Sydney Street, where Fritz Svaars and Joseph 'Yoshka' Sokoloff were hiding out.

Surrounding the building, the police roused the landlord, tailor Samuel Fleischman and his family, and persuaded Mrs Fleischmann to get Betty Gershon, who had been sheltering the two fugitives, to come downstairs. Evacuating the house, they set snipers in houses opposite and awaited daylight. Wensley and his officers positioned themselves in an alley. At 7.30am one of them ran across and knocked on the door at number 100 while the others threw stones at upstairs windows. One of the

gunmen appeared at a window and fired, hitting police Sergeant Leeson in the chest.

Taking cover, the police decided they could not match the gunmen's Mausers, automatics capable of 60 rounds a minute. They requested help from the army at the Tower of London, and the request had to be authorised by Home Secretary Winston Churchill. He too had been under fire from political opponents and newspapers, accusing him of being soft on immigrants. Now was his chance to show himself the hero. Donning his top hat, Churchill hastened off to the East End to see the action. By noon, when he arrived, 20 Scots Guards marksmen were positioned in the street and in nearby Mann's brewery with rifles trained on the siege house. Machine guns were brought up, and it was planned to bring a field gun to demolish the house before storming it. Over 1,000 police were employed just keeping back spectators. At 1pm, smoke began to issue from an upstairs window at number 100. Soon the upper floors were ablaze. It's possible a bullet had fractured a gas pipe.

One of the gunmen appeared briefly at a lower window and fired before retreating under heavy fire from the soldiers. Neighbouring houses were evacuated and the fire brigade arrived, but Churchill – later to claim he had only been observing, not commanding the siege – ordered them to stay back. By 2pm the roof of 100 Sydney Street had crashed in; the first floor was next. Only after the police were sure nobody had got away into the neighbouring premises did they let the firemen go in to extinguish the fire. Part of the building collapsed, injuring five firefighters, one fatally.

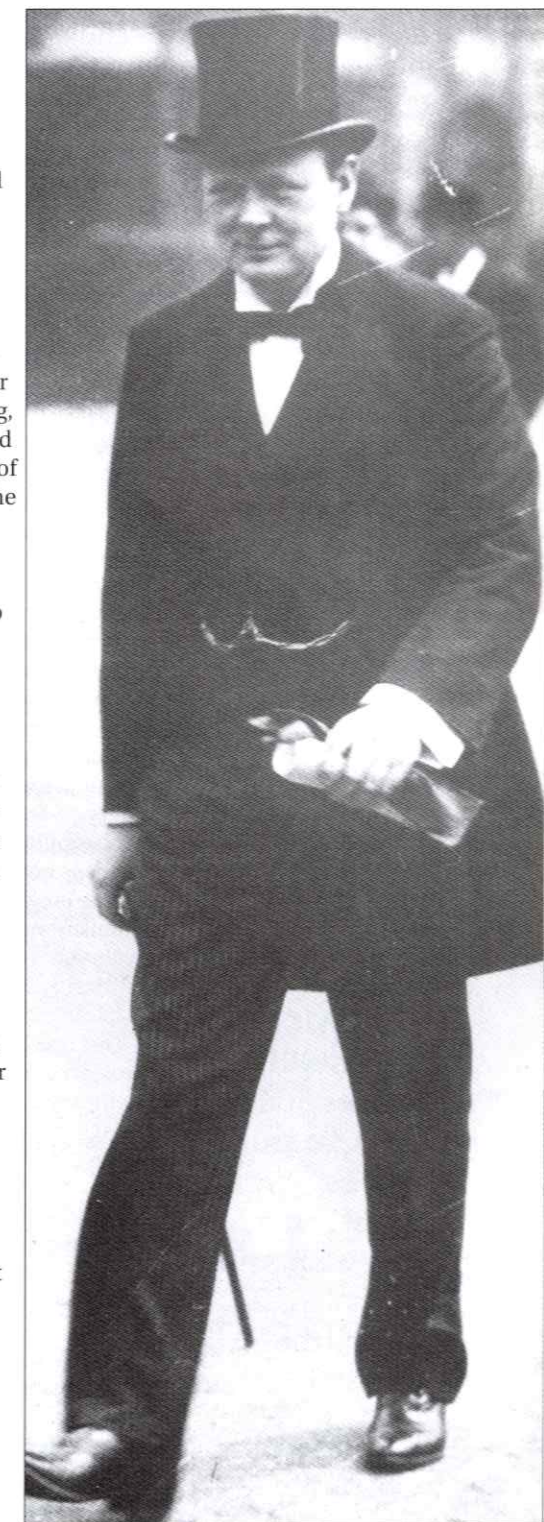
People watching out in the snow might have believed a whole army were inside. The gunmen had plenty of ammunition – Betty Gershon may have been storing it for the gang. But only two bodies were found – Joseph had been hit in the head by a bullet and crashed with the burning first floor. Fritz Svaars had died on the ground floor, overcome by smoke.

Churchill's handling of the siege won him no credit from opponents. In the Commons, Tory leader Arthur Balfour ridiculed this 'dangerous military operation' against two burglars, and the Tory press continued linking socialists and anarchists with criminals, and demanding tighter immigration controls. (Balfour, author of the first Aliens Act, which the Liberals were accused of watering down, became more famous for his declaration favouring a 'national home' for the Jews in Palestine. Fewer people remember that he wanted to keep them out of Britain.)

With Gardstein, Svaars and

Opposite page: Winston Churchill arrived in his top hat to direct operations

Below: Peter the Painter, who the police believed was the mastermind. He was never found.



