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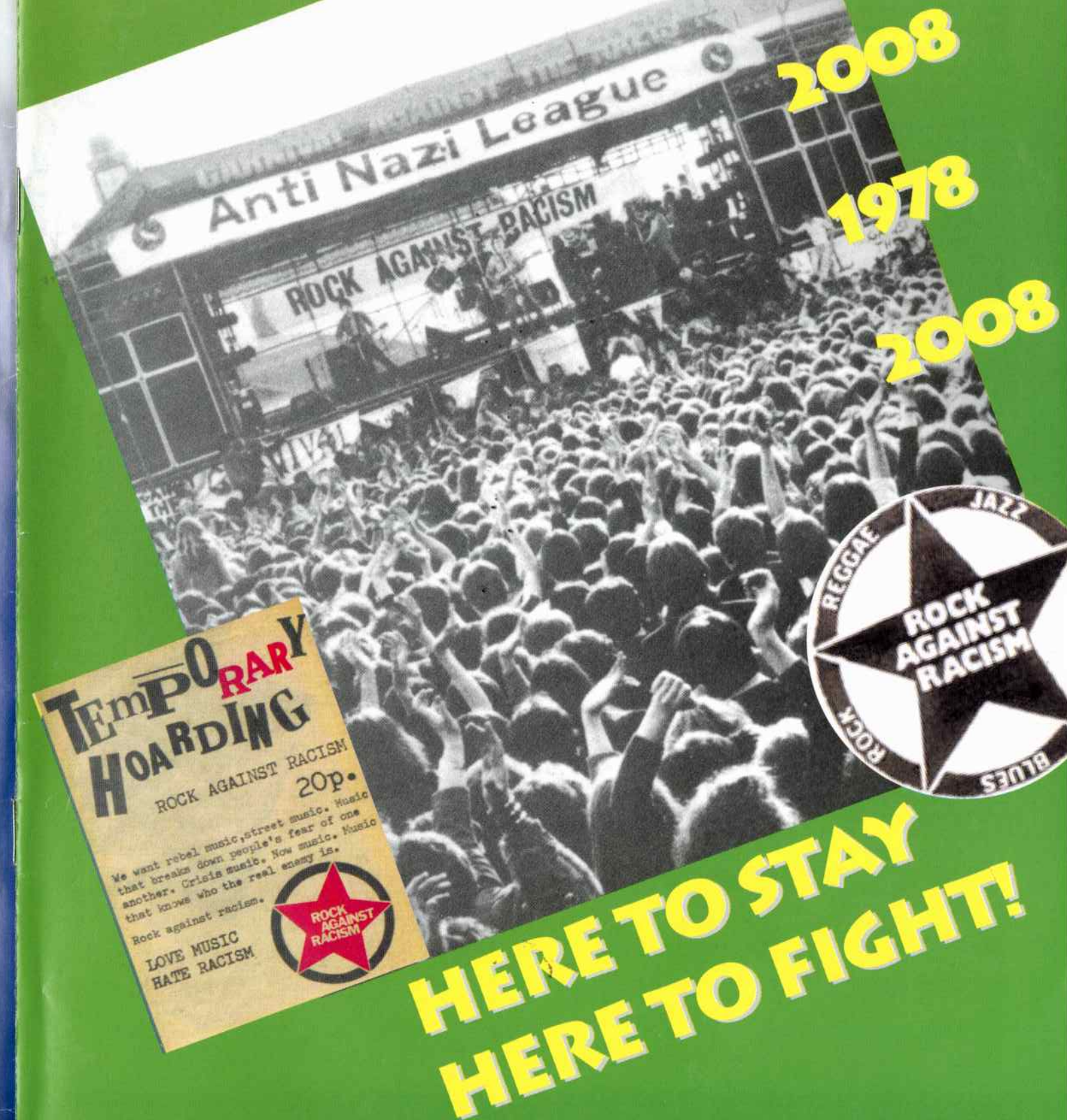
journalist-
author Mike
Marqusee



compere
Ivor
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**Mike Marqusee interview ■ Green Party, Israel + Palestine
Turkey's forgotten Jewish writers ■ Klezmer and the Holocaust**

EDITORIAL

Sixty years ago Jewish life underwent a seismic shift. A people whose most profound practical, cultural and intellectual accomplishments were realised in conditions of dispersal over nearly two millennia, and who were still contributing to social progress across several continents, were overwhelmed by a new imperative – the creation of a Jewish nation state.

1948 was simultaneously an act of creation and destruction. During a war, Palestinian villages were razed to the ground, the people dispossessed and exiled and their land literally turfed over to 'socialist' kibbutzim. For Palestinians, a nightmare began that has endured for 60 years and is reaching a new intensity as poverty stricken Gazans battle mass starvation and disease.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, few were willing to acknowledge the price that Palestinians paid. The fighters for the new Jewish state, pitting themselves against forces of a fading British Empire, commandeered the language of independence and freedom. They won support from Labour and Communist parties in the West and from leaders of the evolving Eastern block. Though as Mike Marqusee points out (page 12), not among Jewish and Arab communists in Iraq and Egypt. The claim by Zionists today that even the fiercest critics of a Jewish state before the war, recognised the new realities afterwards, was belied too by Bundist survivors of Nazism, whose conferences in Belgium in 1947 and America in 1948 opposed partition in favour of a binational solution (page 10) and declared that a Jewish state would not solve the problems Jews continued to face in the world.

On Israel's 10th birthday, the renowned Jewish Marxist, Isaac Deutscher, warned Israelis to, 'beware of being carried away by their new-fangled and already red-hot nationalism'. Their state was 'not above criticism: it is an earthly creation not a biblical sanctity'. Their future depended, he said 'on whether the Israelis are on guard against nationalist conceit and able to find a common language with the people around them'.

The devastating physical, psychological, and existential tragedy for the Palestinians has also been a political and cultural disaster for the Jews. The liberatory impulses that swept through Jewish life, bringing Jewish individuals and organisations to the frontline of so many struggles for social justice, were twisted, warped and ultimately subordinated to defence of an increasingly repressive state of Israel.

Jump forward to 1978: the calamitous results of the new master-servant relationship between a Jewish state and the Jewish people are evident all around. The state that proclaimed

itself 'a light unto the nations' was collaborating on nuclear weapons technology with the ultimate pariah – apartheid South Africa. Meanwhile, in Argentina, thousands of oppositionists 'disappeared' in the struggles against the Junta, the proportion of Jews among them far greater than their proportion in the population. While America – and American Jewish leaders – looked the other way, this Junta was provided with arms and security expertise by Israel. Far from defending the Jews from the Junta, Israel was protecting the Junta from the Argentinian Jews.

The late 1970s was also the peak of a worldwide campaign for Soviet Jewry – not for their right to live as Jews in the USSR, nor for their freedom to emigrate to a country of choice, but exclusively for them to go to Israel, whether they liked it or not.

Here in Britain, as fascist forces reached their highest membership since the 1930s and minority communities including Jews suffered a dramatic rise in racist attacks, a broad-based mass anti-fascist movement was formed. But self-proclaimed 'leaders' of the Jewish community told Jews to stay away from the Anti Nazi League because some of its leading members were also anti-Zionist (page 16). While Zionists might have been unnerved by the slogan 'Here to stay, here to fight', it was criminally irresponsible for Jewish leaders to divide the Jews from this movement that was breaking down racist barriers and stemming the fascist tide.

As a more right wing version of Zionism consolidated power in Israel, a right wing Jewish tendency was strengthening first in the USA and then in Britain. Exploiting the left's antipathy to Zionism and support for the Palestinians, it tried to shift Jewish opinion away from its traditional left/liberal mooring towards an aggressive neo-conservatism.

In 2008 Israel's 60th birthday is already being commemorated. We are not celebrating. When Israeli forces have withdrawn from the Occupied Territories, the Palestinians have self-determination, Israel is a state for all its citizens equally, and when Israel stops insisting that Jews around the world have to be 'ingathered' to the Jewish state or that Israel is the undisputed centre of Jewish life, we will have reason to cheer.

Isaac Deutscher understood that the Jews 'were conditioned by the circumstances of their existence to rise above the limitations of the nationalist outlook, to overcome the fetishes of state and empire'. We celebrate the fact that in the diaspora there are Jews who maintain this outlook along with their commitment to unite with others for universal human liberation.

Jewish community through photos. In 2004 he became founder and creative director of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, which provides a permanent home for this work and organises events marking the Jewish presence in Galicia. Chris Schwarz died of cancer in 2007 in Krakow at the age of 59. www.galiciajewishmuseum.org

Cover picture: Chris Schwarz, The Clash on stage at the Rock Against Racism/Anti Nazi League Carnival in Victoria Park, 30th April 1978.

Chris Schwarz took many photos documenting anti-fascist struggles in London in the late 1970s. He later moved to Poland where he spent 12 years recording remnants of the pre-War Polish

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Canadian challenge

More than 100 Jews from 26 cities across Canada met from 28th-30th March to form an organisation committed to promoting real peace and justice in the Middle East. Convened by the Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians (ACJC), the conference brought together Canadian Jews belonging to 18 different groups to offer an alternative to the uncritical support of Israeli policies by the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canada-Israel Committee and B'nei Brith, as well as those of the Harper government. The new



Naomi Klein

organisation will advocate instead for Canadian policies which respect international and humanitarian law. Jewish-Canadian author Naomi Klein made the keynote address, 'Whatever you do, don't be normal,' she said, and called on Canada's Jews to challenge Israel's 'normalisation' of policies such as torture, targeted assassinations, collective punishment, and permanent war in the name of security. Israel, she explained, depends heavily on both its tourism and its security industries. These are inherently in conflict: for tourists, it needs to project an image of peaceful normality, but to justify its demand for massive military aid and uncritical support for its aggressive treatment of Palestinians, it needs to claim to be imminently in peril. So it is trying to convince the world that it can deliver security through a permanent war on terror. Canada's Harper

government is enthusiastically signing up to this dangerous model. Naomi Klein pointed to Israel's plan to pilot an Israel Brand campaign in Toronto, and urged progressive Jews to expose the ugly reality beneath the slick Israeli tourism image.

Representatives of progressive Jewish national groups in the US, the UK, and France all described riding a 'tidal wave' of Jewish opposition to Israeli mistreatment of Palestinian people. Although they represented a spectrum of perspectives, all enthusiastically welcomed a solidarity relationship with the emerging Canadian independent Jewish movement. Speakers included Glen Hauer of Jewish Voice for Peace (United States), Sue Swartz of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom (United States), Brian Klug of Independent Jewish Voices (Britain), Mariana Viturro and Rivka Bar Zohar of the International Jewish Solidarity Network, and Richard Wagman representing both the European Jews for a Just Peace and l'Union Juive Française pour la Paix.

Representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Canadian Arab Federation and the Canadian Peace Alliance also called for a pan-Canadian progressive Jewish voice which can stand in solidarity with their anti-occupation resolutions and calls for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against companies profiting from the Israeli occupation. Sid Ryan, President of CUPE Ontario, described the harassment he and his entire extended family have suffered since he pioneered CUPE's call for targeted sanctions against the Israeli occupation. 'We need Jews

to stand in solidarity with us,' he said.

Participants unanimously endorsed the following principles: 'Human rights are universal and indivisible. This is as applicable in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories as it is elsewhere. Palestinians and Israelis alike have the right to peaceful and secure lives. Peace and stability require the willingness of all parties to the conflict to comply with international law. There is no justification for any form of racism, including antisemitism, anti-Arab racism or Islamophobia...The battle against antisemitism is undermined whenever opposition to Israel's government policy is automatically branded as antisemitic.'

Diana Ralph, ACJC's official spokesperson, described the weekend conference, the largest gathering of progressive Canadian Jews ever, as an unqualified success. 'Jews critical of Israel's government policies need a coherent, effective way to express their opinions and to work for change,' she said. 'We have launched an organisation that will let us do just that.' Participants planned strategic campaigns to:

- influence mainstream Jewish groups and individuals
- get our views into the mainstream and alternative media
- ally with unions, churches, and peace groups which have taken anti-occupation stands
- support international and Israeli Jewish peace movements
- develop a progressive Jewish think tank
- challenge Islamophobia in solidarity with Palestinians, Muslims and Arabs.

Anti-imperialism is not enough

Iranian socialist Yassamine Mather broke her journey from an international Women's Day event in Brussels to her home and work in Glasgow to stop in London on 9th March and address a meeting of the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG) on 'Women, Peace and Liberation in Iran'.

The JSG wanted this meeting both because of the ongoing threat of war on Iran, in which Israel might be cast in a frontline role, and because some on the Left and in the anti-war movement have taken this threat as a reason to turn their back on social struggles in Iran, and pretend that critics of the Islamic regime are serving US imperialism.

Yassamine has been fighting reactionary policies since she joined the underground struggle against the Shah as a young girl. She is now secretary of Hands Off the People of Iran (HOPI), which opposes war on Iran but supports the struggles of workers, women and other Iranians against the Islamic regime. The official Stop the War Coalition has refused to accept HOPI's affiliation.

She warned that the danger of a US-led war on Iran was as great as ever, and that sanctions also hit ordinary Iranians. Yassamine ridiculed the US pretence that it cared about the rights of Iranian women or anyone else; but said the anti-war movement was losing credibility and weakening itself if it claimed nothing was wrong in Iran.

Yassamine said that any advances women had made under the Islamicist regime had resulted from struggle. They had not been given willingly by the regime. In the period 1979-81, when the Ayatollah's regime was at the

height of its popularity, the Left had wanted to support it against the West, and despite suffering repression, tended to treat women's rights as a diversion. While many women had demonstrated against the hijab in 1979, others, because of previous enforcement of 'Westernisation', felt they had been freed to wear it.

During the Iran-Iraq war, women were needed to replace men in the workplace, and they felt more confident in campaigning for their rights. But from 1988, when the Iranian regime began to adopt neoliberal economic policies, women experienced the results in casualisation, privatisation and mass unemployment. New entrepreneurs have found ways to exploit women working at home, not just making garments, but assembling electronic equipment, and on very low pay. But women are pursuing higher education and getting involved in social issues, with women's groups formed, across the spectrum from Left to Islamic reformist or liberal.

Sharia law had been part of the legal system under the Shah, Yassamine said, but was strengthened under the Islamicist regime. Under the law of retribution, a family could pay money for taking a life, and a woman's life was accounted as worth half that of a man. Likewise evidence from two women witnesses was needed to weigh against that of one male. Divorce could be difficult – one woman was kept waiting 14 years for a divorce, even though the judges knew she was being beaten by her husband.

Sireh, or temporary 'marriage'

is a Shia speciality. It need only last days, or hours. If a child is born, the man takes no responsibility. Many poor women used in such 'marriages' end up in prostitution, and Iran now exports prostitutes to places like Kuwait and Dubai. Stoning to death for adultery still happens, not in the big cities but in smaller places, and it is always the women who are punished.

As for girls arrested for 'poor hijab', if a young girl has a rich father he can pay the money for his daughter's release, but a less fortunate girl might be lashed, then asked to sign a statement promising not to be a 'prostitute' again. Yassamine had heard of young women in a terrible state after such treatment, their physical scars far outlived by the psychological damage.

There is segregated higher education, and restrictions on what courses and professions a woman can enter, though wealthy families can send their daughters abroad for education. Yassamine stressed that Iranian women's struggle was not new. As far back as 1905 women were involved in Iran's constitutional revolution, and they took part later in the struggles against the Shah.

She described how the old left-wing Iranian parties and groups had been affected by divisions and exile. But she was optimistic about the new movements emerging in Iran, among students demanding democratic rights, workers wanting independent unions, and women fighting for equality. People have more enlightened attitudes, and are not encumbered with the past.

Charlie Pottins

Update from Yassamine Mather

The threat of a US attack against Iran's nuclear installations and military centres is as serious as ever. Given these threats, Iran's Islamic regime might be expected to seek less controversy at home and concentrate on its external enemy, but the regime is stepping up its attacks on the rights of Iranian workers, women and students.

Workers in Gavehsan Dam, Minoo sweet factory in Tehran, textile workers in Poushine Baf

factory in Ghazvin, railway workers in Tabass and cement workers in Nahvand were amongst the thousands of workers who protested against the job losses, privatisation and non-payment of wages towards the end of March. Iranian Hezbollah and the religious police were used to attack the demonstration.

Iranians went to the polls on 14th March. These elections were considered a sham by the majority of the population. The very low

turnout reflected dissatisfaction with the government and with the 'reformist' factions of the Islamic Republic party. Before the election, the unelected Guardian Council used its powers to disqualify 1,700 candidates on grounds of insufficient loyalty to Islam even though most of them were candidates of the Islamic Republic Party!

The anti-war movement needs to take positive action in supporting the struggles of Iranian workers against imperialist war and also against neoliberal capitalism.

For information about HOPI: www.hopi.org

MUSICIANS AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMS

Musicians Against Nuclear Arms (MANA) is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. In 1983 – when Cruise missiles had arrived on British soil – a number of anti-nuclear groups were formed among professional bodies such as teachers, artists, doctors, architects, actors and journalists. Musicians came together to form MANA.

MANA organises benefit concerts to raise money for a range of peace campaigns – local, national and international. Musicians donate their services and each concert includes a guest speaker from the peace movement. It has 400 members throughout Britain including professional, semi-professional and amateur musicians, as well as non-

performing music lovers who wish to support MANA's work. Its current president is classical guitarist John Williams.

MANA publishes a quarterly newsletter in print and online versions.