Sokolow dead, legal proceedings were a bit of an anti-climax. On 22 February, Luba Millstein, who was pregnant with Svaars' child, was discharged for lack of evidence. Four weeks later, Karl Hoffman, who had been charged with conspiracy to rob, was freed for the same reason. These two paired up, went to America, and raised Svaars' son there. Sara Trassjonsky was also freed, but fragile in mind and body, she suffered a breakdown, and spent the rest of her tragic life in Colney Hatch asylum. Nina Vassileva, identified as having been at Houndsditch with the gang, was jailed for two years, though this was reduced. Befriended by Millie Witkop, Rudolf Rocker's partner, she stayed with them after her release, before finding work and a flat. She never left the East End and her name was never deleted from security service files.

Charles Perelman received £166 13s 4d reward money for tipping off police where to find his former tenant Fritz Svaars. We don't know how much he was paid for passing information to the Okhrana before this. Jacob Peters' presence at Houndsditch was never proved and he had good character witnesses from his workplace. He returned to Russia in 1917, joined the Bolsheviks and became a leading officer of the Cheka, hunting down anarchists and other real or imagined enemies of the Revolution until, in 1937, he was executed in the Stalinist purges. In 1960

he was posthumously rehabilitated and declared a Hero of the Soviet Union.

Despite a £500 reward, and various reported sightings over the years, Peter Piaktow, better known as Peter the Painter, was never found. Some said his nickname was the Russian equivalent of Will o'the Wisp, the illusory figure that vanishes in the mist. Others believe he was an agent provocateur sent to Britain by the Russian Okhrana, and his disappearance was arranged by the two countries' secret services.

FURTHER READING

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The Corpse on Clapham Common: A Tale of Sixty Years Ago by Eric Linklater (Macmillan, 1971).

East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914 by William J Fishman (Duckworth 1975)

The London Years by Rudolf Rocker (Five Leaves Publications, 2004).

BLOODIED BANNER

At a ceremony in Moscow in September a memorial was unveiled to the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee murdered on Stalin's orders in 1952. MICHAEL FAULKNER assesses Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Post-war Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee edited by Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir P Naumov

It is now more than 50 years since Stalin died. The anniversary did not pass without note. New biographies have appeared and Martin Amis has applied his talents to a literary rumination, the main purpose of which appears to be to fire a broadside at any and everyone, including his own father, whom he considers to have been under Stalin's spell or at least, not sufficiently free from his malign influence. For Amis and others on the right, there is no possibility of a Marxist alternative to capitalism that does not become a Stalinist tyranny. Stalinism was the inevitable outcome of Leninism, and Leninism was the product of the Bolshevik revolution, which, in turn was the foremost practical application of Marxism. Ergo, Marxian socialism produced Stalin and all his works.

This line of argument is very convenient for ideologues of capitalism and imperialism in their attempts to persuade us that 'there is no alternative' to the world as it is ordered at present. However, rejection of a reactionary equation of socialism with Stalinism should not lead us to ignore the legacy of Stalinism, or to avoid confronting the enormous damage done under the influence of Stalin, to the cause of socialism.

The opening of the Soviet archives during the past 10 years has released an enormous quantity of material which will occupy historians of the Soviet period for years to come.

Some of the most interesting new studies of the Stalin era have focused on the post-war years up to his death in 1953. In the early 1990s, Yakov Rapoport, a survivor of the 'Doctors' Plot' of 1952, published

his long suppressed firsthand account of that notorious episode. Stalin died before the accused group of doctors, most of them Jewish, could be brought to court in the frame-up trial planned for them. Khrushchev dropped all charges against them as he sought to reverse the intensified wave of repression that characterised Stalin's last years.

Rubenstein and Naumov have added considerably to our knowledge and understanding of Stalinist methods of falsification and judicial murder, in a book which deals with the liquidation of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and the physical destruction, between 1948 and 1952, of its leading members. Four fifths of the book consists of court records, individual testimonies and final statements by the 15 defendants. These documents, abridged from the transcripts of the 1952 trial, have only recently been released. Together with the introduction dealing with the formation of the Anti-Fascist Committee, its leading personalities and its later suppression, they make harrowing reading. The book provides damning evidence of the central role of antisemitism in the affair.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the full fury of the Nazis' genocidal antisemitism was unleashed against Soviet Jewry. In March 1942 the Soviet government established five anti-fascist committees, for women, youth, scientists, Slavs and Jews, each intended to appeal to different sections of western opinion to rally their support for the Soviet struggle against the Nazis. The Jewish committee was intended to appeal to western Jews, particularly in the USA but

also to Soviet Jews as Jews – a distinct shift in official Soviet policy. Despite ambivalence about whether the Jews constituted a nation (resulting on the one hand in the establishment from the late 1920s of the Jewish autonomous region of Biro-Bidzhan in the Soviet Far East, and, on the other, in the official line that Jewish nationalism was reactionary and anti-Soviet), the predominant trend by the late 1930s had become unswervingly hostile to all manifestations of Jewish particularism. The prominence of some Jews in the Left Opposition from the 1920s led to the cynical exploitation of Russia's deep-rooted antisemitism under the thin disguise of a campaign against 'rootless cosmopolitans' while, open expressions of anti-semitism in official circles were avoided, but in 1937, at the height of the purge trials, Stalin told the German-Jewish novelist Leon Feuchtwanger (with reference to the doomed Karl Radek), that 'you Jews have created one eternally true legend – that of Judas.' Shortly before his death, Trotsky commented that when his son, Sergei Sedov, was arrested, he was identified publicly neither as Sedov or Trotsky but as Bronstein!

By the end of the 1930s the Stalinist terror against all 'enemies of the people' left no room for non-conformity and this certainly applied to expressions of Jewish cultural or religious identity.