Musicians Against Nuclear Arms (MANA) 71 Greenfield Gardens, London NW2 1HU Tel: 020 8455 1030 Email: admin@mana.org.uk



Getting shirty



Congratulations to Philip Mendes from Melbourne, Bill Gutteridge from Edinburgh, Mike Heiser and Joseph Chapel from London who are the four winners of the competition in issue 54. Each of them wins a shirt from Philosophy Football's Spanish Civil War commemorative collection. www.philosophyfootball.com

WISEWORDS

'Democracy is not something you believe in or hang your hat on, but something you do. You participate. If you stop doing it, democracy crumbles and falls. If you participate, the future is yours.'

'Become an internationalist and learn to respect all life. Make war on machines. And in particular the sterile machines of corporate death and the robots that guard them.'

'Revolution is not something fixed in ideology, nor is it something fashioned to a particular decade. It is a perpetual process embedded in the human spirit.'

'Avoid all needle drugs, the only dope worth shooting is Richard Nixon.'

These words were spoken by **Abbie Hoffman**, one of the leading voices of the Yippie movement that was part of the radical upheaval of 1968. Born in Massachusetts he was a student of the Marxist critical theorist Herbert Marcuse. A civil rights and anti-war activist, Hoffman attempted to change 'flower children' into political activists. Hoffman was charged with conspiracy and incitement to riot after violent confrontations with police during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. He told the judge, who was also named Hoffman, 'You're a disgrace to the Jews.' Hoffman committed suicide in 1989 at the age of 52.

Comedians defy Israel birthday party

Jewish celebrities and non-Jewish comedians are putting on a show for a just peace in the Middle East as a counter-attraction to a gala which celebrates Israel's 60th anniversary at the same time.

Comedians Jeremy Hardy, Mark Steel, Shazia Mirza and Reg D Hunter will appear on the bill with stand-up comic Ivor Dembina, poet and broadcaster Michael Rosen and journalist-author Mike Marqusee.

The show, **60 Years – What a State!**, takes place in London on 8th May, the same night as the Zionist Federation stages its **Israel 60** gala, with comedian Jackie Mason, Israeli singer Sarit Hadad, and the Israeli defence Forces 'entertainment troupe' – or should that be 'troops' – a few miles away at Wembley.

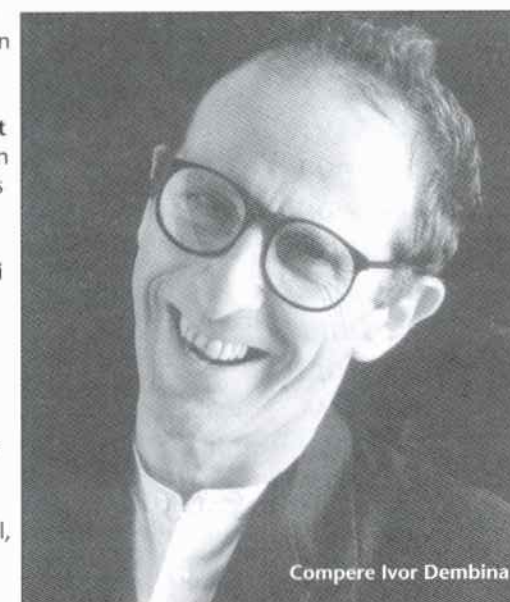
Doors will open at 8pm for the event, which starts at 8.30pm at Interchange Studios, Hampstead Town Hall, 213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 4QP.

Money raised from **60 Years – What a State!** will go to: B'Tselem, the Israeli Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Friends of Freedom and Justice – Bilin, a non-violent campaign against the separation wall in the territories, and the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, which supports refugees and asylum seekers in Britain.

The show has been organised by the Jewish Socialists' Group, which opposes Israel's occupation and supports Israelis and Palestinians campaigning for peace and justice.

Ivor Dembina, who will comper the event, said: 'The Palestinians' misery and hardship amid the occupation gives no cause for celebration. We urge people who care about human rights to give the Wembley gala a red card and back our show.'

To buy tickets go to www.jewishsocialist.org.uk. For more details, see the advert on the back cover.



Comper Ivor Dembina

NO GREEN LIGHT FOR OCCUPIERS

The Green Party's spring conference controversially adopted a policy of boycott, sanctions and divestment with regard to Israel. Green Party MEP **CAROLINE LUCAS** describes the background to this decision

The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories is causing untold suffering across the region, but nowhere more so than in Gaza. The humanitarian situation is worse now than it's been at any time since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967, with ever rising poverty and unemployment, hospitals suffering 12 hours a day power cuts, and the water and sewage system close to collapse. This was the verdict of a report published last month by a coalition of leading humanitarian and human rights organisations, including Oxfam and Amnesty International.

But this suffering is not happening by accident. It is a direct result, as the report acknowledges, of Israel's blockade of Gaza. The report concludes that not only is the Israeli government's policy of blockade an illegal act of collective punishment of the entire Gazan civilian population of 1.5 million people, it is also failing to deliver security for Palestinians and Israelis alike. As one of the report's authors says, 'Unless the blockade ends now, it will be impossible to pull Gaza back from the brink of this disaster, and any hopes for peace in the region will be dashed.'

Yet this stark warning is just the latest in a series of warnings about the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Occupied Territories. When I visited Gaza a year ago, the Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency was already speaking in stark terms about the scale of the crisis: 'This year has seen an unprecedented social, political and economic decline in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. "Decline" is not even the word; a "terrifying free fall" is a more accurate description,' she said.

This is the context in which the Green Party has been discussing its policy on the Middle East. In the light of the fact that previous strategies have signally failed to bring about an end to the occupation, our recent spring conference adopted a resolution which supports the call for a strategy of boycott, divestment and sanctions made by more than 170 Palestinian civil society organisations and community groups.

Unsurprisingly, we have attracted both support and criticism following the policy decision; in an inclusive and progressive political organisation like the Green Party, opposition to certain aspects of party policy is to be expected.

Such disagreements can be important for sparking debate and for initiating attempts to reach consensus over complex and emotive issues. If there were an easy answer to this particular issue, then the conflict between Israel and Palestine that

has for so long defined politics in the Middle East, would have been resolved long ago.

Like the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians, the Green Party is united in a desire for a peaceful solution to the complex set of conflicts in the region, and we call for an end to violence by both sides. We recognise that in any political or diplomatic endeavour, there will be disagreement about specific means, but the desired end — a just peace — is undisputed.

Sanctions should be recognised as an instrument targeted against specific policies of the present government of Israel; this is not a policy which attacks Israel's right to exist within its 1967 boundaries, nor does it target a particular religious faith or culture. Such an instrument sends out a clear signal that the international community is prepared to stand up for justice for Palestine, and could encourage Israel to end the occupation that is undermining its relations with its fellow nations around the world.

My work as a Member of the European Parliament has focused on the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which gives preferential access to Israeli exports. The terms clearly allow for the Agreement to be suspended in the event of human rights abuses. Since the ongoing occupation of Palestine is continuing to lead to major abuses of human rights, the suspension of this Agreement is long overdue.

There are more than 200 settlements in the Occupied Territories, all of them illegal under international law. And even after Annapolis, Israel is continuing to expand its settlements. Peace negotiations are of course the preferred medium for diplomacy, yet they will continue to stall for as long as the occupation is driven further and deeper. In March, four months after an agreement was made at Annapolis to freeze construction, the Settlement Watch team of Peace Now reported that construction took place in 101 settlements and not a single project was frozen. And despite the ruling of the International Court of Justice that it is illegal, Israel continues to build its 'security wall',



Caroline Lucas MEP

effectively creating Palestinian ghettos devoid of community, security or resources.

Suspending the trade agreement and attaching the necessary conditions to any future trade policy with Israel would allow the EU an opportunity to play a significant role in bringing peace and stability to the Middle East. It would also communicate hope to the beleaguered population of Gaza and the West Bank — and peace can only flourish in a climate of hope.

Some have opposed a boycott by defending Israeli policies to develop environmentally friendly technologies. These developments are interesting and, of course, to be encouraged. Yet human rights cannot be traded or 'offset' in this manner. And how could these policies possibly benefit those in the Occupied Territories — where trees are regularly

uprooted, clean water supplies are cut off, and badly damaged waste systems pollute rivers and streams?

Financial and moral support from the United States means that Israel has been able to act with relative impunity, hiding behind its false claim that all who criticise its policies are antisemitic. This does a great disservice to the many Jewish people who support the principle of universal human rights, and who oppose the current policies of the Israeli state.

A just peace settlement with Palestine which translates into real justice for Palestinians and Israelis, Jews and Arabs, which listens to the many progressive Jewish voices in Israel and elsewhere, and thus seeks an end to the violence perpetrated by both sides, will be the key to establishing a long-lasting peace in the region — and a safer, more stable world for all.

THE REAL LESSONS OF 1917

Twenty years after its foundation, the revolution that the General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia (to give the Bund its full title) had fought for, came about, in the conditions of the First World War. Leybetshe Berman, a Bundist in far-flung Odessa, could not at first believe the reports that the Petrograd garrison had come out in support of the workers and that the hated Czarist regime had ended. The revolution also took the Central Committee of Bund by surprise — people were wary lest 1917 should turn out to be another 1905. But when May Day was celebrated in the open, they knew that what they had dreamed of had come true.

For the first time the Bund was legal, and there could be an end to conspiratorial meetings. Prominent Bundists such as Henryk Erlich and Mark Liber were on the executive of the Petrograd workers' and soldiers' council (or soviet — the word means 'council' in Russian) and Bundists took leading roles in local soviets, particularly in the areas of highest Jewish concentration, such as Minsk and Vitebsk, but spreading to areas well outside this. For example, in Saratov the chair of the soviet was a Bundist. The Bund's newspaper, *Arbeter Shtime* (Workers' Voice) called for the unity of all workers' organisations (meaning the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks as well as the Bund). The Bund did well in the municipal elections in summer 1917 and in a number of cities, such as Minsk and Saratov, Bundists were elected as chairs of the local councils.

By decree the new government swept away all the anti-Jewish legislation (amounting, according to Leon Trotsky, to some 650 separate pieces of legislation).

The Bund's first conference, in Petrograd, barely a month after the revolution, had at the top of its agenda a quick end to the war on the basis of no annexations or reparations. The Bund looked to the Socialist International to play a leading role in

bringing this about.

The conference also debated what the Bundist watchword of national cultural autonomy should mean in practice. Yiddish was seen as key to this, but it should go beyond language to full self-determination in questions of culture. Anyone who considered that they belonged to the Jewish nation could take part in democratic elections to new public institutions, for every locality and for the whole country, in charge of schooling, artistic and intellectual life. These should be secular and should be funded both through the general budget (the state exchequer and local authorities), and through a right to raise supplementary taxes from members. If a minority wanted a secular school in a language other than Yiddish, they should also be able to obtain public funds. Religious communities should enjoy the full protection of the law as strictly private bodies but should not be publicly funded.

The Bund played a full role in the first all-Russian conference of soviets which took place in Petrograd in July 1917. In one debate, Mark Liber, the Chair of the Bund, spoke on behalf of the Petrograd soviet against Lenin, who held that the proletariat should seize power exclusively for itself.

In a speech to the conference, Liber laid out the Bund's position on the national question. Where a people were a majority within any particular province, they should have national territorial autonomy (Ukraine was seen as an example of this). Notwithstanding this, minorities should everywhere have national cultural autonomy along the lines laid down at the Bund's own conference, and the two forms of autonomy — national territorial and national cultural — should not be confused with each other. A resolution to that effect was carried, with the Bolsheviks voting against.

National cultural autonomy did not mean economic autonomy. The Bund took the lead in urging Jewish workers to go into branches of the

A month after the Russian revolution in 1917, the Bund debated how national cultural autonomy should be put into practice. **MICHAEL HEISER** looks at their historical and modern significance.

HOW COULD ISRAEL'S ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGIES POSSIBLY BENEFIT THOSE IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, WHERE TREES ARE REGULARLY UPROOTED, CLEAN WATER SUPPLIES ARE CUT OFF, AND BADLY DAMAGED WATER SYSTEMS POLLUTE RIVERS AND STREAMS?

economy that had previously been closed to them, such as the railways, even though they would have to work on Saturdays. Indeed, the Bund's central committee adopted a resolution calling for 'a vigorous struggle amongst the Jewish proletariat against Saturday as the day of rest in all cases when this prevents (them) from taking part in the processes of production and exchange'. Nevertheless, the Bund was against enforced Sunday closures, and Bundist local councillors supported the right of Jewish traders to open on Sundays in cities such as Riga.

The Bund's nuanced position on Saturday as the day of rest was attacked by religious elements in the Jewish community and synagogues. The Bund defended religion as a private matter but was against the use of synagogues as platforms for attacks on the Bund. In a letter to synagogues in Ekaterinoslav, at the time of Jewish community elections in 1917, the local Bund organisation said that 'the shul is not to be touched all the time it remains a shul, that is a place of prayer. However as soon as it allows itself to be used as a place for one political party to attack another one, it loses its untouchability'.

In October, the Bund was able to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its foundation openly. Among the greetings received was one from Mendele Moykher-Sforim, the grandfather of Yiddish literature.

The Bund lined up with the Mensheviks and condemned the Bolshevik seizure of power. In an article written in 1918 and published in Warsaw, Henryk Erlich said 'The "revolution" of 7th November (in the Western calendar) was not an uprising of the workers and peasants. It involved, besides the Bolshevik activists, a few hundred soldiers, sailors and Red Guards. The reasons for its stunning success are not to be found in its organic (styctic) or mass character, but in the weakness of the Kerensky government.'

After November 1917 the Bund called for a government which involved all socialists of whatever hue, not merely the Bolsheviks, and warned against civil war. At a Bund conference in December 1917, in Petrograd, Esther Frumkin gave a report for the north-west regional committee, repeating the Bund's call for unity of all minorities and for a fight within the Jewish community of all democratic forces in favour of a secular Yiddish culture and against clericalism.

The Bund held a relatively orthodox Marxist position and considered that the conditions in Russia, with a minority working class, were not yet ripe for a dictatorship of the proletariat. At this conference it passed a resolution to the effect that the Bolshevik attempt to impose such a dictatorship would only lead to repression and the suppression of the freedoms which had been won, such as a free press and the free right of assembly.

This proved to be prophetic as, in 1918 and 1919, the Bund found itself increasingly subject to repressive measures. For example, in Homel the Bund's newspaper was prohibited from appearing. In protest, an issue was brought out with a leading article signed by the entire committee of the local Bund organisation: 'We, the whole committee of the Bund, are prepared to go before the People's Tribunal. Down with the Terror, down with the

dictatorship over the working class. Long live the workers' soviets!' The issue was confiscated and the Bundists were forbidden from standing for election. Nevertheless in early 1919 they still had a majority in many local trade union branches and throughout 1919 were able to maintain both in Russia and the Ukraine some form of independent existence.

This could not last, of course, and ultimately the Bund in Russia split between those who felt that what was, for all its faults, a workers' state should be defended against the imperialist powers, and those who felt that the lack of democracy and coercion in that state meant that if the Bund were to stay true to its social democratic principles, it had to be part of the opposition. The former, which became known as the Kombund, was forcibly integrated into the Communist Party and the latter had its existence made impossible. The Bund continued to be a mass force in the Jewish working class of other countries, notably in Poland, but its history as an independent force in Russia had come to an end.

Thus national cultural autonomy, in the form envisaged by the Bund in its July 1917 conference, was never instituted in the Soviet Union. Ironically, the Jewish section of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, known as the Yevseksia, after the liquidation of the Bund, did proceed to establish a form of national cultural autonomy, with the development of Yiddish culture and cultural institutions, particularly in Belorussia and the Ukraine. Some former Bundists, such as Esther Frumkin, were prominent in this. But there were, of course, no nationally elected democratic institutions.

In pre-Second World War Poland the Bund played a leading role in the Yiddish secular school system (known as Tsisho) and had its own sanatorium. But the conditions in Poland meant that there was never the sort of national cultural autonomy envisaged by the Bund in 1917; in 1920s and '30s Poland, the Bund was forced to fight discrimination against Jews in many sections of public life, and received no public support for its educational and cultural work.

One of the fullest developments of national cultural autonomy took place in Yugoslavia, where non-territorial nations, such as the Romā, had representation in the national parliament. Unfortunately this did not survive the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Three points can be made about national cultural autonomy in the way it was envisaged by the Bund. Firstly, it should be restricted to questions of culture, language and education. There should not be economic separation, nor separate arrangements for social care and social security. For example, in Poland during the German occupation in the First World War, when local elections were organised, Bund leader Vladimir Medem was quite clear that help for the Jewish poor should be a concern of the general budget, and not seen as a specifically Jewish matter.

The second point is that it should happen in conditions of equality. National cultural autonomy was a way of giving minorities equality as minorities, as opposed to as individuals, which did not require territorial concentration (as Zionists

and territorialists were urging). It should be funded from a mixture of general and supplementary funding which should ensure equality of funding. The Bund never had the opportunity to work out all the technical details of how this would happen, but there are many examples of formulae used to fund local and regional government in Britain and elsewhere, which aim to equalise for different needs and taxable capacity.

Lastly, national cultural autonomy in the way the Bund saw it should be secular. The Bund saw itself as an organisation dedicated to the creation of new institutions, not to the perpetuation of existing ones in their current form. It was not anti-religious but saw its Jewish identity in a secular way. So the Bund would have been unlikely to support the devolution of civil law to either the Beth Din or Sharia courts.

National cultural autonomy was designed to supply a way in which different minorities can coexist in multinational states. There are many situations to which it could be applied today, not least in Israel and Palestine. In his recent article (The Guardian, 30th January 2008), Daniel Barenboim poses three problems for Israel that need solving: 'its very identity; the problem of Palestinian identity within Israel; and the problem of the creation of a Palestinian state outside of Israel'. In one sense, Palestinian citizens of Israel already have a form of national cultural autonomy, in that education in Arab areas is carried out in Arabic. But they do not have the equality which the Bund saw as vital. Perhaps a national democratically elected body in charge of education and culture in the Israeli Palestinian sector, publicly funded on equalising principles, could help address the problem as Barenboim poses it, and perhaps it could also contribute to forming an Israeli identity where Palestinian Arabs can see themselves and be seen as Israeli citizens in conditions of full equality in a state with a majority Jewish population. Equally, at least in theory, it provides a way in which Jews could exist in a Palestinian state, although in practice that might be difficult given the ideological orientation of the vast majority of settlers.

That brief discussion reminds us that national cultural autonomy has implications for the majority as well as the minority, and that an idea developed in the early 20th century has not lost its relevance for the 21st.



Opposite: Bund election poster from Kiev, 1918, with the slogan: 'The place where we live is our homeland'.

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The JSG is a campaigning organisation which is active on issues directly affecting the Jewish community, other minorities and oppressed groups, and the wider labour movement. The group works and campaigns with other organisations sharing some or all of our aims and always welcomes new members who support our political principles. All members receive a regular internal discussion bulletin, a frequent newsletter detailing meetings and events and can participate fully in our annual conference and in any aspect of the group's work.

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Membership Secretary, Jewish Socialists' Group,
BM3725, London WC1N 3XX
jsg@jewishsocialist.org.uk



www.jewishsocialist.org.uk

THE JEWISH WORKERS BUND AND THE JEWISH STATE

In 1938 Henryk Erlich, one of the leaders of the Bund in Poland, wrote:

The Zionists regard themselves as second class citizens in Poland. Their aim is to be first class citizens in Palestine and to make the Arabs second class citizens.

What can a Jewish Palestine be, under the best of circumstance? If a Jewish state should arise in Palestine, its spiritual climate will be: eternal fear of the external enemy (the Arabs); and eternal struggle for every foot of ground and for every bit of work with the internal enemy (Arabs)... Is this a climate in which freedom, democracy, and progress can grow? Indeed, is it not the climate in which reaction and chauvinism ordinarily flourish?

In 1947 the remnants of the Bund that had survived the Holocaust, met for a conference in Belgium. This is an excerpt from the resolutions passed by this conference:

...The Zionist way cannot be a solution for the vast majority of the Jewish people which lives and will remain outside Palestine. At the same time the Zionist aspirations towards statehood have led to all sorts of difficulties for the Jewish community in Palestine and even endangered its existence.

The role of Zionism in the war and afterwards is shameful and particularly worthy of condemnation. The constant utterances that a Jewish state in Palestine is the only solution has, to a significant extent, weakened the ability of all forces within the Jewish community to mobilise for the vital task of demanding that the world put maximum effort into saving the lives of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. This has also led to an indescribable shame in the fight to put an end to the disgraceful camps in Germany and Austria [the DP camps] where over 250,000 Jews languish. Zionism has crippled any large-scale campaign to open the doors of the whole world to the victims of Hitler. The conference considers that the fight against Zionism and its policies should not in any way be weakened today....

This worldwide conference of the Bund considers that continually saying, as the Zionists do, that is immigration exclusively to Palestine is the only solution to the refugee problem merely serves narrow political

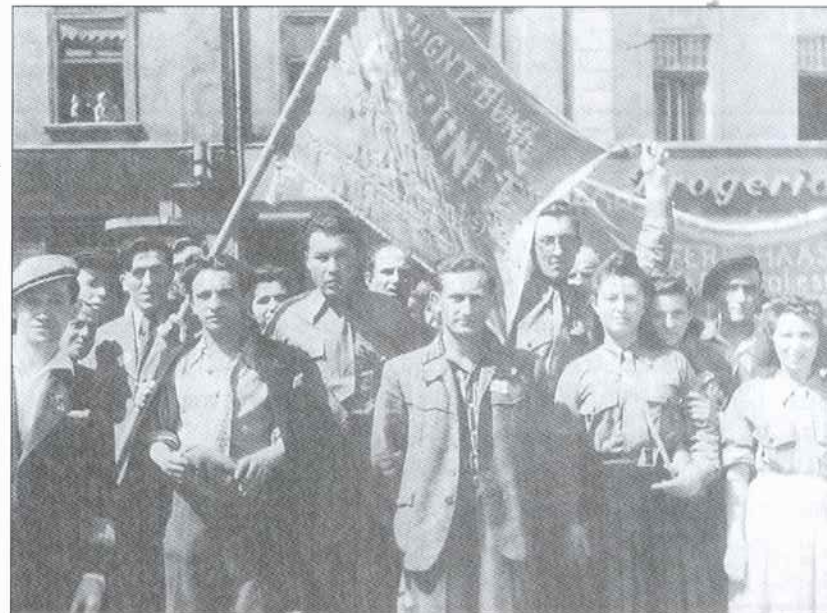
goals and damages the fight to put an end to the camps. The conference declares that the only solution for those still languishing in the camps is to allow immigration to anywhere in the world...

The Bund held a further conference in 1948, just a few months after the State of Israel was declared. This is an excerpt from the resolutions passed by this conference:

The Jewish people are and will remain a world people; of which nine tenths live outside Palestine. The State of Israel, which is the result of an artificial division of Palestine and which is being born in the midst of a bloody conflict between Jews and Arabs, not only is no solution to the national question for Jews anywhere in the world but is also endangering the very existence of the Jewish community in Palestine...

Jewish socialists and democrats everywhere should not have a negative attitude to the State of Israel but should fight for peace with the neighbouring Arab states and for collaboration with the domestic Arab population upon the basis of free national development for both peoples within Palestine, underwritten by UN guarantees, and through the creation of a joint Jewish-Arab state built on the principles of democratic federalism.

For the physical and intellectual existence of our people both inside and outside Palestine, it is necessary that the Palestinian community should not be cut off from the Jewish people as a whole nor become a tribe or a people in itself. Links between the different parts of our people should be strengthened. Yiddish should be taught in the State of Israel and the Yiddish language should enjoy full rights and freedom in schools and in public life.



Tsukunft, the Bund's youth movement, on a May Day demonstration in Dzierzoniow, Poland, in 1948

WOMEN OF WORTH

Journalists are repeatedly invited on guided and photographed tours to admire ultra-orthodox women who work for high-tech firms. The preferred site is the Matrix Talpiot project, which employs about 400 women and is looking for more. Matrix receives the most attention, but it is not alone. Many firms – including Israel Aerospace Industries, which employs the women via an employment agency – quickly understood that it was worth their while to employ ultra-orthodox women.

All the firms are pleased with the arrangement and are considering expanding it. They explain that these women are cheaper and more obedient than Indians, and more accessible and reliable than East Europeans. Ultra-orthodox women, they all report, do not waste time chatting, surfing the internet or drinking coffee. For NIS5,000 (£700) or less per month, they work diligently from 7am to 4pm, on a contract that does not include overtime pay.

An excellent deal. Particularly for the Talpiot project, located in Kiryat Sefer (Modi'in Ilit), which was founded on the other side of the Green Line in the early 1990s in order to provide cheap housing for the impoverished ultra-orthodox community, and quickly became both the third largest religious community in Israel and the leader in the poverty rankings. Thus Matrix received cheap real estate on lands confiscated from Palestinian villages, low property taxes and a large number of job seekers. Another prize: for each ultra-orthodox woman employee, the government gives Matrix NIS1,000 (£140) a month.

There is a reason for this government involvement. Having declared that it would make a serious effort to integrate the ultra-orthodox into the economy, the government reduced child allowances – which, according to the prevailing theory in the Finance Ministry, encourage large families – and transferred NIS10 million (£1.4 million) to the 'dignified livelihood' project in the Ministry of Industry Trade and Employment, which promotes education and job training for yeshiva [seminary] students. As opposed to the ultra-orthodox in the United States, about 80% of whom have a post-high school education and work, here, they lack education and appropriate training for the job market. Hundreds study in non-governmental institutions such as the ultra-orthodox campus in Kiryat Ono or Machon Lev. Some have found jobs, 80% of them women.

These steps were supposed to bring about a change in the ultra-orthodox 'community of learners', which has reached degrees of poverty and dependence that are dangerous to it and to the country. But the government carried them out with only one hand, while with the other, it shook hands

with the rabbis, thereby causing its own efforts to fail in a manner that arouses suspicions that it never intended to succeed in the first place.

Granted, the rabbis ordered the promotion of training for high-tech, the introduction of engineering courses in the seminars, and even computer and mathematics courses in the elementary schools. But these are for girls only. At a meeting of the Knesset Science and Technology Committee in February 2005, a representative of Matrix promised: 'We will also have an initiative for men if the rabbis approve.' However, he added, 'at the moment, they haven't approved it. Only for women.'

Not only have they not approved it, but they have since appointed supervisors in all the firms to ensure that the women do not mix with men, eat only in the separate kitchens set up for them and do not sit idle. 'We are working in complete co-operation with the rabbis,' say the employers with great pleasure.

What a brilliant idea! The rabbis, who have consistently rejected initiatives to enable men to combine study and work, have found in high-tech a new channel to rehabilitate the collapsing society of Torah learners, via an old and familiar method: the oppression of women. The men will once again sit in the kollel (a yeshiva for married men), the women will once again work; and instead of technological education providing them with a key for change, it will deepen their exploitation. Without any difficulty, the rabbis concocted a circular deal with the employers and the government that is giving them twice as much as the government cut.

Yet the government still insists on claiming the 'return' of ultra-orthodox women to the workforce as an achievement. What return? After all, ultra-orthodox women have long been supporting their families. The only innovation is that, thanks to their co-operation with the finance and industry ministries, the rabbis are entrenching their power and expanding their control over women's lives to the office as well.

And the women? Who is asking them? 'Three months a year,' said an engineer in one of the firms, 'they are absent [on maternity leave], and they return like clockwork. They asked the rabbis if it was permitted to go out for a few minutes to pray, and they were reprimanded and told that it wasn't. Nor are they allowed to rest for a moment for fear of "stealing" [their employers' time], and they do not argue or complain. Only once in a while they do they go out – to a special room to pump breast milk for the baby. At 4.30 I see them waiting, exhausted, for the bus to Bnei Brak. My heart goes out to them.'

Israel's high-tech industries are benefiting from the super-exploitation of ultra-orthodox women, and the government and rabbis approve, says AVIRAMA GOLAN

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WHAT A BRILLIANT IDEA! THE RABBIS HAVE FOUND IN HIGH-TECH A NEW CHANNEL TO REHABILITATE THE COLLAPSING SOCIETY OF TORAH LEARNERS, VIA AN OLD AND FAMILIAR METHOD: THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN.

MIKE MARQUEE is the author of a challenging new book titled 'If I Am Not For Myself: Journey of an anti-Zionist Jew'. **JULIA BARD** and **DAVID ROSENBERG** interviewed him about what it is saying to the Jewish community and the Left

What inspired or provoked you to write this book?
Principally the issues that Jews on the Left have been facing since 9/11. As an activist in the anti-war movement I had to deal with a whole series of questions coming on the one hand from the enemies of the movement who smeared it as antisemitic and on the other hand from elements within the movement who have not always answered that smear clearly or effectively and who have some confused ideas about Jewish history and Jewish identity. These two outside pressures made me want to clarify my own views.

The book is subtitled 'Journey of an anti-Zionist Jew'. Is it possible to reclaim a space for explicitly anti-Zionist Jews here and elsewhere?
It's definitely becoming more possible but it is still very difficult. When I was talking to my publisher about the title, we were both aware that as soon as you put the word 'anti-Zionist' in there, you risk alienating large numbers of people and becoming the target of serious hostility by people who would never bother to read the book. Nonetheless I felt strongly, and the publisher supported this, that there wasn't an alternative that was honest. Shying away from the anti-Zionist label was reproducing and reinforcing the very mindset that the book set out to challenge. It was not my intention to be provocative for its own sake, but with this subject, you can't avoid being provocative if you want to talk about the truth. A lot of argument in the anti-war and Palestine solidarity movements, especially in the United States, is about how far you take into account Jewish sensibilities. But who defines those sensibilities? Too many concessions are made to Zionism in defining what we mean by Jewish sensibilities. I would like to normalise being an anti-Zionist Jew. Until the 1940s most Jewish opinion defined itself as being anti-Zionist or non-Zionist. The principal rabbinical body in America – the body of Reform Rabbis – started off in the 1880s expressly opposed to the idea that the Jews constituted a nation, and expressly opposed to Zionism when it emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. Through the activities of Rabbi Stephen Wise, in particular, that was undermined and in the late 1930s they embraced a kind of Zionism. This led to a small split in the movement. In the period in which I grew up, anti-Zionism was regarded as extreme heresy and a betrayal of the community. But blanket support for Zionism is actually an exception in Jewish history and the situation is changing again.

What is enabling that reversion to happen?
Firstly, the weight of reality – the documentation of Israel's record and an awareness of Palestinian suffering that simply was not available before. You used to have to go to a far-left group to hear it. Now it is said by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and mainstream governments of virtually every country except Britain and the United States.

The vast majority of Jews live integrated lives in the shared political world. They are not sheltered from these realities, whether it is the siege of Gaza or the bombing of Lebanon in 2006. What they see is no longer deniable and is so appalling that people's better instincts triumph over their Zionist conditioning.

Secondly, despite the hegemony of Zionism in organised Jewry, the Jewish left tradition has survived and endured. Even in the United States where there is no question about the huge influence of Zionism, most Jews opposed Bush in 2000 and 2004 and were disproportionately opposed to the Iraq war. Despite the neo-con Zionist barrage, and the huge political power that it wields in the United States, its actual base among Jews is weak. On social issues Jews in both the United States and Britain mostly remain liberal. At the time of the Lebanon war, in 2006, for the first time, there were explicitly Jewish anti-war demonstrations in most major cities in the US. Although they were small, they were inconceivable a decade ago. They signified that a younger generation of Jews do not feel that this link with Israel is sacrosanct.

How well did your own Jewish education in the Reform Movement prepare you to understand modern Jewish realities?

For all the gallery of Jewish heroes and heroines we were told to revere, there were some striking absences. Although it was a Reform Sunday school, we learned more about Hasidism than about Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment]. It was as if the Reform Movement was ashamed of its own historical roots in the struggle for secular emancipation. The struggle for legal and civic emancipation of the Jews in Europe is really the basis of everything we are. Without that there wouldn't have been Zionism. Zionism can only function in a secular political environment and there certainly wouldn't be all the other non-Zionist traditions. Yet we don't study it. How many Jews are aware of how it was that their ancestors came to achieve the vote, and achieved access to the courts? People don't like to talk about this – it doesn't fit the Zionist narrative which must conclude that emancipation was futile or not successful in some way. The struggle for Jewish emancipation was also as much a struggle against Jewish authority as it was against the secular authority of the day. Many rabbinical authorities were very reluctant to see the Jews fully free and able to participate fully with all their neighbours because they could feel a loss of their own authority. The rabbis of Metz, during the French Revolution, were very uneasy about the liberation of Jews from feudal restriction.

I have read a lot of Spinoza and Mendelssohn in translation and they are sparking. There are a million things one wouldn't agree with them about, but the process of human minds reaching out to freedom is

incredibly moving and stimulating. They argue ferociously against the state establishment of any form of religion and I conclude they would have been opposed theoretically and philosophically to Zionism.

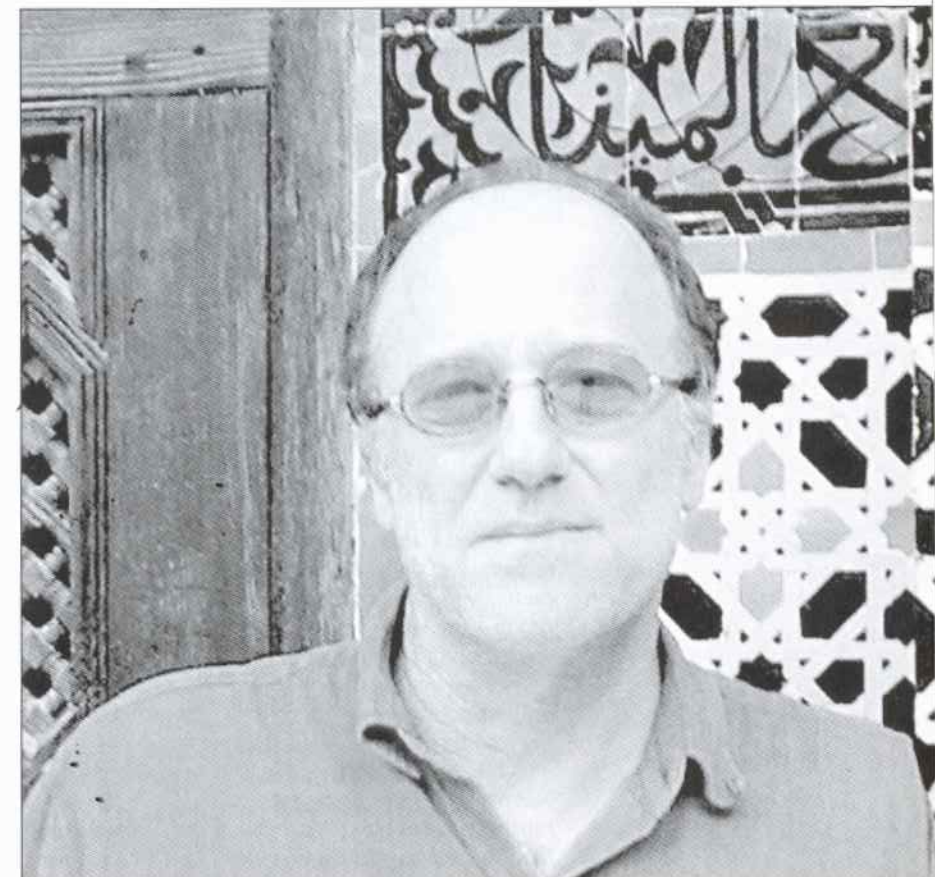
An even more remarkable hero is Zalkind Hourwitz who, as an active participant in the French Revolution, spoke to the Assembly, organised Jews in Paris to join the revolutionary guards, and opposed the rabbis and the wealthy leaders of both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities in France because he believed they were dragging their feet about Jewish emancipation.