With the establishment of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) in 1942, many eminent Soviet Jews, such as Ilya Ehrenburg, Sergei Eisenstein and Solomon Lozovsky, most of whom were completely assimilated and often prominent cultural workers or political figures who had never particularly identified themselves as Jews, came to the forefront as spokespersons for Soviet Jewry. Leading members of the JAC also included prominent representatives of Yiddish culture, such as the actor Solomon Mikhoels and the poet Itzik Fefer. Eleven of the 15 leading members of the committee, later facing charges of treason, were members of the Communist Party. Lozovsky, a deputy commissar for foreign affairs throughout the war, had been a member of the pre-Bolshevik RSDLP from the beginning of the century. They were all Soviet patriots.

With the launch of the JAC, much of the earlier suppression of Yiddish culture was eased. A Yiddish newspaper, Eynikayt, (Unity) was launched in June 1942. Shakhno Epshteyn was editor, Mikhoels and Fefer sat on the editorial board. Following the Red Army's defeat of the Wehrmacht at Stalingrad in 1943, Mikhoels and Fefer were sent on an extended visit to Britain and the USA as ambassadors for Soviet Jewry. The Mikhoels-Fefer visit to the west was an outstanding success, widely reported in both the American and Soviet press. Stalin and Molotov bade them farewell on their departure. In the USA they met not only leading members of the US Communist Party but also mainstream Jewish organizations like the Jewish National Fund, the B'nai Brith and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. A National Reception Committee was organized, headed by Albert Einstein and B Z Goldberg, a pro-Soviet Yiddish journalist married to the daughter of Sholem Aleichem. However, the more conservative American Jewish Committee and socialist groups like the Bund and the Jewish Labour Committee

were hostile and kept their distance. Mikhoels and Fefer were the first official representatives of Soviet Jewry ever to visit the US and they came at a time when the Soviet Union was immensely popular following the Red Army's decisive victory at Stalingrad.

This was also a time when the first hard information about the Nazi death camps was reaching Britain and the US. While Mikhoels and Fefer were in New York during the summer of 1943, discussions took place on two projects that arose directly in response to the Nazi genocide. The influential journalist and novelist Ilya Ehrenburg, suggested compiling a 'Black Book' of Nazi atrocities against Jews on Soviet soil. This was supported enthusiastically by the American Jewish organizations endorsed by the Soviet government. The second project aimed at the resettlement of displaced Soviet Jewish survivors in the Crimea where, it was suggested, a Jewish republic could be created. This was an idea of unimpeachable provenance, as the Bolsheviks had supported the establishment of a Jewish agrarian region in the northern Crimea earlier and it was also endorsed by the US-based Jewish relief organisation, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). However, these two proposals, treated sympathetically by the Soviet authorities in 1943, were later twisted into evidence of treasonable Zionist plotting and sealed the fate of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

In 1943 the course of the war turned decisively against Nazi Germany and the Red Army had played by far the major part in the allied victory. During the last eighteen months of the war the circumstances that led Stalin to launch the JAC had changed. The desperate need to promote the Soviet war effort in the west was no longer as pressing. By 1945 he also suspected that the Anglo-Americans were prepared to allow the Soviets to shoulder the main military burden of the war in order to weaken their post war bargaining power in preparation for the imposition of a pax Americana.

In his introduction to the defendants' testimony in the 1952 trial, Joshua Rubenstein vividly describes the tragedy that overtook the JAC. What his account lacks is a sufficiently convincing explanation of why the secret pogrom was unleashed. The pre- and

Fefer and Mikhoels with Paul Robeson at the Soviet Consulate in New York in the summer of 1943



post-war purges are widely recognised as grotesque frame ups and judicial murders, but so many accounts of the trials still leave one with the impression that they are inexplicable except in terms of the paranoia of a bloodthirsty dictator. But we cannot ignore the realities of either the Nazi threat to the Soviet Union in the 1930s or of the global Soviet-US confrontation after World War Two, which provide a context for these events. However they may be interpreted the post-war purges in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe have to be considered in the context of the Truman Doctrine, the division of Germany and the confrontation over Berlin, the creation of Israel, the victory of the Chinese Revolution and the Korean War. The point, of course, is not to excuse the purges but see them within the wider context in order better to understand them.

With the ending of the war in 1945, the anti-fascist committees were allowed to continue. From its inception in 1942 through to 1945, the JAC had an illustrious record. Eynikayt flourished as a mouthpiece for Yiddish culture; co-operation with representatives of western Jewry was promoted and officially sanctioned; the links with the Joint and other US Jewish organisations were allowed to flourish. In 1946 B Goldberg and the US communist Paul Novick visited Moscow. But the atmosphere was changing. Between 1946 and 1948, Soviet-US relations were to break down and the division of Europe between East and West became a reality. The US alone possessed the atomic bomb. The 'cold war' seemed likely to explode into a hot war as tensions heightened over Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Berlin. In 1947 Stalin decided to batten down the hatches in the face of what he clearly perceived as an imminent US threat to the USSR and the buffer states in Eastern Europe. Also – and this was to prove crucial for the JAC and Soviet Jews – by 1948 Stalin's earlier policy of support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine went into reverse. He began to treat Israel as an agent of US imperialism. It was against this background that, from 1948 until Stalin's death in 1953, a series of murderous purges were unleashed, mainly against Communists, throughout Eastern Europe. In the Soviet Union itself, prominent Jews were purged. The JAC was disbanded in 1948 and the onslaught began against Yiddish culture, 'bourgeois Jewish nationalism', 'rootless cosmopolitans' and 'Zionists'. In the trials that followed, antisemitism masquerading as anti-Zionism played an important part.