Hourwitz was determined that Jews had to emancipate themselves both from the oppressive structures of their own communities and simultaneously the oppression meted out by the majority – by the state. His argument for Jewish emancipation was revolutionary at the time, because, prior to that, when people issued defences of the Jews they argued that Jews really weren't so bad as a people and could be improved. His argument was that the Jews were just as bad as everybody else and had the same right to be rogues and fools as everybody else. This goes way beyond a lot of other enlightenment thinkers and gets beyond notions of collective guilt. Historically, it's only very recently that the idea of collective guilt was criticised, but here's Hourwitz in 1787 arguing against it. At the same time he doesn't want to cease to be a Jew, so he signs his letters to the assembly 'Zalkind Hourwitz, Jew'. For him that's neither pride nor shame, it just is; his Jewishness is a fact that other people just have to accept. So he's got an insight into the plurality of society as a precondition for its freedom.

The book tells the fascinating story of your grandfather – an enlightened leftist Jew, a civil libertarian, an anti-colonialist and anti-fascist, who is troubled by the clash of principles he is committed to when the Second World War breaks out.

He was a militant anti-fascist. He had been chair of the Bronx Committee to Aid Republican Spain. He was a strident champion of the boycott of Nazi Germany, but come September 1939, he is not at all sure where his priorities lie, and I have sympathy for him. World wars are hugely complex. He was nearly a pacifist because of his experiences in World War 1 and he was deeply mistrustful of militarist propaganda. He was also troubled by the allies who were fighting Nazi Germany. Britain's record in India and Africa and the Netherlands' record in Indonesia were not brilliant. Poland, to him, was a hotbed of antisemitism.

He was condemned by liberals and social democrats, who were gung ho for the war against the Nazis. He was condemned too by the Communists who at that point were against war because of the Hitler-Stalin pact. He was very isolated, trying to figure all these things out. Within a year he comes to the conclusion, before most people in the USA, that for all



the objectionable things about British imperialism, the priority has to be to defeat the Nazis. They are too great a danger. I admire the fact that he comes to that conclusion slowly, that he doesn't immediately forget everything he knew before that. That's one of the worst tendencies of the Left.

The clashes between the principles he espoused seem even more stark in 1948, yet he gets swept up by a militaristic and triumphalist Jewish nationalism. How do you understand that?

There are factors peculiar to him and his psyche, and things that he shared with others. The pre-condition is the ubiquity of Zionist propaganda in the United States at that time and the absence of another point of view, although Zionism wasn't nearly as hegemonic then as it later became. The New York Times did report Deir Yassin and reported it truthfully, but my grandfather has no response to that. In the same issue of the New York Times he reads other articles that he does respond to, so the information was there but he disregarded it.

At a personal level he always was tortured by an uncertainty about his identity because his father, who died when he was one year old, was Irish. He grew up, in his words, 'with an Irish name and a Jewish face'. He was intellectually very proud of that, believing in the hybridity of the 'new American' and feeling himself to represent the best of the new world in which these old divisions would go away. But he

If I Am Not For Myself: Journey of an anti-Zionist Jew by Mike Marquese (Verso, £16.99, hardback)

AT THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE IN BRITAIN IN 1944 A MOTION WAS PASSED WITHOUT A SINGLE NOTE OF DISSENT WHICH CALLED NOT ONLY FOR A JEWISH STATE IN PALESTINE BUT FOR THE ENFORCED TRANSFER OF THE ENTIRE ARAB INDIGENOUS POPULATION.

changes as antisemitism rises again and he is not alone in coming to believe that there is no melting of boundaries and you should be proud of what you are. He embraces his Jewishness more aggressively.

In his writings about 1948, in asserting his Jewishness through the triumph of the Haganah and the Irgun, he displaces a lot of his anxieties about having a multiple and complex identity and his uncertainties about his masculinity. His experience of World War 1 left him haunted by feelings that maybe he wasn't fully a man, and in the manliness of the Jewish armed conquest of Palestine he finds a proxy for the masculinity he's desperately looking for.

In 1948 my grandfather says 'this is the Barmitzvah of our people. Today we are a man'. What a grotesque, sad comment on the previous existence of the Jews in America and elsewhere! The language is very telling about the emotional need it fulfilled. The other important reason why my grandfather ended up feeling this way is that the Left as a whole – not just the Jewish Left – in Britain and the United States, was largely pro-Zionist and remained so until 1967. One reason for this was a perfectly healthy identification with an oppressed group – the Jews – and an awareness that the Jews were the principal target of the fascists who were the deadly enemies of the left. But it was also an unthinking absorption of colonial assumptions about the Middle East. The Arabs became completely invisible. My grandfather conceives and theorises the war of 1946-48 as a war against the British. It was much easier for him to denounce the colonial British than to have to address the reality of the Palestinians. That was common on the left. At the Labour Party conference in Britain in 1944 a motion was passed without a single note of dissent which called not only for a Jewish state in Palestine but for the enforced transfer of the entire Arab indigenous population. It was written by Hugh Dalton who was not Jewish but an upper class Etonian social democrat. Drawing lines on a map and disposing of whole peoples was what the British upper class had been doing in the world, and the labour movement uncritically absorbed those perspectives.

It was also true in France and Spain – the countries which governed Morocco. With the election of Popular Front governments in France and Spain in the 30s the Moroccan National Movement looked to those governments for relief, but the Popular Front had no intention of liberating their colonial dominions. Not surprisingly, having been rejected in Paris and Madrid, the Moroccan National Movement met with Hitler on the grounds that your enemy's enemy is your friend.

Your book highlights the gulf between the Left in the West and the Left in the colonised world. How does that play itself out in 1948?

While the western Left, including the Soviet Union, supported partition, the Left in the anti-colonial world did not. Ghandi and Nehru both spoke and wrote beautifully on this because they were fully aware of the Holocaust, and of the history of antisemitism. It was a core part of their

understanding of what was wrong with Europe, but they did not accept that the answer to this was to dispossess a colonised people in the Middle East. The fact that that was so obvious to them, to democrats and anti-colonialists outside the West tells you a lot about how blind the Western Left was. In his *Glimpses of World History*, which Nehru wrote in a British jail in India, he's got a whole chapter about Palestine in which he is spot on. The irony is that today India is one of Israel's principal allies and apologists.

India was independent from August '47, so when they voted against partition in Palestine in the UN in November '47 it was one of the first things they voted on. The Indian ambassador gave a great speech about the tragedy of partition in the subcontinent, about how the independence movement was always about a secular non-communal understanding of the state. India's vote is probably one of the only principled votes cast on either side.

In the United States and Britain, Soviet support for partition was a boon for the Communist party and the Left in general. But in the Arab world it was an utter disaster. There were large Communist parties in Egypt and Iraq. They were anti-Zionist and had many prominent Jewish members but they were hopelessly undermined by Stalin's position on this. They appealed to Stalin to recognise the basic human rights of Arabs, but they were ignored. That was a huge setback to the Communist movement and the Left throughout the Middle East and it helped to open the door to the Islamists who could show a more consistent approach to Palestine.

The Left still struggles with issues and demands around nationalism, ethnicity, minorities, religion and liberation. In the book you refer back to the disputes between the Bund and Lenin. Have we made any progress on these issues?

Our Enlightenment heritage is weak on the science of human diversity. This has remained extraordinarily underdeveloped. These weaknesses are shared by the Left. You can see that underdevelopment in the debate between the Bund and Lenin.

Both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks agreed in opposing the Bund at that time. There is a big element of truth on almost everybody's side in this debate. They agree that the Jews are an oppressed nationality but don't agree about what political structure should flow from that. And they have no other way of discussing social diversity or what we might call ethnic or social minorities except through the language of nationality, which refers back to an earlier experience of democratic revolution of 1848 in Central and Eastern Europe and was obviously a pressing issue in Russia – the prison house of nationalities. Both the Bund and its opponents were imprisoned in national-minority concepts derived from the experience of nationalities in the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The conceptual apparatus remains very limited. It doesn't fit for the Jews and it doesn't fit for anyone entirely. We have seen that again in the whole debate

about multiculturalism in Britain in recent years and in some of the Left's responses to that – the belief among some people that there is a uniform and coherent Muslim population who are all oppressed in the same way and who all therefore have the same social and political interests.

In the case of the Indian National Movement, formed in response to colonialism, it was very clear-cut what the demand for national self-determination meant: the removal of a foreign dictator who ruled by coercion. Indian nationalism had all kinds of elements in it but it had this shared and coherent objective framework. The main carriers of Indian nationalism today are the Hindutva movement – the RSS and BJP. Their ideas of the Indian nation are every bit as militant as Nehru's and Ghandi's, but they are aimed at internal enemies not foreign oppressors. Yet they would both claim to represent the same nation.

Nations are always in formation. They are always changing and their boundaries are always debated. The contours of the nation have to be discussed and debated and are not self-evident. They don't exist objectively in the way that a river or mountain does. My guiding principles about this are that human rights are non-negotiable but national rights are almost always negotiable.

How does this apply to Zionism?

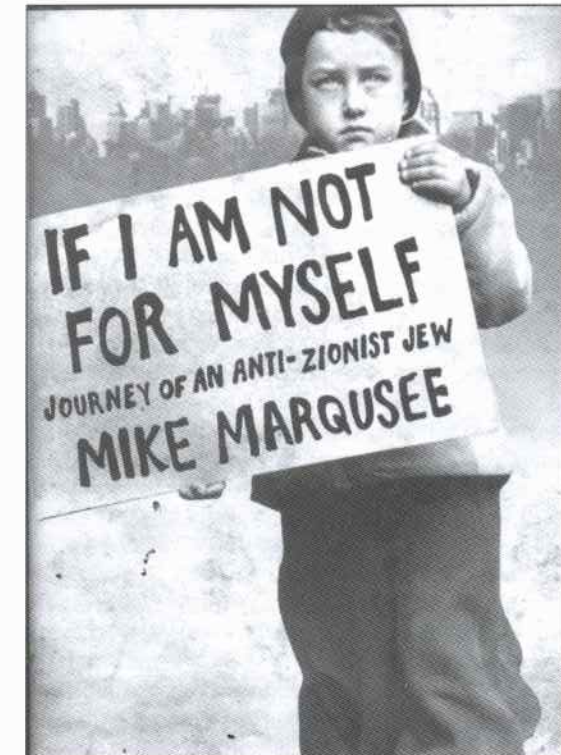
Among the whole spectrum of nationalisms, Zionism clearly falls among those whose claims are least legitimate. Its definition of Jews as a nation of that kind denies the several millennia of experience of dispersal which is actually the formative experience for Jews historically. That is why we are, in our multiplicity, the way we are.

It has never been accepted that national self-determination includes the right to dispossess another nation. On that fundamental fact, Zionism falls as any kind of progressive and liberating nationalism. People say: 'Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jews'. I accept that that is what it intends to be. But the premises on examination fall apart. If you ask what kind of national liberation movement is built entirely on the exclusion and dispossession of another people, the United States gets thrown at you a lot. It is a particularly gruesome argument of a kind of historical inevitability. It is the worst kind of moral relativism, the rule of naked force and a retrospective justification of the facts created on the ground.

Everyone acknowledges that the extermination of the Native Americans was a terrible crime. There is discussion about what at this juncture of history can be done about it. Zionists throw the same thing at you: 'it is in the past, there is no going back.' The difference, of course, is that unlike the Native Americans the Palestinians still exist in huge numbers in Palestine and their situation can be redressed now. It's not too late for the Palestinians.

First Nation groups in Canada fighting for their land claims don't feel the need to recognise the Canadian state in order to argue for their rights. But Israel makes 'recognition' a pre-condition for negotiation with its opponents.

Anti-Zionism is considered illegitimate because it fails to recognise the State of Israel. We recognise that the state of Israel does indeed exist. It has an army and a government that has to be dealt with. But Zionists



are asking you to recognise that this is justified and to recognise that the State of Israel has a right to exist, not that it does exist. This is not a demand that other states make and it tells you a lot about Zionism's illegitimacy as a form of nationalism. It has to sanctify its own material basis and it demands that of others. It is inherently unfair to demand of Hamas or anyone else that they provide a retrospective seal of approval to the act of dispossession through which the State of Israel was founded. It doesn't mean that they shouldn't be negotiating with them – that is an entirely different question.

I see Zionism as a modern day version of other forms of communal control imposed on the Jewish population by rabbis and by other unaccountable community leaders throughout Jewish history. The Old Testament is full of that narrative, and it marks all the struggles of Jewish people of the Diaspora. Zionism imposes on each individual Jew a narrow definition of what it is to be a Jew and a specific political loyalty. Political loyalty should not be inherited. Tom Paine once said that the idea of hereditary ruler was as absurd as the idea of a hereditary mathematician and the idea of hereditary political allegiance is likewise. Zionism cuts us off, as Jews who actually live in the real world today, from the multiplicity of our own historical political experiences and from the full expression of our humanity. My compassion for and solidarity for the Palestinians is not at odds with who I am; it is in keeping with who I am, what I have grown up to be, what I've tried to be, and the principles that have guided the rest of my life. When they call us self-hating Jews they decide what the self is that we must hate. And as a 'self' I'm damned if I'm going to let them get away with it because that is my choice. After several decades when there was more imposed political uniformity on the Jewish people than at any time in its history, including biblical times, there is a rediscovery of independent thought on many levels by Jews in the diaspora. It faces a vicious, reaction from the Jewish establishment but in that reaction people will discover where their humanity really lies.

HOW THE EAST WAS WON

A demonstration in 1978 changed the political contours of London's East End, and for DAVID ROSENBERG the carnival's still not over

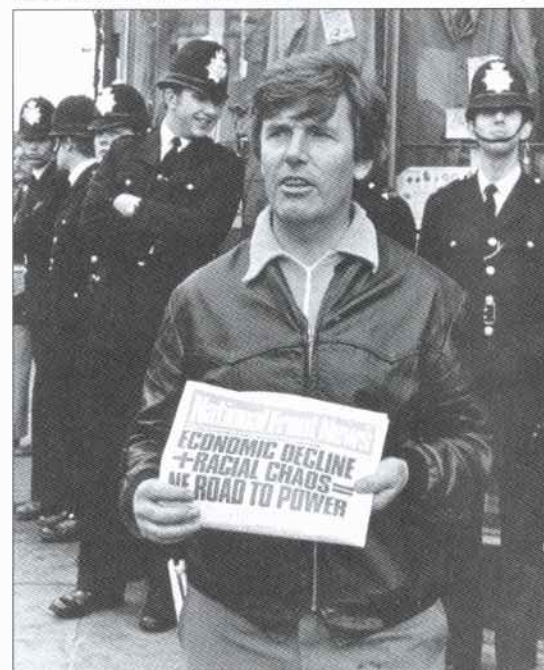
The most frightening demonstration I remember was in October 1977. The National Front (NF) was at its peak, claiming 20,000 members. Like Mosley's movement before it, its heartland in London were the decaying, deprived areas to the east of the city. The NF were starting to hold more frequent marches in towns and cities up and down the country. But today it was our turn. A coalition of local groups had called a demonstration to support local residents who were refusing to march in (goose) step with the fascists, and to tell them that they were not alone.

The London branch of the Jewish Socialists' Group was in its infancy, but a few of us grouped behind our banner and joined the march. We walked, a few abreast, on one side of the road, through estates completely decked out in Union flags. We tried to reassure each other that these were leftovers from the recent Queen's Jubilee celebrations. That comforting thought was shattered as people appeared on the balconies to rain down insults and abuse on the marchers. As we passed a pub, wave after wave of fascists emerged on to the pavement sieg-heiling, spitting and shouting. As our banner passed they screamed that we were 'going to the gas ovens'. A very thin and rather spread out line of police stood between them and us. The scene was repeated at the next pub too.

At the end of the march we dispersed quite quickly. It felt as if we had made a minor and temporary incursion into enemy territory. There was no doubt that the streets belonged to them, though we had been an irritant that day. Given the abuse we got along the whole route, this wasn't a case of fascists imposing themselves on the community – they clearly were the community and we were on the margins.

On 30th April 1978 we reclaimed the streets. Tens of thousands of anti-fascists filled Trafalgar Square

and the streets around, holding lollipop-style placards with 'Anti-Nazi League' and an arrow printed in black and red on a yellow background, or punk pink Rock Against Racism stars. This was not going to be the standard march to Hyde Park, shouting our slogans among the West End tourists. Instead, we were heading five miles east to Victoria Park, where a stage had been set up by Rock Against Racism. Many of the new wave artists who had shaken the music scene – the Clash, X-Ray Specs, Tom Robinson – were going to be there to show their followers that their allegiance was to the cause of anti-racism and anti-fascism.



Right: A National Front member sells his paper in East London, 1978, while police look on cheerfully.

Mobilisations against the NF had been steadily growing and, the organisers were hopeful that there would be a show of strength by 20,000 anti-fascists. They were taken by surprise. By the time we reached Victoria Park, the crowd had grown to 80,000. On the way, we walked through the very same streets in which we had been so abused and terrified a few months earlier, only this time the streets were ours. And in the narrower streets the march was so dense that we filled the whole road and both pavements.

It was an exhilarating day and, for me, personally, a significant step on a political journey. Most of the anti-fascist demonstrations I had been on up to that point, where we had shouted 'Black and White – Unite and Fight' had been predominantly white, but this one was different. Especially in the park it was clear that this was a black and white demonstration. We were physically expressing our demand for equal rights for all. That was reflected on the stage, too, where Steel Pulse's reggae riffs and the Clash's punk/new wave sounds combined beautifully, and the whole crowd rocked to Tom Robinson's 'Glad to be Gay'.

And the Jews were there too... but not without a fight. Our 'leaders', the Board of Deputies, pulled out all the stops to prevent Jews from supporting the biggest anti-fascist mobilisation in Britain since the 1930s. They claimed that the ANL's leading figures were anti-Zionists and therefore the Jewish community should have nothing to do with them. Effectively, they were saying that it was more important to keep out of range of what someone might say about a conflict 2,000 miles away in the Middle East than to unite here and now with communities that were bearing the brunt of racist attacks from the same forces that were attacking Jews. It seemed a callous and narrow attitude, as well as a self-defeating one.

For several months the letters pages of the Jewish

Chronicle were filled with argument and counter argument about this issue. When the ANL held a public meeting in the Jewish heartland of Golders Green, with Jewish speakers on the platform, it was forced to hold it in a Unitarian church. Aubrey Lewis – the Manchester-based founder of the JSJ – argued that the Board were not really worried about young Jews becoming enticed by anti-Zionism, they just wanted to keep young Jews away from the Left.

The arguments rumbled on and thankfully many people ignored the Board. When we arrived in Trafalgar square on 30th April, some of the first people we encountered were from left-Zionist groups – Mapam and Habonim. At the time the JSJ defined itself as 'non-Zionist' and was closer to these groups than it is now.

I was a young student and not much beyond my own flirtation with Zionist youth movements. Although I was strongly at odds with the Israeli government at the time, and completely opposed to the Occupation, I was not opposed to Jews choosing to 'make aliyah' – going to live in Israel. The ANL experience helped change that and enabled me to make my break with Zionism. It wasn't, as the Board of Deputies seemed to fear, that mixing with anti-Zionists would expose Jews to 'Palestinian propaganda' – my deeper encounter with the Palestinian narrative came later, when I read Edward Said. But what met me immediately through the ANL and through the multi-racial Rock Against Racism movement was the slogan 'Here to stay – here to fight', the polar opposite of the Zionist perspective. On 30th April 1978 I caught a glimpse of how things could be in Britain for black and white, gay and straight, Jews and non-Jews, if we could break down the walls of prejudice. That's where I wanted to stay and that's what I wanted to fight for.

A FIGHTER TO THE END

The veteran anti-fascist campaigner and Auschwitz survivor, Leon Greenman, has died aged 97. Leon was believed to have been the only British-born Jew deported to Auschwitz. One of six children born in London's East End, he married Else – a Dutch Jew – in Stepney in 1935. After their honeymoon in Rotterdam, Else stayed on to look after her grandmother. Leon commuted back and forth, working in his father-in-law's book business.

In 1938 they were making plans to return to England but after Chamberlain declared 'peace in our time' they put these plans on hold. When the Nazis occupied Holland it was too late. He was deported to Auschwitz in 1943 together with his wife Else, son Barney and Else's grandmother. On arrival at Auschwitz, they were immediately separated from him and taken to the gas chambers. Leon was condemned to survive the most barbaric treatment and later did, indeed, return to London.

Using his skills as a barber, singer and market trader to make a living, he dedicated his life to

ensuring that coming generations would not fall for the populist racism and the false and malevolent solutions of the neo-Nazis. He travelled the length and breadth of Britain to talk to school students about what fascism is really about, how it starts and where it ends.

He was an activist in every sense, willing to patiently persuade those who doubted and willing to put himself in the front line of demonstrations, even when he was well into his 80s. While the anti-fascist movement was locked in internecine conflict, he personally embodied the unity of purpose and action that the movement needed. He didn't need to agree with other activists on secondary issues in order to unite with them totally on opposing racism and fascism.

As an activist in the NUT, I was privileged to join a group of trade unionists and school students on the first visit to Auschwitz organised by the Anti Nazi League in May 1995. Leon was our guide on this visit, and gave a graphic picture of his

LEON GREENMAN 1910-2008

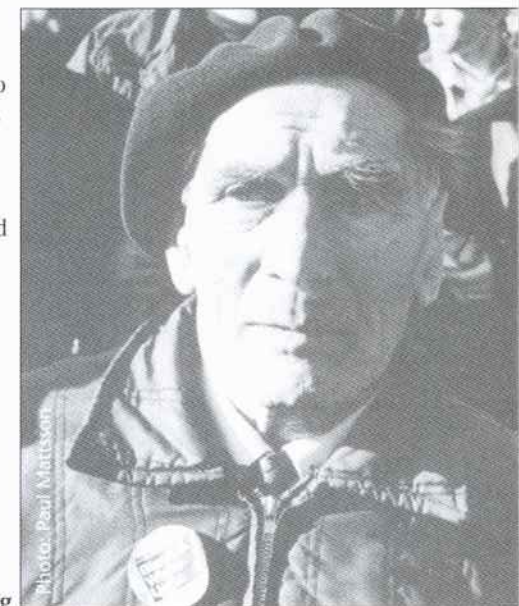
experiences and those of the people he was amongst in the places we were visiting. He spoke in a matter of fact way. He didn't see himself as a hero, but simply gave us the opportunity to see what happened through his eyes. It was both a shattering and uplifting experience for us all.

In the main Auschwitz camp we looked at a display of the different badges that the Nazis made various prisoners wear, depending on the distinctions that Nazism made according to ethnicity, national origin, politics, sexuality, mental health status and many other categories. Leon was the living antithesis of this mindset, refusing to draw any distinctions among those who may have an interest in fighting the Nazis. When I attended his 90th and 95th birthday celebrations I renewed contact with anti-fascist friends. We all looked older. Leon had hardly changed.

At his funeral the mourners were black and white, Jew and non-Jew. The rabbi stood at the entrance of the prayer hall and gave a very eloquent

eulogy which highlighted Leon's courageous political activism among and for all communities. Returning to more mainstream rabbinical themes, the rabbi described his last visit to Leon a few hours before he died. He held Leon's hand and recited the shema prayer. He assured us that God himself would personally be welcoming Leon to heaven. I smiled and thought about what Leon – a secular Jew committed to preventing hell on earth – would have made of these obscurantist musings. At that moment a stunning rainbow crossed the sky behind the rabbi. A heavenly sign? Or an indication that one day we will live according to the values that Leon espoused – all colours united for one beautiful purpose.

David Rosenberg



SHABBY

JOHN EVERSLEY challenges negative portrayals of refugee health professionals and points to their long-standing contribution to British society

Contemporary media images of refugee health professionals are often negative. These include stories of them being involved in terrorism or war crimes; potential carriers of transmissible diseases such as TB, hepatitis or HIV; lacking the necessary professional and linguistic skills to practise in the UK; taking jobs away from UK-trained health professionals; and robbing countries that need health professionals of their skills.

These images are an extreme distortion, reflecting myths about refugee health professionals who have been coming to Britain for 500 years and ignoring the reality of their lives and work.

A LONG HISTORY

Some Muslims and Jews came to England after they had been expelled from Spain and Portugal in 1492. Roderigo Lopez from Portugal was the first resident physician to be appointed to St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. He was physician to Elizabeth I, but was was hung, drawn and quartered after being falsely accused of plotting to poison the Queen. It has been suggested that Shakespeare drew inspiration from Lopez for his creation of Shylock. Jews were later expelled from England – officially at least – by James I, and were later allowed back by Oliver Cromwell. In the late 17th century more refugee physicians arrived from Portugal and Spain.

The expulsion of the Huguenots from France at the end of the 17th century brought another group of health professionals to Britain. In France patients were forbidden to consult Huguenot physicians. Huguenot apothecaries were not allowed to compound their drugs and there were

public campaigns against doctors who were religious and medical dissidents. Huguenot midwives were not allowed to attend the births even of Protestant women.

The 19th century migration of Jews to Britain from Eastern Europe brought very few health professionals because they were banned from such work in most of the countries they came from, though a few had qualified in Germany.

Even before the labour camps, concentration camps and death camps, health professionals felt the force of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws which required 'racial purity' for holders of public office. Relatively few Jewish health professionals who were refugees from fascism were able to enter the UK. Only about 12% of German speaking doctors who fled Nazism came to Britain. In any case, the United States was the destination of choice for many of the refugees. Some people were vulnerable to persecution for more than one reason. Charlotte Wolff, for example was a Jewish socialist doctor who set up the first birth control clinic in Germany and who made little secret of her lesbian sexuality.

Since World War II, health professionals have come to Britain from many parts of the world: some were among the Asians expelled from Uganda; they have also come from Pinochet's Chile, Rwanda, Iraq, Afghanistan and many other places. There are currently over 1,000 doctors on the BMA's voluntary database of refugee doctors. However, based on records of doctors who have sought assistance from various projects and programmes, there are nearly that number in London alone. Health professionals may have the money and contacts to escape more easily than poorer or less educated refugees, but in

Health rights of refugees and asylum seekers

Both the law and NHS policy distinguish between refugees, asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers. They also make distinctions between different types of treatment. A major problem in describing people's rights is that in practice, deliberately or unwittingly, the rules are not always applied to the letter.

Refugees (asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status, leave to remain or humanitarian status) and arrivals in the country through government initiative are entitled to free primary and secondary care. They have to pay prescription charges and the like, unless they are exempt, like any other British citizen.

Asylum seekers, whether or

not they are late applicants for asylum (who may be denied other support) are entitled to free primary and secondary care as long as their application (including any appeals) is under consideration.

For refused asylum seekers the picture is more complicated. On the one hand there is a Department of Health Circular saying that general practices should not register refused asylum seekers; on the other hand, general practices have discretion about who to register. For secondary care, refused asylum seekers are entitled to Immediately Necessary Treatment to save a life or to prevent a condition becoming life threatening or to complete a course of treatment started while

their claim for asylum was still being considered. Accident and emergency, family planning and compulsory mental health treatment and treatment for a range of communicable diseases are always free. NHS Trusts are expected to pursue costs 'as far as the trust considers reasonable' even for Immediately Necessary Treatment if the trust believes (rightly or wrongly) that the patient is not entitled to free treatment. Some trusts adopt a 'stabilise and discharge' policy for patients they believe to be overseas visitors. Trusts are supposed to check whether chargeable patients have the means to pay and are 'strongly advised' to take deposits. A recent High Court case has ruled that refused asylum seekers who

TREATMENT

some ways they are more vulnerable to persecution because of their willingness (or sense of duty) to treat all sides in a conflict; as witnesses to injustice and torture; and as intellectuals.

A WELCOMING HAVEN?

The reception of health professionals is part of the myth that Britain is a haven for refugees. Governments and the professions have a mixed record. When the Huguenot doctors arrived, the government was broadly encouraging but among the physicians there were conflicting views. Some doctors welcomed the ideas and techniques that the physicians brought with them. Others were very hostile to their Paracelsian approach: their emphasis on the use of properly prepared chemical treatments became what we now know as pharmaceutical products.

Suspicion of the health practitioner refugees from the late 19th century pogroms in Eastern Europe remains in the form of one of the many (evidence-light) theories that Jack the Ripper was a refugee doctor. Some of the second generation descendants of these refugees qualified in the UK but still faced discrimination in entry to medical schools and in their subsequent careers.

The Medical Sub-committee of the Jewish Refugee Committee, which helped the Jewish refugees from Nazism and fascism, accepted that 'it is quite impossible for refugees to be given jobs here' because of unemployment among doctors. The treasurer of the Academic Assistance Council (later the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, now CARA) was in favour of admitting people for scholarship and research but against them practising

medicine. Lord Dawson, president of the Royal College of Physicians, said of refugee doctors: 'The number that could be usefully absorbed or teach us anything could be counted on the fingers of one hand.' Along with other enemy aliens many of the doctors were interned when they arrived.

Given this history, it is refreshing that in recent decades the BMA, the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Nurses have been in the forefront of initiatives to support recently arrived refugee health professionals.

GETTING ESTABLISHED

From the rules regarding 'stranger doctors' in the 16th and 17th centuries right up to the present day there have been barriers to foreign health professionals practising in Britain. The Huguenot doctors had to attend early morning lectures in Latin run by Gresham College. Some of them had problems in obtaining or retaining licences from the Bishop of London, who controlled entry to the College of Physicians. One was reprimanded for dressing too flamboyantly.

The refugee doctors from 1930s and '40s fascism had to sit exams before being allowed to practise in the UK. The process in Scotland was more accessible than that in England with the result that many went to Edinburgh. However some never re-established themselves in clinical practice while others took many years to do so.

Today refugee doctors have to pass a Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test, even after their medical qualifications have been recognised, in order to practise in the UK. After that,

have co-operated with the Home Office but cannot return to their country of origin are also entitled to hospital care.

For HIV/AIDS only, the initial test and counselling is free to all. The costs of drugs are not covered for refused asylum seekers. Although maternity services are classed as Immediately Necessary Treatment, women who are refused asylum seekers can still be charged for maternity services. Recovering costs is an expensive process for trusts and if, as is generally the case, refused asylum seekers don't have the means to pay, it is likely that recovering costs will not be worthwhile. However many trusts still pursue costs vigorously.

Many asylum seekers live in poor conditions when they come to the UK, having endured poor conditions before they arrived, and when their asylum

claim is refused they are often destitute. Not surprisingly, ill health is common. Agencies report examples of women being refused maternity care and people living with HIV/AIDS and other long-term and terminal conditions also being refused treatment. The recent forcible removal of 39-year-old Ama Sumani to Ghana highlights the worst practice. Her visa had expired and she needed kidney dialysis as a result of cancer treatment. She has since died.

Many clinicians have strong ethical objections to denying treatment that they consider necessary. The medical journal, *The Lancet*, described Ama's removal from hospital as 'atrocious barbarism'. Others find the rules confusing or impractical. Uncertainty about how even people with settled status and open claims will be

treated, let alone refused asylum seekers, has led some areas to set up healthcare services outside the NHS. For example Médecins du Monde has started medical clinics in Tower Hamlets, east London. While they are providing essential services, some local NHS GPs are concerned that people may need access to diagnostic care and treatment that are beyond Médecins du Monde's capacity.

Although further restrictions might hold some political attractions for the government, they are aware that this might attract professional opposition, legal challenge and be more expensive than the present provision by undermining preventative and public health. The Entitlement Working Group, co-ordinated by Medact, campaigns against restrictions to free health care for undocumented migrants: www.medact.org/ref_entitlement_page.php



Top: Hans Krebs, 1953 winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Bottom: Charlotte Wolff, Jewish socialist doctor who set up the first birth control clinic in Germany.

however experienced they are, most have to compete with newly qualified UK-trained doctors for training posts. Despite their experience and skills, they often have major problems getting jobs. Sometimes this is because NHS Trusts confuse their situation with that of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who are from outside EU, who do not have refugee status and are not now eligible for such posts.

For nurses and midwives, the English language test requirements are even higher than for doctors. They also generally have to undertake a period of supervised practice and/or an adaptation course before they can practise. There is a shortage of supervisors, which contributes to a shortage of placements. Also employers and colleagues do not always understand the issues the nurses face. Many such nurses end up working in the independent sector. The Department of Health funded a £2-million programme between 2001 and 2006 to support refugee health professional integration – in addition to other funds coming from local NHS and charitable bodies. It seems likely that regional and local NHS bodies will take this work forward.

SUBSEQUENT CAREERS

Despite all the obstacles over the centuries, some refugee doctors and nurses have gone on to long and sometimes influential careers in the UK.

Huguenot doctors were instrumental in setting up the Society of Apothecaries and the Distillers Company. The Chamberlen family, for better or worse, introduced a form of obstetrics forceps to the UK – the invention is said by some to have guaranteed the position of doctors in childbirth in

their prolonged battle with midwives.

The refugees from Nazism have had an extraordinary impact on the health services and health research. There have been at least three Nobel Prize winners and many more Fellows of the Royal Society but, perhaps even more significantly, practitioners developed whole new specialisms including group therapy, child psychoanalysis, the idea of alcoholism as an illness and an addiction, and the treatment of spinal injuries. In some cases this was specifically because their previous or preferred specialties were closed to them by prejudice and discrimination. Mental Health services in general, but specifically psychiatry for older people, developed in this way. Some doctors became general practitioners but many have been and still are influenced by a style of doctor-patient relationship developed by a Hungarian émigré doctor and his wife. Although she trained in the UK, Professor Annie Altschul was a pioneer clinical researcher in nursing. She set up the Psychiatric Nurses Association and, by her openness in talking about her suicidal depressions, has played a significant role in helping healthcare services acknowledge the mental health needs of clinicians – wounded healers.

Today's refugee doctors and nurses bring many skills and experiences to the countries they arrive in. Working in war zones has brought professionals with experience of treating bomb, gun and knife wounds, and rape survivors. Many of the nurses in particular have far more experience in working with patients with HIV than UK-trained staff. They bring linguistic and cultural competences that benefit patients for whom the NHS is not always very accessible or sensitive.

PRINCIPLED INTERNATIONALIST

By way of a footnote to Piers Mostyn's review of Donal Nevin's book, James Connolly: A full Life (JS54), it's worth mentioning how Connolly, responding to an attack on American socialist Daniel de Leon, denounced the antisemitism of Britain's Old Etonian 'Marxist', Henry Mayers Hyndman, leader of the Social Democratic Federation.