Anyone still doubting Stalin's personal responsibility for the judicial murder of the JAC's leaders should consider the case of Solomon Mikhoels. This great Shakespearean actor and champion of Yiddish language and culture received many honours from the Soviet State including the award of the Stalin Prize as late as 1946. In 1948 Stalin secretly ordered his murder, which was to be disguised as a car accident, and then allowed him a state funeral with full honours. His name and reputation were soon to be blackened. By 1948 everyone associated with the JAC was treated as a potential US spy. The pressure was intensified on all prominent Jews. All expressions of Yiddish culture were considered suspect. Between 1948 and 1951 large numbers of Jews were arrested,

including the leaders of the Communist Party in Birobidzhan. The dragnet spread beyond those who had connections with the JAC. Polina Zhemchuzhina, the Jewish wife of Stalin's loyal Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, was arrested and sent into exile for supposed 'nationalistic' activities (she made a few favourable remarks in Yiddish to Golda Meir at a diplomatic reception for an Israeli delegation in 1948.)

Fifteen leading members of the JAC were charged with treason and finally brought to trial before the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court, within the walls of the Lubyanka prison, in May 1952. During the months and years they spent in prison awaiting trial, all (with the exception of Itsik Fefer) were subjected to the methods of interrogation (including physical torture, sleep deprivation and solitary confinement in punishment cells) that characterised the trials of the Bolshevik old guard in the 1930s. The interrogators sought confessions and pleas of guilty to charges that the JAC was a centre for espionage and that the defendants were engaged systematically in passing secret information to Zionist and other organisations in America to assist US imperialism against the Soviet Union. Unlike the frame-up Moscow trials of the 1930s and East European trials of the early 1950s, the trial of the JAC was held in secret. It also differed from the other Stalinist frame-ups in that only two of the defendants – Fefer and Teumin – pleaded Guilty. Of the others, five pleaded not guilty and eight pleaded 'guilty in part'. The abridged transcripts of the trial present a chilling picture of the methods employed to extract confessions and incriminate the defendants. As in the Moscow trials, a phantasmagorical perversion of the facts was constructed by the prosecution in order to turn perfectly innocent expressions of opinion, meetings and discussions between the defendants and between them and pro-Soviet Americans, that had occurred years before, into evidence of a sinister Zionist plot. Running like a leitmotif through the prosecution case was a virulent hostility to 'bourgeois Jewish nationalism' and to every expression of Yiddish language and culture – deemed incompatible with Soviet citizenship and commitment to communism. Some of the defendants succumbed to the terrible pressures. Lozovsky – the most Stalinist of them – felt the most affronted by the accusations of 'nationalism' and clearly wanted to dissociate himself from those he regarded as less ideologically sound than himself. His 'not guilty' plea was the most forceful. Fefer, the Yiddish poet, one of the two who pleaded guilty, was most amenable to the prosecutors and throughout his testimony adopted a mea culpa attitude to his previous 'nationalist' deviation. Lina Shtern, a medical scientist who had lived for years in the USA, stubbornly refused to be intimidated. She was the only one of the defendants to escape the death sentence.

The case concocted against the JAC only makes sense against the background of the Cold War and particularly the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. There can be no doubt that concurrently with the rapid pro-American orientation of Israeli foreign policy, Stalin came to see the JAC and possibly the whole of Soviet Jewry as a fifth column for Israel and US imperialism. In the 1930s he had

treated those old Bolsheviks whose loyalty he doubted as real or potential agents of Nazi Germany. In 1948, Tito, the independent communist leader of Yugoslavia, was denounced as a spy for Britain and the US. 'Zionism' rapidly took the place of 'Titoism' as the main charge levelled against largely Jewish victims of the purge of Czech communist leaders between 1949 and '53. The trial of the JAC fits this pattern.

The most damning charge against the JAC was that the 'Crimea project', seeking to establish a Jewish republic after the war, was actually intended to facilitate a US invasion of the Soviet Union through the Caucasus! The defendants did their best to expose the calumnies hurled at them. Their testimonies make heartrending reading as they tried, in vain, to affirm their loyalty to the Soviet Union and their commitment to socialism. Some, no doubt under unbearable pressure, apologised for their 'bourgeois Jewish nationalism' which, they confessed, had led them to place the suffering of the Jewish people above their loyalty to the Soviet Union. Thus, those who had pleaded 'guilty in part' succumbed to the prosecution pressure to depict them as renegades and traitors. Guilty verdicts were returned against all 15. In sentencing them, in every case reference was made to the fact that they

were Jewish. Fourteen of the 15 were sentenced to execution by firing squad. Only one escaped the death sentence: Lina Shtern, who was sentenced to three and a half years in a labour camp to be followed by a further five years of exile.

The leaders of the Jewish Anti Fascist Committee were Stalin's last victims. Sentence was passed in July 1952. Stalin died in March 1953. Reviewing the case in November 1955, the Supreme Court of the USSR concluded that 'there was no substance to the charges against' any of the defendants, and decided 'to repeal the sentence of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR dated July 1-18, 1952.'

While the left will continue to debate the origins and nature of Stalinism, this affair was undoubtedly a disaster for socialism. The overwhelming majority of Stalin's political victims in the Soviet Union were people who had dedicated their lives to the revolutionary cause. Not least among them were those courageous Jewish communists and Soviet patriots who worked and died for the ideals of the Jewish Anti Fascist Committee.

Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-fascist Committee edited by Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir P. Naumov, and translated by Laura Esther Wolfson (Yale University Press, 2001).

Reel life in Berlin

I have no idea what it would feel like to go to Berlin as a non-Jew. When I went to the Berlin Film Festival last year, I saw the possibility of a different sort of visit but my time there was driven by identity, both by choice and by accident.