Referring to Hyndman's paper, Justice, and its treatment of the Boer War, Connolly said: 'Justice, instead of grasping at the opportunity to demonstrate the unscrupulous and bloodthirsty methods of the capitalist class, strove to divert the wrath of the advanced workers from the capitalists to the Jews; how its readers were nauseated by denunciations of "Jewish millionaires", "Jewish plots", "Jew-controlled newspapers", "German Jews", "Israelitish schemes", and all the stock phrases of the lowest antisemitic papers, until the paper became positively unreadable to any fair-minded man who recognised the truth, viz, that the war was the child of capitalist greed, and inspired by men with whom race or religion were matters of no moment.'

Connolly was to develop his own differences with de Leon, but as he noted, Hyndman had called de Leon a 'German-Venezuelan Jew', appealing to racial and religious prejudice, rather than sincerely argue with his opponent's ideas. (De Leon was actually a Sefardi from Curaçao, though he had lived in Venezuela before going to the United States).

'Now, comrade de Leon is a Venezuelan, and the

descendant of an old family, famous alike in the history of Spain and the New World, but if he were all that the Justice phrase has him, what of it? Suppose he were a German-Venezuelan-Jew, or a Cockney-Irish-Scotsman, or even, horror of horrors, an Anglo-Saxon, what is it to us or to socialists generally?' (From The Socialist, June 1903. Republished in James Connolly: Lost Writings, edited by Aindrias Ó Cathasaig, Pluto Press, 1997.)

Hyndman, a clever but dubious character who accepted Tory money, wound up a jingoist supporting the First World War, and split from his British Socialist Party comrades to form a National Socialist Party – though that phrase did not yet have the significance it would later possess. Connolly, who had boldly exposed this chauvinism and his unscrupulous demagoguery a decade before, opposed the war, and led the 1916 Dublin rising of course.

By way of a further footnote, we might mention that among those who joined Connolly's Irish Citizens' Army, formed after the 1913 transport strike, was a Jewish worker called A Weeks who fell fighting for Irish freedom during the 1916 Rising. In March 1924 the union leader James Larkin inscribed his name in the Citizen's Army's 1916 Roll of Honour, alongside that of Connolly, with the words: 'A Weeks, a Jewish comrade who joined on Easter Monday and died in action.' (Information from Manus O'Riordan of the Irish Service Industrial and Professional Union, SIPU.)

Charlie Pottins, *Middlesex*

Pesach in the Warsaw Ghetto

In 1943 the first night of the festival of Pesach fell on 19th April. That was the night the Nazis chose for their final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. Only they were met by armed resistance of the United Ghetto Fighters Organisation, the ZOB, led by Bundists, Communists and Left Zionists. This vastly unequal battle raged for three weeks and was very costly in lives to the Nazis. The resistance knew that they were doomed but were fighting for their dignity. On 8th May most of the remaining fighters, trapped in a bunker, took their own lives rather than be caught and killed by the Nazis. A few escaped through the sewers and emerged outside the ghetto and escaped to the forests to continue their anti-Nazi fight as Partisans. This year, 2008, the first night of Pesach, guided by the lunar calendar, once again falls on 19th April. To honour the freedom fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto and all fighters for freedom today, we reproduce an English adaptation, from the Workmen's Circle Haggadah, of 'In varshaver geto iz itst khoydesh nish', a poem by the Yiddish poet and Holocaust survivor Binem Heller, who died in Israel in 1998.

Pesach has come to the Ghetto again.

The wine has no grape, the matzah no grain.
But the people anew sing the wonders of old,
The flight from the Pharaohs, so often retold.
How ancient the story, how old the refrain.

The windows are shuttered. The doors are
concealed.

The Seder goes on. And fiction and fact are confused
into one.

Which is myth? Which is real?

'Come all who are hungry!' invites the Haggadah.

The helpless, the aged, lie starving in fear.

'Come all who are hungry!' and children sleep,
famished.

'Come all who are hungry!' and tables are bare.

Pesach has come to the Ghetto again.

The lore-laden words of the Seder are said,
And the cup of the Prophet Elijah awaits,
But the Angel of Death has intruded, instead.
As always – the German snarls his commands.

As always – the words sharpened up and precise.

As always – the fate of more Jews in his hands:

Who shall live, who shall die, this Passover night.

But no more will the Jews to the slaughter be led.

The truculent jibes of the Nazis are past.

And the lintels and doorposts tonight will be red

With the blood of free Jews who will fight to the last.

Pesach has come to the Ghetto again.

And neighbour to neighbour the battle-pledge
gives:

The blood of the German will flow in the Ghetto

So long as one Jew in the Ghetto still lives!

In face of the Nazi – no fear, no subjection!

In face of the Nazi – no weeping, no wincing!

Only the hatred, the wild satisfaction

Of standing against him and madly resisting.

Listen! How Death walks abroad in the fury!

Listen! How bullets lament in their flight!

See how our history writes END to the story,

With death heroic, this Passover night.

FROM WHERE I'M

The Archbishop of Canterbury made a curiously worded speech last February in which he said that the adoption of certain aspects of Shariah law in the UK 'seems unavoidable'. He argued that this would help social cohesion saying that Muslims should not have to choose between 'the stark alternatives of cultural loyalty or state loyalty'. This generated an instant response from the Jewish Beth Din (rabbinical court). The rabbis were remarkably well prepared to appear on BBC Radio 4's Today programme and offer themselves as an example of how these things should be done.

The Beth Din, apparently, is a model of a religious court that can act as an arbitrator whose rulings are recognised in the British courts if the parties to the conflict voluntarily accept its decisions. The issues it pronounces on, though, particularly in 'family law' (which, as with Shariah Councils, is one of its key areas of influence) are not a matter of free choice and do not treat all parties equally.

I did not feel I had any choice about whether to

seek a religious divorce from my first husband because, without that certificate from the Beth Din, I could not marry again in a synagogue (if I had wanted to) and any subsequent children I had would have been designated as mamzerim – outcasts from the community for generations. This is the threat held out by husbands who refuse to divorce their wives (it only works that way round), who may keep them 'chained' in this limbo for a lifetime (or until they buy themselves out).

Jewish 'family law' like that of most other religions, is mainly concerned with controlling women's sexuality. And the bid to have religious laws recognised by the state is an attempt by those who have emerged as unelected leaders of parts of their communities to consolidate their power.

People from minority communities have the same rights to protection from and access to state law as everyone else. We need to fight to protect those rights, not allow them to be handed over in part exchange for so-called social cohesion.

Julia Bard

STANDING

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MISSING WORDS

Progressive Jewish writers have struggled for recognition in Turkey, says LAURENT MIGNON

'Literary histories written by reactionaries ... don't mention us and neither do those written by ... the new sultans of Turkish Literature', complained Hasan İzzettin Dinamo, a leading Turkish socialist poet and novelist, in 1965. Dinamo argued that conservative historians of literature in Turkey, as well as critics close to the Kemalist establishment, systematically ignored the works of left-wing writers. Even the world acclaimed communist poet, Nâzım Hikmet, has only been recently added to Turkey's high school curriculum.

Turkish literary historiography has not only ignored dissenting voices but it has also silenced the voices of writers from religious minorities, even if they wrote in Turkish. After the National Liberation War and the establishment of the Republic on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the criterion for differentiating between the various peoples in Anatolia was neither ethnic nor linguistic but religious. The Christian and the Jewish populations were not considered as belonging to the Turkish nation. This affected the conception of national literature and of the literary canon. Non-Muslims writing in Turkish were excluded from literary historiography, since their existence directly challenged the dominant discourse on the intrinsic relationship between Islam and Turkishness. Only in recent times have Turkish-writing Jews and Armenians such as Roni Margulies (top right), Mario Levi (bottom right) and Karin Karakasli (centre right) been awarded important literary prizes. This new found openness in literary Turkey has not yet affected the notion of 'national literature' in Turkish academia, and pioneers of non-Muslim Turkish literature in the Ottoman Empire are still ignored.

Writers who are both Jewish and progressive have barely achieved even a footnote in scholarly volumes dealing with the history of Ottoman Turkish writing and political thought. However, there were several Ottoman Jewish liberal intellectuals writing in Turkish who deserve greater attention both within and beyond Turkey. The poets Avram Naon (1878-1947) and Isaac Ferera (1883-1933), who were also lawyers, are two cases in point. Part of their journalistic writings dealt with issues, such as minority rights and the death penalty, that were important concerns for liberal thinkers in Ottoman Turkey in the early years of the 20th century, just as they are for us nowadays. Though both of them were Ladino speaking Sephardim, they founded *Mi'rât* (The Mirror), a short-lived Turkish language journal designed to further their emancipatory and progressive ideals in the months of ephemeral freedom that followed the restoration of the constitution in 1908. They defined their bi-weekly magazine as a 'literary, scientific, political, economical and ethical Ottoman journal serving national progress and the

enlightenment of Ottoman Jewish writers'. The fact that the journal was completely in Turkish in Arabic script was a political stance in itself. Towards the end of the 19th century, only about 3% of the 300,000, mainly Ladino speaking, Ottoman Sephardim knew Turkish, though 100,000 had learned French as a result of the endeavours of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). The message of the Alliance, though tainted by its patronising attitude towards 'Oriental' Jews had inspired Ferera and Naon. Nonetheless, both writers considered a perfect knowledge of Turkish, not French, a prerequisite for the political and social emancipation of Ottoman Jews. Their focus on Turkish language was also a way to counter the influence of French cultural imperialism which was attempting to foster Francophile feelings among the minorities of the Ottoman Empire. The French foreign secretary Théophile Delcassé supported the AIU and argued in 1902 that 'he who speaks French in the Orient is not far from thinking in French and acting in French and finds himself quite naturally orientated toward France, whether for his moral aspirations or for his material needs.'

Other Ottoman Jews such as Moïse Cohen (Munis Tekinalp) and Avram Galanti, defended a similar stance in regard to Turkish, but, in contrast to Naon and Ferera, they advocated assimilationist policies and openly supported state sponsored initiatives by successive nationalist governments for teaching the Turkish language among religious minorities.

Isaac Ferera and Avram Naon had difficulties getting their works in Turkish published. In an article in *Mi'rât* entitled 'Jews who are ashamed of their name', published on 2nd March 1909, Isaac Ferera Efendi wrote that he was asked by a publisher to use a Muslim penname as a prerequisite for the publication of his poetry manuscript. Similarly, Avram Naon argued, that some Turkish literary magazines refused to publish his and Ferera's works because the editors 'were unnerved by the fact that Jews could write poems which were so accurate and meaningful'.

Publishing the journal



Left: the Sultan of Turkey welcoming Jews expelled from Spain in 1492.

was a way of circumventing the discriminatory attitude in the publishing world and of making their own works known. This also explains why Naon stressed in a leader that the journal would not accept any works written by non-Jews. Though this restriction may seem to contradict the emancipatory aims of the journal, this was a genuine attempt to get around the invisible walls of the ghetto established by the Ottoman Turkish intelligentsia. In the same leader, Naon argued that the journal was also meant as a showcase of Ottoman Jewish literature directed at the other Turkish-speaking peoples, but mainly to the ruling Turkish nationalists.

Without doubt, antisemitism was an essential concern for Ferera and Naon. It is significant that, at a time of rising nationalism, Avram Naon serialised a Turkish translation of Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, the French Catholic liberal thinker's *Israël chez les nations* (Israel among the nations, 1893). Originally published at a time of growing antisemitism in France, this work is a systematic analysis and condemnation of antisemitism. Leroy-Beaulieu was known among the Ottoman intelligentsia since he had also published the text of a conference, held in 1896, which denounced the first massacres of Armenians during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II. Other articles penned by Ferera and Naon were aimed at informing the non-Jewish readership about Jews and Judaism and also countered antisemitic claims. Nonetheless, Isaac Ferera argued in an autobiographical essay that Jews in the Ottoman lands had had an easier life than Jews in Christian Europe. According to him, antisemitism remained a marginal phenomenon and there were no restrictions to the employment of Jews by the state.

Education in matters of Judaism was another important aim of the journal. The editors favoured liberal and progressive interpretations of the faith. Some articles, such as Mahir Russo's essay 'Government among the Ancient Jews and Constitutionalism', argued that the Sanhedrin was an assembly and a legislative body and thus Constitutionalism was legitimate from a religious point of view. These arguments were obviously addressed at the more conservative members of the readership who had problems coming to terms with the new political freedoms

disapproved of by conservative rabbis.

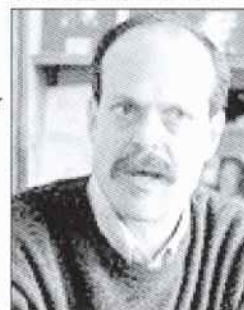
The journal published other articles of interest for humanists and progressives. Avram Naon's article on the death penalty published on 2nd March 1909 reviews various arguments in favour of the death penalty and discards them on philosophical, religious and pragmatic grounds. Referring to Cesare Beccaria, one of the fathers of criminology, Naon argues that 'the killing of an individual is only acceptable in self-defence'. Since a court sentence can hardly be considered self-defence, killing in the name of the community or the state is unacceptable. He also furnishes a religious argument claiming that, since life is a gift from God, it would be a rebellion against divine wisdom to kill a human being, a point that was mainly directed at the more conservative parts of his readership.

His more pragmatic readers would have been satisfied with his argument that in countries where the death penalty is applied, the crime level does not fall. It is not an effective deterrent against violent crime. The unpardonable nature of the death penalty in case of a judicial error is another classical argument that he uses to further his case. Naon's arguments were standard indeed, but in 1909, at a time when the state was going through deep reforms, it was important to spread those views. Avram Naon and Isaac Ferera used this unique opportunity to take part in the public debate as Jews and progressives. Political freedom was short-lived and the nationalist Union and Progress government soon imposed strict political censorship.

Ferera and Naon's progressive and humanist concerns were also reflected in their late poetry. While Ferera and Naon both started as advocates of an Ottoman version of neo-Parnassism during the years of Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign, their later poetry was to become more committed, and openly defended liberal principles.

The works of Isaac Ferera and Avram Naon, those two forgotten names of Turkish and Jewish progressive history, deserve to be rediscovered and not only on the shores of the Bosphorus. Indeed Jewish progressives writing in Turkish have not only been ignored in works on Turkish literature. Works published in the West dealing with the history of progressive ideals and the intellectual history of the left or discussing Jewish literature only rarely mention authors and thinkers who expressed themselves in non-European or non-Jewish languages. Ottoman Jewish progressives had little chance of being cited in such works unless they wrote in a Western European or a Jewish language like, for instance Avram Benaroya, a major actor in the establishment of the workers' movement in the Ottoman Balkans, and Baruch Cohen, a fiery exponent of Voltairean ideals in the salons of the Thessalonica bourgeoisie and probably the founder of the first Masonic lodge in the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps Eurocentrism has played as fatal a role as Turkish nationalism in disregarding aspects of the Jewish progressive heritage.

Roni Margulies (top right), Karin Karakasli (centre right) and Mario Levi (bottom right) modern literary prizewinners



THE WORKS OF ISAAC FERERA AND AVRAM NAON, THOSE TWO FORGOTTEN NAMES OF TURKISH AND JEWISH PROGRESSIVE HISTORY, DESERVE TO BE REDISCOVERED AND NOT ONLY ON THE SHORES OF THE BOSPHORUS.

KLEZMER

JACOB BARD-ROSENBERG'S critique of the klezmer 'revival' compares it with the 19th-century German yearning for a pre-industrial pastoral idyll

Over the course of the last 40 years klezmer has become a stalwart not only of Western Jewish culture, but also of global Jewish identity. What started out as a movement to unearth music that had been obliterated along with the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe in the first half of the 20th century became a phenomenon which created a musical idiom that contemporary Jews began to see as their own. Significantly, klezmer is particularly important to more progressive Jewish communities, whether they be socialists, anti-Zionists, gay and lesbian Jews, or secular Jews. Klezmer seemingly offered a means of Jewish identity without the hang-ups of religion or the brutality of Zionism.

Klezmer was first brought about in its modern form in the early 1970s, by bands such as The Klezmerim, Kapelye, and The Klezmer Conservatory Band. They discovered and began to play music from records they found in libraries, and older Jewish musicians were brought out of retirement to teach them this dead art. Soon after the inception of this revival, Klezmer began to move from the USA to Europe (particularly to Britain and Germany).

Klezmer has since gone global, and has been accepted as a cultural signifier for Jewishness. That being said, any political consideration of this musico-cultural movement reveals that it is riddled with problems. Even on the very surface, there is a problem with identifying contemporary 'Jewishness' with a musical style that, through the very fact that it is reviving something, simply doesn't belong to our own time. Old world klezmer had a long life, flourished, and died in a world alien to our own social reality.

This is not the whole story though: much of the literature surrounding Klezmer describes the necessity of its revival as relating to the fact that the tradition was killed, not because of social and political formations of its period. To play klezmer in a modern concert hall to an audience of self-identifying diaspora Jews and world music aficionados has a very different meaning to playing traditional music at a Jewish wedding in the shtetl in 1870. The music points towards the catastrophic mid-century fissure in Jewish history; it becomes an evocation of the loss these idealised modern Jews feel when they reflect on the history of the Ashkenazi Jews in the 20th century. We are thus identifying what it is to be Jewish today with the notion of the destruction of this paradigm of the Jew.