My mother refusing to tell her relatives where I had gone. She referred to Berlin as 'Europe' and was deeply against my trip. Understandable, but in fact my visit began by reflecting her attitude. I arrived at Berlin Tegel airport and used my very rusty school German to ask the man at the information desk: 'Sprechen Sie Englisch?'

I was shocked at what I thought was his reply: 'You Jew?' In fact he said, jokingly, 'You too?'

On the journey to the city the weight of recent history became apparent almost immediately. The route to the hotel passed a huge site being built in commemoration of the Jews in Germany. My hotel was 10 minutes from the Liebeskind Jewish Museum. Synagogues were being refurbished.

The surprise for me was how large the Jewish presence was. Not only was the city marking the Jewish presence but the film festival seemed to as well.

The Israeli film industry was a strong element in the festival, with films that were both interesting and impressive. The previous year an unprecedented nine Israeli films were shown in Berlin. Since then they have increased their profile, winning at the International Documentary Festival (IDFA) in Amsterdam with 'Checkpoint' by Yoav Shamir and screening Savi Gabizon's 'Nina's Tragedies' in the official selection at the Sundance Film Festival.

This year in Berlin there were four Hebrew language films and a number of shorts and shorts programmes. The Sam Spiegel Film and TV College

was the subject of a homage and showed a retrospective series of shorts from 1992 to 2003, usually seeing the world from children's eyes, including 'A Different War' by Nadar Gal where a young boy exploring his feminine side would not shout at the Arabs from a distance but danced on the barrier wall instead, and an early film 'Sea Horses' (1998) by Nir Bergman who made 'Broken Wings' last year, both exploring themes of how a family survives and changes after the father has gone.

Eytan Fox in a radio interview suggested that his film 'Walk on Water' (Lalechet al hamayim), which explores themes of vengeance and redemption in the form of a spy thriller, also offers a route for Israelis to see themselves as aggressors. The story was satisfying, examining relationships to hate and love, twisting the expectation of German and Jewish characteristics.

Other films showing at the Berlinale from Israel were 'Campfire' by Joseph Cedar (Medurat hashevet) set in 1982, where a mother decides to move to a settlement with her two daughters after her husband's death. Light themes of smug prejudice and darker themes of sexual exploration worked well together.

'Out of the Forest' recorded the aftermath of the events at Ponar in Lithuania, where 100,000 people were exterminated in death camps. Survivors movingly told their stories while residents of the small town either remembered with regret or denied the impact of what happened. The strongest moments were when the makers of the documentary, Limor Pinhasov Ben Yosef and Yaron Kaftori Ben Yosef, allowed their anger and frustration to show.

A lighter documentary, 'Film as a Subversive Art: Amos Vogel and Cinema 16' by Paul Cronin was about 82-year-old Austrian emigré Amos Vogel who was

revealed by a series of interviews to be full of energy and the founder of the New York Film festival as well as of Cinema 16, one of America's greatest film societies which pulled in audiences of 1,500 per show.

Screen International at the Berlinale reported that the 10 or so Israeli films released annually have drawn a 4.5% market share of the local box office. Screen also compared the energy of the current Israeli film industry to pre-War art in Germany in the 1920s and '30s and America of the 1950s and '60s, where artists and filmmakers try to make sense of a fast changing and dangerous world. Audiences are responding. Israel has the state-backed Israeli Film Fund (IFF)

which invests about \$500,000 per film in around 10 features a year. There is also the Cinema Project, managed by Tel Aviv's Rabinovich Fund which also backs four to five features a year. This is fed by talent from the film schools, including the Jerusalem Film School and the Sam Spiegel Film & TV College.

My visit to Berlin was a complex experience. On the one hand I felt included in the film festival by the large Israeli presence. What was more unexpected was that Berlin the city felt welcoming. I did not feel excluded as a Jew. I expected to feel uncomfortable. Instead I felt European. Is that how denial works?

Gail Pearce

RING OF TRUTH



Music has undoubtedly been a mobiliser of political action. The American civil rights movement had simple anthems such as We Shall Overcome, or Oh Freedom to cement a shared consciousness, solidarity and will to win. For the anti-apartheid movement Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika played a similar role. When I first became politically active in the 1970s, a feature of demonstrations, particularly in east London, was a float carrying earnest young men and women singing revolutionary songs. An offshoot of a small Maoist group, the songs of People's Liberation Music were incredibly verbose and convoluted. Mindful of Emma Goldman's adage 'If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution', I recall few people dancing to their renditions of Brecht and Weill's directives to 'March on in the Workers' United Front' or the tortured phrases of Victor Jara. Yet they had an enduring impact on me, if on few others

In his introduction to this excellent book, Mike Marqusee refers back to his early and unrequited quest to unite the political and the aesthetic. Could Bob Dylan express this unity? For a performer still touring and writing new songs, history has already delivered a damning verdict on Dylan. A young pretender, penning cynical songs against the rich, powerful and the mighty in order to take that first step on the ladder to joining the rich and powerful. The writer who declared in the 1960s, 'Money doesn't talk – it swears' and who sang full of vituperation: 'You just want to be on the side that's winning,' was involved a decade later in multi-million dollar divorce proceedings with ex-wife Sara, briefly converted to Christianity, became an apologist for Zionism and has generally lived a high life that few of the subjects of his early songs would have dreamed of, let alone aspired to.

And yet there is a generation of socialists in America and other Anglophone countries for whom Dylan is still 'one of ours', whose words resonate and give strength to our struggles long after he himself dismissed them and distanced himself from them. Dylan's playfulness with words led him to be often described as an enigma; Mike Marqusee's biography is dedicated partly to deconstructing the enigma of the left's enduring attachment to Dylan.