This idea, of the the earlier perfect form of a subject being destroyed after a point at which such a perfect form is no longer possible, has a very close parallel in the history of Germany in the late 18th and early 19th century. The birth of Romanticism in the cities of Central Europe saw a yearning for the pre-industrialised past. As communities were pushed into modernity, intellectual trends (whether they be Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony or Johann Gottfried Herder's search for knowledge in the origins of language) pushed against the very modernity that

created them. It was argued that there was something inherently false about the conditions in which people lived, as if modernity in some way constricted humanity so much as to distort it irrevocably. This argument attributed a level of truth to the paradigm of the German Volk that, as a concept, could only be developed as an opposition to German modernity.

For Germany this break from the idealised past was pervasive industrialisation, but for the Jews of the 20th century, the break was created by the rather more violent pogroms followed by the Holocaust. The Holocaust in particular further problematised what it meant to be Jewish (if it were not a problematic enough identity already), and cultural formations such as Klezmer put us in danger of describing Jewishness only in reference to the history of oppression; the rift in the constructed ideal, and thus imply an inherent inauthenticity in contemporary Jewish identity.

From this, we can see, since the early 1970s, the mechanised production of these cultural objects that, whilst purporting to represent some kind of contemporary cultural niche, in fact direct themselves not to a historical event, but to a cultural gap in history. Of course, the Holocaust is not something that demands a singularly Jewish response, rather, for many theorists, it is the key moment in the 20th century when all the impulses of modernity come to fruition. It is not a break with the past but the ultimate impasse, solidified as a cultural and political moment. As such, any cultural object produced after the Holocaust necessarily referenced the negativity of what preceded it, regardless of whether it did so explicitly. For much of the 20th century, to be modern meant to exist after this moment in which all of the modernist impulses of the 19th and 20th centuries had revealed themselves in their brutal horror. Adorno wrote: 'after Auschwitz poetry is barbaric', yet klezmer is the anachronistic recreation of this poetic aesthetic that had been made impossible in the name of recreating a positive diasporic Jewish aesthetic which represented the situation of the Jews towards the end of the 20th century. Instead of creating art – that is, cultural objects with meaning pertaining to a social reality – the klezmerim (klezmer musicians) had produced a new type of politically loaded kitsch.

This issue of kitsch is not simply a political one, but one that pervades the music too. Whilst the old world klezmer tradition was still functioning when the communities in which it existed were forcibly destroyed, it is fallacious to assume that its revival is appropriate to represent the re-creation of those communities in the new world. The fact that the music died for non-musical reasons does not justify the argument that, were it not for political atrocities the music would have lived on. Nor does the re-establishment of a dead musical tradition provide an adequate critique of the socio-political forces that destroyed it; it merely points to their existence.

CONFUSION

Arguably, the musical tradition that was destroyed was not worth saving, and furthermore has no place in a contemporary musical space. If I were to write a symphony in the style of Brahms, or release an album of singers doing imitations of Bessie Smith there would be obvious questions about whether or not such a thing were appropriate, and how it would relate to today's worlds of high or low art. Essentially, either of these things would point to a negation – to the fact that there is no longer a demand for the new production of these styles. It is then clear that, whilst klezmer may exist as a critique of historical events, through its revival it exists as a critique of the entire process of progress into our own modernity. This is not a subtle critique, underpinned by an understanding of the world today, but rather an irrational fetishisation of the absence of shtetl culture in 21st century America and Europe, accompanied by a sledge-hammer slogan of 'this is not right'.

The major counter-argument to this is that klezmer is in some way a living musico-cultural tradition; that new artworks are being produced and valued. Since the early 1990s a new type of klezmer came into being, with The Klezmatics leading the way. This was known as 'klezmer fusion', and in attempting to allow klezmer once again to become a living musical culture, klezmerim began to work on projects in which formal and stylistic ideas from klezmer exist in a mishmash with later styles. Most important here is the close alliance of klezmer with jazz (a culture that came to flourish with the inception of late capitalism, as the newly packaged musical commodity, whose core message was that of frivolity, and the ability to listen, dance, throw away, and head to the shops to buy a new piece of music with the same meaning or non-meaning). What more could the public want than an understanding of the Holocaust pinned to the surface of these most disposable pieces of music? It is ideal, within our time, to be allowed to dance to the story of progress, but were one to truly understand it there would be no dancing.

The klezmer musician too is constantly at fault. What we see in klezmer is the construction of an authenticity. Whether the performer is Jewish or non-Jewish, atheist, mystic, Sephardi, or Ashkenazi, we are dealing with a tradition that finds itself fantasising its own relationship with Jewish history as each new cultural object is produced. We are dealing with a tautology – a wholly Jewish utterance which demands that the performer is in some way authentic; that they have an empathy with the history of the Jews which, in itself, apparently allows them to identify themselves with the paradigm they create of modern-day Jewish culture. The performative nature of klezmer (the production of a wholly Jewish utterance) means that to create klezmer, to listen to it, and for all of the so-called connoisseurs to 'understand' it, is to create a fantasy-space of modern Jewish culture out of an understanding of Jewish history; they then place themselves within this space, and argue that modern Jewish culture relates to Jewish history in such a way that the Jewish history become a means of

sedimenting a conservative notion of what it means to be Jewish. What this process does is to stop Jewish culture being a space for critical engagement with history and politics. Attempts to understand what it means to be Jewish and to recognise the problems that Jewishness poses to modern day society and culture are undermined by a simple positive statement of being Jewish.

There is no way in which an adequate criticism of modernity can be developed by obsessing over a single issue within the complex of history. In fact to simply point to this monolith we call the Holocaust and exclaim that it pushed us into this problematic time and space in which we exist is to bypass the contradictions inherent in the world we live in today. It is to state that the world is one of unbridled negativity, only to find salvation in a rose-tinted-cum-sanctified view of the past that was a victim of the very 'progress' which put us here today. Of course, if one is to pose the question of klezmer in these terms, we can see that all there is to it is political and stylistic stasis. It is born out of obscurity, and in a sense has moved full circle not to criticise modernity, but to become complicit with it. Adorno once wrote, 'Art is permitted to survive only if it renounces the right to be different, and integrates itself into the omnipotent realm of the profane.' The case for a Jewish response to the Holocaust is a good one, but for its demands to be those of the purest form of assimilation is clearly problematic. A Jewish response to the Holocaust cannot sacrifice what it means to be Jewish today. Whilst there is room to criticise our own society and these breaks in narrative history that brought it about, klezmer is a hugely inappropriate response, not least when it proclaims itself to be a defining feature of the Jewish response to the modern condition.



Klezmer Conservatory Band

It's a man's world

Playwright Bernard Kops' reminiscences are raw and astonishingly vivid. He was born in Stepney Green, the youngest of seven children. And they were poor, Jewish Soup Kitchen poor. But the claustrophobic poverty of his childhood is not depressing. His family were averagely dysfunctional for Jews and there was conflict but also love and affection. And his descriptions of Jewish Whitechapel in the 1920s and '30s – its smells and noise – make us nostalgic for a world we never knew. He recreates snatches of conversation

'Tenk God for communism.'

'Then why did you run away from Russia, Mr Gold?'

'To get away from my wife. But I have infinite faith in Stalin.'

The young Bernard wasn't interested in school; instead he absorbed life on the streets. He grows up

and the world widens for him. There's family, illness and weddings. Fascism – from Mosley on their doorstep to Hitler in Europe – is a constant fear. Kops is 13 when war breaks out and has a happy evacuation to Buckinghamshire. A kind family, clean sheets, good food and toys on Christmas morning. Eventually the family are reunited in London. He writes of the horror of the Blitz, and the hysteria and panic of the air raids as Stepney Green is destroyed.

'Get into the shelter!' says an air raid warden to a group standing in the street as shells explode around them.

'We prefer to take our chances with the bombs. We can't stand Mrs Kops and her daughters having hysterics inside.'

On 5th March 1943 he missed by minutes the mass panic outside Bethnal Green tube station as

200 people were crushed to death. These experiences are written without sentimentality. There is a real sense of the time, with arguments on class politics, the emergence of Zionism and family ambition. The problem I have with this book is Bernard Kops.

I lose patience with him. He is feckless and lazy. He drinks and smokes too much dope. He decides he is artistic. That's artistic. And he resents his family's constant shrieking and cajoling for him to get a job and contribute. His mother frets endlessly. He drifts towards Soho with other shiftless, artistic types but can always return home for a warm meal, a bed and money. It's not this aspect that annoys me so much. Such is youth and such is parenthood. What angers me is how Kops' guilt transfers itself into a conviction that his mother is a malevolent, suffocating presence.

'Someone has to go' he writes. 'It's either my mother or me. It must be her.' You'd think he was Oliver Twist. Not someone who had been indulged and always allowed to go his own way.

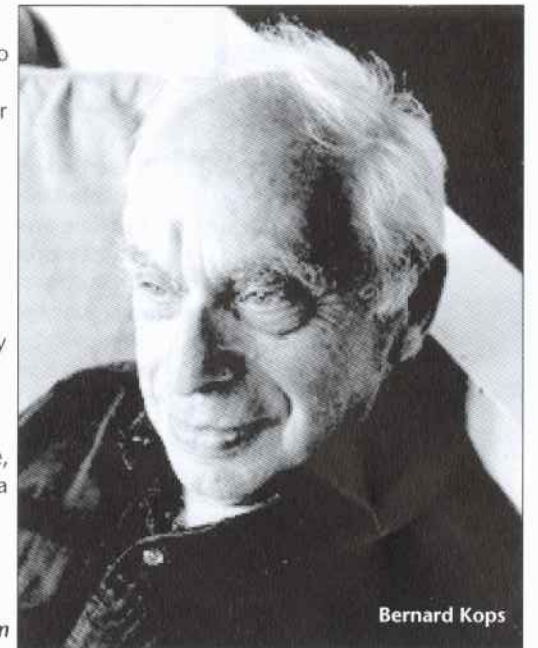
Finally the years and poverty take their toll. This

59-year-old, badly-educated and superstitious woman, who loved, fed and raised seven children dies. Says Kops: 'Later that day I felt wonderful and terrible. I was free at last. The cord had been snapped. I wanted to stand up and sing and laugh my head off but sadness was expected of me and it was easy to be sad.'

Marijuana wrecks his sanity and he lands up in a mental hospital for a while. He recovers but ends up back on the streets of Soho. And there, would you believe, he meets a nice Jewish girl who saves him. I assume she's stuck it out with him.

I guess she doesn't nag.

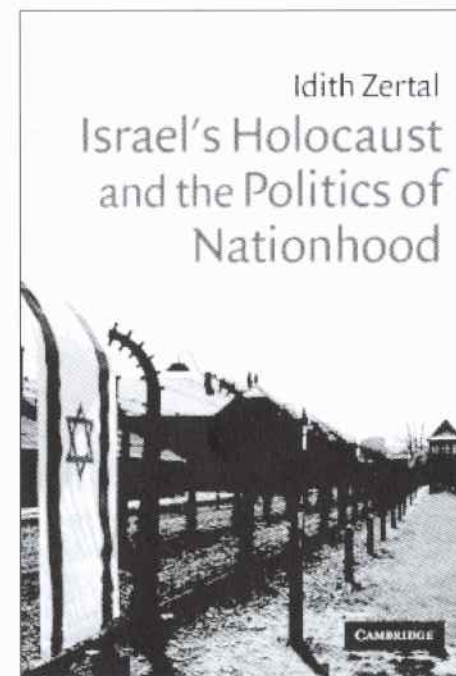
Ruth Lukom



Bernard Kops

THE WORLD IS A WEDDING: FROM EAST END TO SOHO
Bernard Kops
Five Leaves,
£9.99

The lies Israel tells itself



Idith Zertal
**Israel's Holocaust
and the Politics of
Nationhood**

Idith Zertal has written a fine and detailed reflection on the use and misuse of the Holocaust in Israel's 'self-fashioning'. Despite being an academic book, it is also accessible and significant.

It begins by considering particular exemplary events, including the Ghetto uprisings (1943) and the Exodus affair (1947). But the focus is not so much on the events themselves as on their telling and the way in which in Israel 'historical defeats were transmuted into paragons of triumph and models of identification.'

Zertal shows that in Israel those who dissented from Zionist myths of heroism (who refused the 'arrogant' distinction between those who rebelled and everyone else), were marginalised and ignored. One of these dissenters was Marek Edelman, a leader and survivor of the Warsaw

ghetto uprising who 'persistently refused to view the establishment of the State of Israel as the belated "meaning of the Holocaust"'. His book *The Ghetto Fights*, was published in Warsaw by the Bund in 1945, but tellingly was only translated into Hebrew 56 years later. Marek Edelman remained in Poland. He refused to give political significance to the Holocaust, and consistently resisted its appropriation by Israel and Zionism.

A further independent and dissenting spirit whose voice and contribution inspires this book is Hannah Arendt, whose articles and the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on The Banality of Evil* (1963) was vilified in Israel for its discomforting analysis. This controversy is approached here through Arendt's correspondence with Gershom Scholem who had

been her friend but who personally and publicly berated her for 'lacking "love of Israel" and of hatred of Zionism, a charge which clung to her for years'. Arendt's voice was silenced in Israel, but Idith Zertal points us back to her rebellious and rigorous sense of being fully responsible in the world. From Arendt's writing (and from what emerged from Stanley Milgram's work at the time) we should learn to discover a firm basis for our decisions and actions, and even in the most difficult circumstances develop the resources to resist pressures for belonging, conformity and doing others harm.

This book gives us a detailed sense of the way in which Israel has used and abused the Holocaust whilst marginalising the actual survivors. Idith Zertal says: 'Israel rendered itself immune to criticism and impervious to a rational dialogue with the world around her. Furthermore, while insisting, and rightly so, on the unique nature of the Holocaust'... Israel, because of its wholesale and out of context use of the Holocaust, became a prime example of devaluation of the meaning and enormity of the Holocaust'.

The book shows how the Holocaust has been harnessed in the conflict with the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples more widely, as well as to suppress Israel's critics and dissenters. It upholds memory but gives us critical tools to resist the blatant manipulation of the Holocaust (for example by the settlers) and the more subtle ways that some aspects of events can be 'illuminated' and others 'obscured' in forming a narrative. In this Zertal's book is a strong addition to others including James Young's *The Texture of Memory, Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993).

This is a useful book for everyone who is committed to remembering the Holocaust and supporting the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination and justice.

Simon Lynn

ISRAEL'S HOLOCAUST AND THE POLITICS OF NATIONHOOD
Idith Zertal
Cambridge
University Press,
£22

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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.

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- 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;
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- 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;
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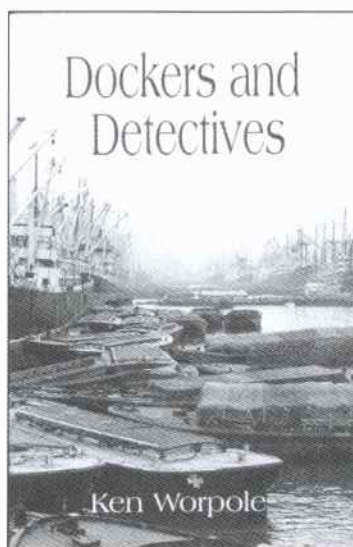
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Dig where you stand



**DOCKERS
AND
DETECTIVES**
Ken Worpole
Five Leaves,
£8.99

The second edition of Ken Worpole's *Dockers and Detectives*, first published in 1983, has been long awaited. This intelligent, pioneering study of working class reading and writing was born from Worpole's involvement in Hackney local history projects and the Centerprise community bookshop. Over two decades on, the writer is still based in Hackney and is now a researcher on the quality of urban life, architecture and social policy issues.

In his powerful new introductory essay, entitled 'Dig where you stand', Worpole shows how class has been handled in British intellectual and cultural life since the book was first published, and highlights the changes in society since then. He talks about some of the vocabulary in the original book coming from 'another political planet'.

His comments on the representation of working class people in modern literature, in particular the 'mis lit' (misery literature) genre, are particularly sharp. Worpole states that working class life and experience is again being treated inadequately. He criticises the harrowing stories of brutalised childhoods and abuse (on a shelf in Waterstones entitled 'Sad lives') as concentrating on 'the condition of victimhood' and rarely making a wider social connection.

His essays describe American influences on popular fiction (the 'tough-guy novel'), as well as popular literature during World War II, the novels of working class writers from Liverpool, and writers from the Jewish East End. Worpole helped bring otherwise neglected authors into focus. These included Dublin

born James Hanley, writer of *Boy* (1931) the shocking story of a young Irish stowaway, and Jewish author Alexander Baron, active in antifascist struggles in the 1930s, whose war novel *From the City, From the Plough* (1948) is seen by many to rival *All Quiet on the Western Front* for its sense of reality and honesty.

The chapter 'Out of the Ghetto, The Politics of the Jewish East End', deals with three Jewish authors, Simon Blumenfeld (*Jew Boy*, 1935), Willy Goldman (*East End My Cradle*, 1940) and Ashley Smith (*The Brimming Lake*, 1937). These novels, explain Worpole, expose the paradox of the working class writer. The act of representing the community in which he has grown up is the first step in being separated from that life. In Blumenfeld's *Jew Boy* the hero's path through life mirrors the marginalised position of the writer as he is sacked from his job in the rag trade for his trade union involvement, leaves Whitechapel and meets a non-Jewish prostitute who he later lives with. The theme of being an outsider to family and culture, through a wish to be a writer, is also central in Goldman's novels.