More pertinently, it is an attempt to understand what created Dylan, the forces at play in 1960s America that could give a platform to protest singers and provide them with a mass audience. As he sketches Dylan's evolution, Marqusee constantly adjusts the

background to take in the dynamic movements and dramatic changes of that decade – the rise of the multi-ethnic civil rights movement and its eventual eclipse by radical black power campaigns; the decline of the old left – a Communist Party crippled by the external force of McCarthyism and its own adherence to Stalinism – and the rise of the new left; the concomitant explosion of student activism, proudly recognising and asserting themselves as a vanguard of revolutionary change; the anti-war movement growing with each day that America entrenched itself in the quagmire of Vietnam; the mass rejection and opting out of society that was the hallmark of the hippies, despite attempts by the yippies to combine the self-focused liberation of the individual through the values of peace and love with a liberation of society, and the deepening sense of generational conflict in American society epitomised in Dylan's classic 'The Times They are a Changing': 'Come mothers and fathers throughout the land/And don't criticise what you can't understand/Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command/Your old road is rapidly fading.'

A historian can clinically separate these movements as drawing on different and discrete sources of inspiration and occasionally colliding. But what Marqusee does is to forensically illuminate their difference in perspectives while presenting a fluid and dynamic, multi-layered analysis of their interactions as well as their divergence.

Into this galaxy of movements and ideas and activities Marqusee analyses the role of music as a political feature, with special reference to Dylan, but balances his strongest claims for its significance with repeated health warnings from the Frankfurt school marxist, Theodore Adorno. Adorno believed that radical music was constantly co-opted by the market and repackaged to desensitise those who might act on its messages. He was especially pessimistic about any potential for radical messages being created through pop music. And yet as Marqusee shows towards the end of the book, the decade of the 60s ended with black musicians such as Curtis Mayfield using a pop/funk idiom as a powerful mobilising tool as, he may have added, did Jimmy Cliff and a few years later, Bob Marley with popular reggae.

The early Dylan consciously drew on the forefathers of American protest music rooted in blues and folk traditions such as Leadbelly, Rambling Jack Elliot, Pete Seeger, and, most of all, the legendary

Woody Guthrie. My prior assumption was that there had been a longstanding connection here and in America between the communist movement and the traditions of radical folk music. Marqusee demonstrates that a more complicated set of processes were at work, with the CP blowing hot and cold over its attachment to the singers and their songs. Guthrie was at one time handed a regular column in the Daily Worker, but was considered far too loose a cannon to be admitted to the party.

The moments of greatest convergence came within a framework of 'social patriotism' as singers lamented the lot of the great mass of the poor, made the case for redistribution of wealth and cast them as the agency of change – a change that would certainly come. Guthrie and Seeger remained mainly in the confines of 'social patriotism', constantly promoting clear, one-dimensional themes of justice and equality as did, to a large extent Dylan's contemporaries, Joan Baez and Phil Ochs. But there was a side to Guthrie's lyrics where he identified with more marginalised elements – the outlaws, prostitutes and vagabonds – and hinted at a deeper cultural critique of American society beyond its obvious economic relations.

The power of Dylan's lyrics is in their ability to move beyond the confines of social patriotism to that deeper cultural critique and lay bare the role of institutions such as the media, the law courts, the colleges and prisons. Despite the many changes in Dylan's personal life, his exposure and condemnation of institutionalised racism beyond individual racist behaviour has remained an enduring theme. It emerged first in songs such as 'Only a Pawn in Their Game' and 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll'. It re-emerges later in songs for victims such as George Jackson and Reuben 'Hurricane' Carter. This deeper critique, though, also embraced the movements of the oppressed themselves and placed less faith and certainty in their ability to repair the world.

The fact that some of Dylan's words could be neatly encompassed within the framework of social patriotism, while others went far beyond that, probably explains why, despite his own frequently expressed cynicism at his 'protest' material, his words and phrases were seized on by the whole galaxy of radical elements that were struggling for different

kinds of changes to American society in that decade.

Marqusee identifies the paradox that Dylan's evolution as a poet proceeded most impressively in the decline of his protest period as his songs moved from the grander political themes found in 'Masters of War' or 'Blowing in the Wind' to a focus on personal relationships and the women he loved, or more frequently despised. These pepper the albums 'Another Side of Bob Dylan' and 'Blonde on Blonde': You say you're looking for someone/Who'll pick you up each time you fall/To gather flowers constantly/An' to come each time you call/A lover for your life an' nothing more/But it ain't me, babe.

Yet sales of his protest songs peaked long after he had archived them and put them in his loft, as the trends he had identified and reacted to in the American body politic became more stark and severe.

Some critics damn many of Dylan's more personal songs as simple misogyny. Marqusee is kinder to him – perhaps too kind – in arguing that Dylan was ahead of the game in understanding that 'the personal is political' and that deeper political themes are played out in these songs. One of my all-time Dylan favourites, 'Like a rolling stone', is at one level a pitiless outpouring of venom for a woman he no longer cares for. At another level it is a searing attack on the rich as they fall from grace and are forced to see life through the eyes of the poor and dispossessed. You've gone to the finest school/All right, Miss Lonely/But you know you only used to get juiced in it/And nobody has ever taught you how to live on the street/And now you find out you're gonna have to get used to it.

I don't love every song, but I treasure my collection of Dylan albums. His words and poetry are embedded in my consciousness and helped give me a language to identify the inequities in society, express rage against the machine and look for collective ways of organising for change. This book provides a fascinating and graphic documentary of Dylan and roots it in a sophisticated political analysis. As well as encouraging the reader to dust down their Dylan albums, it prompts them to ask where are the new Dylans, Guthries and Seegers to be found today? Our struggles certainly need people who can turn words into weapons of mass construction. David Rosenberg

POETRY

Malc's shoes smelled of fish because they
Had been stuck together with fish glue. His
Father had brought them back from Czechoslovakia.
They were, his father said, another
Example of how Communism was improving
The lives of the Czechoslovakian people.
– see how resourceful they are, he said, using
– fish remains to make shoes. Nothing gets
– wasted.

At nights, when we lay in his bedroom, Malc in his
Bed, me on the floor in my sleeping bag – we would
Talk about the girls we fancied; and in the dark
I could smell his Communist shoes

Michael Rosen

This poem is from This is Not my Nose: a Memoir of Illness and Recovery, by Michael Rosen (Penguin, £7.99)

Remember their faces

There are more Jews in the Powazki cemetery than
walk down Marzalkowska.

Sepia'd anonymity
But these people never chose
Symbolism or immortality

historical metaphors mean only that the chains are
unbound but the names are forgotten
'this must never happen again'
history in their eyes but their faces deserve more

To remember the faces of those we never knew
To be the children, grandchildren

...the future they had no time to imagine

Miriam Moss

CHIMES OF FREEDOM: THE POLITICS OF BOB DYLAN'S ART

Mike Marqusee,
The New Press, £14.95

The ties that bind

LIQUID LOVE: ON THE FRAILITY OF HUMAN BONDS

Zygmunt
Bauman

Cambridge: Polity 2003

Price £14.99

Zygmunt Bauman, born in Poznan in 1925, has authored dozens of books in his long career as a sociologist – first at Warsaw and then (after antisemitic purges in 1968 Poland) at Leeds – on subjects such as class, globalization, modernity and social theory.

His latest, *Liquid Love*, marks the culmination of a slow change in Bauman's writing, from earlier densely sociological books to this beautifully written collection of aphorisms and observations, dealing with deeply personal subjects. The premise of the book is summed up in this rhetorical question: 'Is it not so that when everything is said about the matters most important to human life, the most important things remain unsaid?'

Bauman experiments with a more poetic style, as in this comment on the fall of military hardware in the Balkans: 'The weapons do not speak, while the sound of humans speaking seems to be an abominably weak response to the whizz of missiles and the deafening racket of explosives.' The book moves between high and low culture – from Kant to the relationship counselling columns of glossy weekend supplements, from ethical reflections on the Shoah to TV shows like *The Weakest Link* and *Big Brother*, from Sophocles' *Antigone* to the tragic drama of *EastEnders*' Little Mo.

Bauman's fundamental belief – and perhaps the reason he is a sociologist and a socialist – is that there are no biographical solutions to social problems. That is, structural issues, like class or racial oppression, cannot be addressed through self-help manuals or keep-fit regimes. This book, then, starts with the very personal issue of love – a subject most social scientists avoid and the materialist left shuns – but slowly moves to very political questions about society.

Bauman places love today in the context of what some call 'postmodernity' and he calls 'liquid modernity'. It is a condition defined by a looseness of bonds, a weightlessness of duties. In this condition, the tight, heavy, durable and reciprocal ties of commitment are thrown off and we seek, he claims, connections that can be swiftly unfixed so we can move on to the next one.

For me, this grand narrative of liquid modernity is too sweeping a story, too stark a picture. For every cultural shift, myriad countercultures emerge; for every grand narrative, a wealth of other stories whisper from the margins. But if Bauman overlooks these, his analysis of the big picture certainly resonates.

At times, in his discussion of love, Bauman – a lifelong monogamist – seems like a curmudgeonly Jeremiah, railing against the promiscuity of the young. But the power of his argument comes through as he moves from love to other human relations, and suggests that we are losing the ability to generate meaningful forms of *communitas*, solidarity and closeness between people.

He develops concepts like 'virtual proximity', the illusion of proximity given by modern gadgetry. The twist to this 'virtual proximity', as Bauman points out, is that when you're actually proximate to someone with your mobile switched on you are always

available to others, not fully there: 'Those who stay apart, mobiles allow to get in touch. Those who get in touch, mobiles permit to stay apart.' Similarly, consumerism is not about accumulating things ('who gathers goods must put up as well with heavy suitcases and cluttered houses') but about throwing them away to make room for new ones.

As a flipside of 'virtual proximity', liquid modernity saturates our lives with images of distant suffering and distant cruelty – starving babies and displaced mothers in other continents, who appear to be the victims of impersonal global forces. The distance of their suffering and the impersonality of the storms which rage through their lives leave us feeling impotent. Our response is all too often 'to run for shelter'. New technologies of security and surveillance allow the luckier to shut themselves away from public life, in gated spaces of privilege. These spaces bound by security fences house 'mixophobic' communities of sameness. Outside the gates teem the 'ghost wards' of the favelas and inner cities, whose denizens are, in Bauman's harsh phrase, the products of liquid modernity's global 'human waste disposal system'.

A central theme of Bauman's liquid modernity is survival. The practitioners of the liquid love he scorns are playing a Darwinian game of survival, refusing the risks of committed love. In a shocking juxtaposition, Bauman suggests that the reality game show *Survivor* and Spielberg's *Schindler's List* share a common logic: the celebration of survival whatever the costs. This is why Bauman prefers the message of Primo Levi or of Andrzej Wajda's film *Korczak* to Spielberg. For Levi and Wajda, survival without dignity and love is ultimately worthless.

Among the products of the 'human waste disposal system', among the weakest links in the survival game, strangers – and above all refugees – have a special place for Bauman, himself initially a refugee in this country. Refugees – confined in 'the dense archipelago of nowhere-villes', 'their identities surviving mostly as ghosts', reduced to bare life, at the mercy of states to which they can never belong – are the true figures of today's dark times. For Bauman (and for Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben, whose work has profoundly influenced him), the situation of refugees perhaps also points to a possible future for humanity in general.