In the 1980s, when I was completing a very open-minded MA in Education from the University of Sussex, I decided to 'dig where I stood' and to explore the culture and views of a friendship group of working class girls I taught in the London Borough of Newham. My tutor was Ken Worpole and I am still grateful for his encouragement and support. I also remember passing *Jew Boy*, which I'd discovered from reading *Dockers and Detectives*, around my family. Relatives who usually only read the JC and the black cab trade papers sat down and read this hard-hitting book from cover to cover. Do read *Dockers and Detectives*, even if it is 'to step into the same river twice'. *Anne Krisman*

Investigating Jewtopia

The Second World War ended with the dropping of an atomic bomb on Berlin. The fledgling state of Israel was overwhelmed and its Jewish inhabitants driven into the sea in 1948. The shattered remains of European Jewry have lived for 60 years in a precarious semi-autonomous Jewish homeland in the Sitka district of Alaska. But the sleazy capitalist Birobizhan was never intended as a permanent arrangement, and the sell-by date for the entire project is fast approaching.

Welcome to the alternative reality of Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* – an exploration of Jewish history, identity and politics that is more interesting than anything you are likely to find in a more straightforward non-fictional account. The book works fine as a police procedural novel. Landsman, the world-weary hard-drinking Yiddish policeman protagonist is trying to solve the mysterious death of a hasidic gangster's chess-prodigy son before the entire Jewish police department is closed down – as part of the process whereby Jewish autonomy ends and Sitka reverts to

Alaskan control. As the genre demands, his superior – in this case, also his ex-wife – is trying to close down the investigation, though only so as to leave the books tidy at the handover. His relationship with his partner, a half-Tlingit who has converted to Judaism, allows Chabon to introduce the uneasy relationship between the Jewish colonists and the original inhabitants – even Sitka had turned out not to be a land without a people.

Of course, it's more than just a detective novel. It's an account of how an alternative Jewtopia might have happened, and how it might have turned out. There's always a temptation with this kind of book to slap in long patches explaining where and how history diverged; strangely, it turns out that FDR really did consider Alaska as a Jewish homeland, and the Alaskan Democratic politician whose accidental death under the wheels of Washington taxi removes the main obstacle to the project was a real person too. But Chabon manages this with a light touch, and he creates a vivid picture of the down-at-heel Ashkenazic society created by the Sitka experiment, with hasidic

**THE YIDDISH
POLICEMEN'S
UNION**
Michael Chabon
HarperCollins,
£7.99

Lyrical Ladino

Israeli vocalist Yasmin Levy's latest recording, *Mano Suave*, probably deserves a five-star rating, but I'm not sure I'm the reviewer to award it. Although my mother's side of the family is at least partly, like Levy, Sephardi, when it comes to Jewish folk music, it's normally the now-ubiquitous klezmer variety I listen to. My west European ears are more readily attuned to the east European melodies of Yiddish folksongs and instrumentals, to neo-klezmer and the klez-jazz hybrids, than they are to the strains of the Sephardi-Ladino tradition, which is Levy's speciality.

Levy is unquestionably one of the world's most outstanding female vocalists, irrespective of genre. The respected music pundit Charlie Gillett, said about her on BBC radio: 'I close my eyes and Yasmin Levy fills my head with her voice, searing, soaring, sighing. When she stops, I unwillingly open my lids and face reality.'

Her voice really is that glorious – the range, the earthy timbre, the sweeping drama of her melisma vocalising. She would make the most wonderful khazan, or, if there were such a thing, female muezzin.

Melisma is common to Jewish and Islamic liturgical and Hispanic singing, and one can discern all three traditions, which coalesced in medieval Spain before the Inquisition drove the Arabs and Jews out, in the songs that Levy sings.

On *Mano Suave*, she revives them in acoustic arrangements, backed by 10 superb instrumentalists in various combinations. 'Mal De L'Amor', a pretty Ladino song, features kora-like passages. Kike Pedersen's harp adds lyrical, Andean touches at various points of the album. I am particularly struck by the atmospheric sounds of the instruments with which western listeners are less familiar – the zurna,

qanun, durbaka – though some guidance in the liner notes for the uninitiated would have been welcome. You're left guessing which of these instruments you are listening to from those identified alongside the personnel listing.

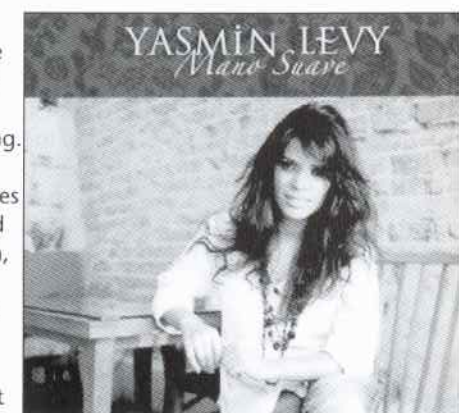
On 'Una Ora' – a fast Turkic percussive piece – I've written 'some wild reedy solo takes the track out'. This must be the zurna, played by either Amir Shahsar or Vardan Hovanissian, or the ney flute, which Shahsar also plays as well as clarinet. Whatever it is, it's one of the best moments on the album.

The album goes out on a high: the long, slow, haunting final song 'Odecha' is the best track, with a beautiful deep violin sound, Levy's incredible voice and the male vocal – the versatile Shahsar again. The song, evokes a balmy evening in an Arabic city, the faithful being called to prayer. I don't know if that is what is intended but it's beautiful and touching; you listen to it under a spell, then it stops and, like Gillett, you're forced to face reality.

Playing *Mano Suave* through for a fourth time, I realise that the album is starting to gnaw its way into my affections. How many points in my Jew Box Jury? I'll give it four!

A web search reveals that Levy has performed at Ronnie Scott's Club – not presumably in jazz mode, but I would really love Levy to stretch out by performing her Sephardi material accompanied by a band of jazz musicians free-improvising on that great range of instruments. Though if she does that on her next album, I want a cut of the royalties.

Mike Gerber



MANO SUAVE
Yasmin Levy
CD Harmonia
Mundi

mobsters, chess hustlers, Jewish-Tlingit intermarriage, and weird culinary innovations like the uniquely Sitka-Jewish-Philippino-Chinese fried donut. Perhaps this is the kind of Yiddish-speaking, half-secular Jewish society that might have arisen if Zionism had not become the dominant ideology within the Jewish communities of the world.

And it's Chabon's thoughts about Zionism that are perhaps the most interesting aspects of the book – though strangely, none of the reviews that I have come across have commented on this at all. Like Roth's *The Plot Against America*, Chabon imagines a world in which Jewish life, particularly in America, is rather more precarious than in our own world. Part of the effect of this is to provoke a sort of primitive Zionist gag reflex in the reader – see, the whole world really is against us, Jews can never be safe anywhere, look what happens when there's no Israel to look after us. Sitka's autonomy is very weak, and it seems very likely that its reversion to Alaskan control will propel the Jewish inhabitants on to yet another exile. The failed efforts to obtain permanent status for the colony, hinted at rather than described by Chabon, serve to emphasise Jewish powerlessness.

Yet the book is the very opposite of an argument for Zionism. Indeed, it seems to me to be one of the

best examinations I've read anywhere about the real relationship between Zionism and American power in the Middle East. Chabon pulls few punches in laying out the mechanisms that link the politics of oil with the kinds of nutcases who are preparing the restoration of the Third Temple – and yes, sadly that project exists in the real world as well as Chabon's alternative version. At the same time, he never loses sight of what is tail and what is dog, as some real-world anti-Zionists sometimes seem to do.

It's hard to explain how Zionism comes to be so important to the storyline when in Chabon's world Israel ceased to exist so soon after its creation – at least, without revealing and spoiling some of the best twists of the plot. But here's a quote from the Yiddish policeman (and yes, there is union) which sums up the sentiment: 'I don't care what is written. I don't care what supposedly got promised to some sandal-wearing idiot whose claim to fame is that he was ready to cut his own son's throat for the sake of a hare-brained idea. I don't care about red heifers and patriarchs and locusts. A bunch of old bones in the sand. My homeland is in my hat.'

If that doesn't sell the book to you, you probably wouldn't like it anyway.

Jeremy Green

RAF SALKIE samples some American products

Raf Salkie samples American products. Noam Chomsky has a knack of reminding me of forgotten truths, and his new book, *What We Say Goes* (Hamish Hamilton, £14.99), contains plenty of these. 'Since the Second World War,' he writes, 'the United States has been the world's strongest outside supporter of extremist Islamic fundamentalism.' It took a minute for this to sink in (I get slower with age), but let's think about it. We know that the CIA funded the Islamist resistance in Afghanistan in the 1980s, creating a huge network of armed fanatics there and across the border in Pakistan. Talking of armed fanatics, who supported Zia ul-Haq and his brutal successors as they developed Pakistan's nuclear weapons? Continuing the 'armed fanatics' theme, the oldest and most important US ally in the Middle East is, of course, Saudi Arabia, probably the most extreme religious autocracy in the world.

Enough of this knee-jerk anti-Americanism, I hear you say. Fair enough. The real problem for the US, Chomsky argues, has always been secular nationalism – the outrageous idea that the people living in a country should run the country. This is where Israel comes in, because two of the most important secular nationalist movements in the Arab world were Nasser's National Union and Arafat's PLO. Israel helped to virtually destroy both of them, with the result that we now have the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its close relative Hamas among the Palestinians. I could round off the picture by describing how the US conspired to remove other secular nationalists like Mossadegh in Iran and Sukarno in Indonesia, again paving the way for Islamic extremists.

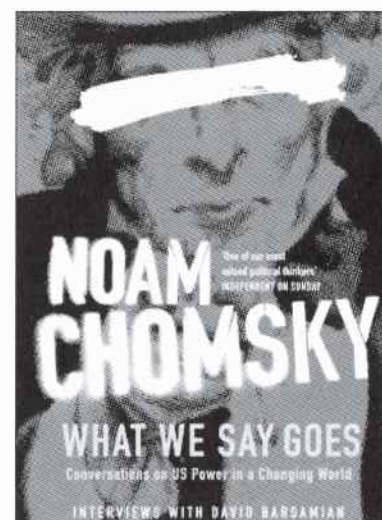
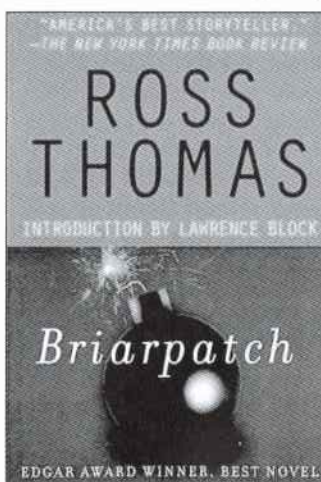
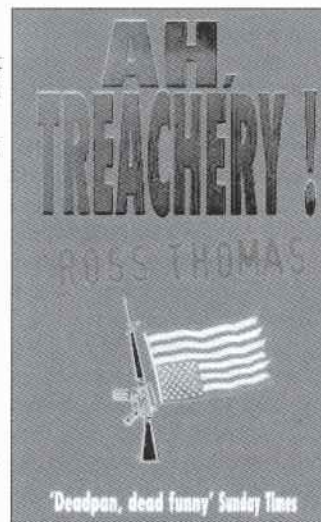
So the US has no problem with Islamic extremism, so long as it is friendly to its interests. This is the key fact about Iraq, as Chomsky points out in another grim reminder. There is no way that the US will withdraw, he stresses, until Iraq's oil is safely out of the control of the country's people. The resistance to the occupation will, of course, be demonised and accused of fundamentalism and 'outside interference' and all the other well-worn clichés while it suits the US; the basic enemy, however, isn't Islam but the idea that anyone except the US controls the world's oil. I accept that this is anti-Americanism, but surely it's too subtle an analysis (not to mention too true) to be unfairly condemned as 'knee-jerk'.

And then there's the 'Jewish Lobby' in America, where Chomsky once again doesn't say what you might expect. For him it isn't Jewish organisations like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) which make up the lobby: it's the corporate elite and 'the US intellectual community and the media' whose support for Israel has real weight. Evidence for this comes from occasions where Israel's interests conflict with those of US business. Remember a couple of years ago when Israel wanted to sell high-tech weapons to

China? The White House told them not to, and Israel backed down. Most of the time, though, Jewish organisations in America don't need to lobby much because Israeli policies are exactly in line with those of the US. That's why the 'Road Map' to peace is going nowhere, as the late Israeli peace activist Tanya Reinhart rightly put it.

There are many more intellectual riches in Chomsky's book – not bad for someone approaching his 80th birthday this year. His comments on Venezuela are right on the button: Hugo Chavez, the book reminds us, has the highest support of any Latin American leader, and by an amazing coincidence his social programmes have helped the great majority of the country's population. Chomsky is also right to insist that nuclear proliferation remains probably the most important danger threatening humanity – so long as countries like the US and Britain refuse to take serious steps towards reducing our nuclear arsenals. We have treaty obligations to do this, but we have just ignored them for decades. Come on Gordon Brown, that self-righteous snake Blair isn't there to stop you any more: start disarming now!

Those disloyal and anti-British remarks should have convinced you that really I love the USA, but let me dispel any remaining doubts by continuing my occasional series about top-class American thriller writers. You may not have heard of Ross Thomas, but my son was recommended to try him by one of his PhD advisers at Princeton (sorry for the outrageous bragging, but I did enjoy writing that). Between 1966 and his death in 1995, Thomas wrote a number of crime novels, among them *Briarpatch* (1984) and *Ah! Treachery* (1994). Look for them in charity shops and on Amazon – *Briarpatch* is available from one penny as I write. The writing style is beautiful, with superb descriptions of people and places which somehow don't detract from the pace of the plot. *Ah! Treachery* includes a very convincing account of corruption at the heart of Washington. Ah Zut! I'm getting knee-jerk again...



INHERIT THE EARTH

It was nice of the Zionist Federation to send me a comp ticket for the Israel Property Exhibition at Wembley, and good of the exhibitors to assure us that the places on offer were all within Israel, even if that wasn't strictly true. People are worried enough about crime in Brent, without hearing dodgy property is being sold at the Town Hall. Fortunately there was just a handful of protestors, perhaps the rest had used up their indignation at the Israel-England football match.

American Christians keen to buy chunks of Israel/Palestine can now have it delivered. 'Have you ever wanted to own a piece of the Holy Land?', asks the ad on a right wing website. 'Is someone close to you in love with Jerusalem? ... At the very moment the Israeli government is reportedly considering giving up holy sites and sections of Jerusalem to create a Palestinian state, now you have a chance to hold on to your own piece of the Temple Mount. ... For a limited time, genuine Temple Mount soil is being made available exclusively ... as part of a campaign of solidarity with the Mount. You can buy 212oz of soil in a viewing case for your mantlepiece, or a silver necklace with 12oz of soil in a locket, or a Prayer Jar (whatever that is).

Another firm is offering Jews 'holy earth' from the Mount of Olives. 'It is rabbinically certified to be from the Mount of Olives by Rabbi Aharon Greenfeld, the Rabbi of the Unsdorf section of Jerusalem. Bring a part of the Holy Land to your home', says the ad, on a site called Judaica Heaven. I envy these enterprises. I once tried placing an ad offering little phials of water from the Jordan. 'All our water has been passed by the Rabbi', it said, but I was accused of taking the episcopacy.

A REBBE MAYSE

Rabbi Jeremy Rosen is not happy with the Lubavitchers, or Chabad hasidim. Time was he invited them to preach at his synagogue in Glasgow, and to teach at Carmel College when he was head there. But for some years they have been inflating the image of their wunderrebbe founder, using a story about Jeremy's father. Rabbi Kopul Rosen died in 1962 after suffering a particularly nasty form of leukaemia. Before he died, he had visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York, who advised him to grow his beard and devote himself to prayer and study. Kopul Rosen found this spiritually comforting, but he was being kept alive

by regular blood transfusions, and his condition grew worse. On his second visit, the Lubavitcher Rebbe promised him he would live to dance at his daughter's wedding. She was only two years old. Kopul Rosen died two months later.

In the Lubavitchers' story, the Rebbe promises a miracle cure to the dying man if only he does not tell anybody. But Kopul Rosen does, and that's why he died. The family have tried before to stop this tale, but it just grows. The latest version, recounted on a Lubavitch website, has 'Koppel(sic) Rosen' weeping in London in 1963 (he'd died in 1962). 'He was known ... for his disdain toward the Chabad hasidim' (odd, says son Jeremy, recalling his dad got Lord Wolfson to finance Lubavitch House in Stamford Hill in the 1950s). He stands before the Lubavitch Rebbe. 'It had all come about so suddenly, he had always shuddered in repulsion (sic) at the name Chabad'. Staying with the Rebbe, he begins to get well, then phones his wife before Shabbat to tell her he has never felt better. 'I'll begin by telling everyone about my miraculous recovery!' he exclaims, forgetting the Rebbe's 'no publicity' condition. He gets a cold, complications set in and he dies. If only he had listened... The Lubavitcher Rebbe could cure his ills, as a sign the Moshiakh (Messiah) is coming.

'Bubemayses and lies will not bring the Moshiakh now!' declares Jeremy Rosen in exasperation, wondering if we can believe anything the Lubavitchers say. Indeed. But should we be talking about 'bubemayses' (grandmothers' tales), when what we are hearing are Rebbe Mayses?

UNDERMINING ISRAEL

Having slept through England's earthquake and noticed nothing, I'm not worried, but if I was, should I heed Shlomo Benizri, a Shas Party Knesset member? He says a cause of earthquakes in Israel is that 'the Knesset gives legitimacy to sodomy'. Leaving aside the slur on the Dead Sea town's inhabitants, the Knesset member claims biblical authority for asserting: 'A cost-effective way of averting earthquake damage would be to stop passing legislation on how to encourage homosexual activity in the State of Israel, which anyways causes earthquakes.'

Come off it, Shlomo! Making the earth move is one thing, but I reckon it's Israelis with monstrous bulldozers, and frum wide boys digging up soil to sell to credulous Yanks that's causing the problem!