The plight of liquid modernity's weakest links leaves Bauman angry. Angry at politicians who provoke the fear of strangers under the alibi of being tough on crime. Angry at states which, even after the lessons of the Holocaust, routinely practise such stratagems of power as banishing whole populations to camps or ghettos or uprooting olive groves to strangle a village's livelihood.

But, through the anger, the message is the need for dialogue, friendship and humanity. He follows Hannah Arendt and her hero GE Lessing in arguing that 'openness to others is the precondition of humanity in every sense of the word.' On the basis of openness to others and 'truly human dialogue', we can build a global community. **Ben Gidley**

Mind, body and soul

As might be gleaned from the title, this book is not a direct account of the philosophy of Spinoza and the reader may wonder why the 17th century Sephardic thinker is being invoked at all within a popular science text on neurobiology.

Damasio waits until page 11 to provide an answer, one which provides the book's key unspoken leitmotif – the necessary and unavoidable linkage between science and philosophy. He states: 'Spinoza dealt with subjects that preoccupy me most as a scientist – the nature of emotions and feelings and the relation of mind to body... To my eyes, however, he seemed to have prefigured solutions that researchers are now offering on a number of these issues.' In other words he rejected Cartesian dualism, favouring the idea, taken for granted in mainstream science today, of mind and body emanating from the same substance rather than existing as separate entities. A scientist before there was science.

In Spinoza's era, the term natural philosophy was preferred. It seems to be more in the last century that this historical connection has been severed. Damasio considers this book to be one attempt to correct this. The key thesis of the book is Spinoza's understanding that the 'human mind is the idea of the human body'. The author relates this to his understanding of mental processes originating within the complex maps of changing physical body states residing in various interacting regions of the brain.

There are two detailed chapters, which outline this hypothesis focusing on emotion and feeling respectively. Research with neurological patients who have suffered emotional disorders provides empirical backup for the central thesis. These are helpful and quite straightforward to follow. However, along with these accounts are complex descriptions of the anatomy of the brain. If you don't know your ventromedial prefrontal cortex from your periaqueductal gray, you may be overcome with the conviction that neither of those or any other parts of your brain are functioning terribly well these days and fast forward until the 'easy stuff' emerges a few pages later. I came close.

More interestingly, from a social science perspective, is when the significance of emotion and feelings are discussed with respect to their role in society past and present. Inevitably, the former engenders a digression into socio-biology. The example cited is that of prejudice, which the author sees as having arisen from ancient evolutionary needs to respond to difference but which are no longer appropriate in our society today. Aside from not producing any evidence to back up this assertion, he claims that by understanding the fact that our brains carry these 'prejudice' mechanisms, we are empowered to reject that option. Very noble sentiments. But I do not see how a cogent socio-political analysis could not accomplish the same goal without recourse to neurological accounts.

Later on in the book such explanations give way to a more sophisticated analysis, one that insists on the vital importance of disciplines outside biology and evolutionary science being mined to develop a more complete approach of the operation and development of human social creations such as

ethics, justice, law and religion. This is very much in tune with the writing of the late Stephen Jay Gould who held that evolutionary biology alone was not adequate to account of the plethora of human social behaviour and attitudes.

Specific to Damasio's account is the foundational role emotions and feelings play in the creation and sustaining of religion, justice and socio-political institutions, a role he considers possible only due to our innate concern for the needs and desires of others as well as ourselves. He considers religion impossible within a purely rationalist base, deeming that there is no reason why religion could have developed within human culture without the need to meet certain emotional wants such as joy or despair. Equally, he considers the sustaining of religious practice untenable without emotions supporting notions of dominance, awe, respect and so forth. One key problem with this perspective is that it does not account for why some people are religious and some people are not. After all, it is possible to feel despair and joy and not turn to religion in any form. The most this theory can suggest is that emotions provide the possibility of a religious response but not why religion as opposed a range of other options would not be taken up at a societal level or indeed on an individual basis.

Spinoza himself rejects the religious teachings he learnt as a rabbinical student, preferring to pursue a more naturalistic philosophy, rejecting the notion of a god as understood within Judeo-Christian traditions. Whether Spinoza was atheist as currently understood is not a debate entered in great depth. Either way his opinion was sufficiently out of kilter with the prevailing religious orthodoxies of his time to ensure his excommunication from Judaism as well as the repression of his ideas within mainstream post enlightenment debate for a good 100 years after his death. Damasio surmises that the source of his radical ideas could be his engagement with Jewish history and suffering throughout the ages, and an awareness that even in the relative safety of Holland the Jews were still not completely safe. Hence the impetus to develop a world view which would cut across such social divisions allowing for the Jews and indeed humanity as a whole to overcome their antagonism and discontent.

What is not dwelt on here is the notion of exile. How much did Spinoza see himself as an exile as a Jew in Holland and how might this have related to his preparedness to risk and ultimately experience exile from the faith in which he was brought up. Also it would have been interesting if the author, like Spinoza, a Portuguese exile, had directly referenced his own (emotional?) experiences while drawing out various developments in his own life and academic career. Since he appears generally interested in Spinoza the person as well as in his ideas, such an approach would not be misplaced.

On Spinoza's grave lay the inscription *Caute!* (Be careful!). Spinoza had told us that every man should think what he wants and say what he thinks but not so fast, not quite yet. It's advice that Jewish radicals might well have ringing in their ears today.

Miriam Moss

LOOKING FOR SPINOZA: JOY, SORROW AND THE FEELING BRAIN

Antonio Damasio

Heinemann, 2003

Price \$28