

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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

Through this forum we aim to:

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

Child refugees ■ Jazz Jews ■ The 'new' antisemitism
Faith schools ■ Whitechapel boys ■ Raja Shehadeh interview

The size and breadth of protests across the world that greeted Israel's three-week invasion and massacre in Gaza in January, demonstrated an unprecedented level of solidarity with the Palestinians and their demand for an end to occupation, and for peace with justice.

Not only those directly affected, but people of all nationalities and backgrounds, who are simply in favour of human rights, have lost all patience with Israel's crocodile tears over its vulnerable civilians in Sderot and its plaintive cry that it has no partner for peace. Its actions year on year – expanding its illegal settlements served now by Jewish-only roads, its eviction of longstanding Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to make way for Jewish families, its two-year long economic blockade of Gaza – have sabotaged any prospect of moving towards the peace settlement its leaders feign commitment to.

On campuses up and down the UK a new wave of student radicalism has exploded around the Gaza War. A series of well-organised student occupations demanding economic divestment by universities coupled with scholarships for Palestinian students are winning their goals. There are links to many of the university occupations on the University of East London Occupation Blog, at www.ueloccupation.blogspot.com/.

Israeli policy has also helped create an unprecedented level of criticism and opposition within Jewish communities around the world from whom Israeli governments have traditionally garnered political and material support. Jews in many countries have played a full and prominent part in protest activities. In Britain the numbers of Jews marching together against Israel's war policies have been completely unprecedented. And for each individual who marched, there were many others who may have been reluctant to join a demonstrate but nevertheless stood on vigils, wrote letters, signed petitions, or took some small action to indicate that they were utterly opposed to what Israel was falsely claiming to do in their name.

The reverberations were partly felt within Israel itself. On the night that Israel launched its ground invasion, 10,000 Israeli citizens marched through Tel Aviv with banners and placards in Hebrew, Arabic and English, damning the war. No doubt this action prompted a growth in the ranks of refuseniks but it couldn't stop the invasion any more than mass protests on the streets of London could stop Britain's war in Iraq. Neither did it stop the majority of Israelis voting in

a lemming-like procession for right wing parties that can only promise more wars. And with Lieberman's ultra-right Yisrael Beiteinu sure to command significant influence in a Netanyahu-led government, the prospects for an ugly conflict over the 'loyalty' of the 20% of Israeli citizens who are Palestinians, grows stronger by the day.

So where does that leave so-called Jewish leaders in the diaspora? When 1,300 Palestinians were killed over three weeks, with white phosphorous bombs used in civilian areas, and hospitals, schools, mosques, universities and houses suffering direct hits, by a sophisticated army trumpeting its deceitful claims of minimising civilian casualties, these leaders turned the other way, called for Jews to rally to Israel's support and screamed 'antisemitism' at Israel's critics. Real antisemitism, unfortunately, is still alive and kicking, and the BNP is waiting in the wings, ready to exploit heightened community tensions but these leaders cynically devalue the term 'antisemitism'; they cannot be trusted either to lead any meaningful and honest fight against it or mobilise others to do so. We can only wonder what would Israel have to do, that it hasn't already done, to evince even a murmur of public criticism from the Chief Rabbi, the Board of Deputies or the Jewish (mis-)Leadership Council?

But the tide is turning, and those who have protested for the first time and found that they are far from alone will not return simply to previous positions of confusion, prevarication or silence.

And if Israel doesn't want to take notice of the ordinary people – the protesting Jews they dismiss as self-haters, and protesting non-Jews they dismiss as antisemites – they may also have to reckon with winds of change among their prime sponsors. There is no guarantee that an American administration led by Barack Obama will simply follow previous incumbents in offering blind support for Israel's government of the day.

Despatching George Mitchell to the Middle East did not go down well in Tel Aviv, and more irritation will hopefully follow. After the disastrous Bush years, America's more far-sighted capitalist interests will be pressurising Obama for change that suits them and makes American capitalism more robust. But he has also been elected with a huge weight of expectation by the poor and marginalised, and one of their concerns is justice on the international stage.

The future is uncertain but change will be coming.

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Boston Peace Declaration

Opposition to Israel's war on Gaza united people across traditional boundaries in Boston, Massachusetts. Shortly after Israel began its air strikes, one of Boston's Muslim community leaders sent an email to interfaith colleagues in the area indicating that its members would be participating in a rally protesting against the Israeli strikes. In response, one of Boston's Jewish community leaders lamented the loss of life, but rejected the criticism of Israel's campaign and urged the email's recipients to attend a counter-protest in support of Israel's actions.

Joining the email trail, yet another Jewish community leader urged both sides to agree on a set of shared principles that addressed the Gaza situation. A respected Muslim doctor further recommended crafting a joint statement, and a Catholic community leader volunteered to help co-ordinate the inputs from the various faith communities.

As a result on 11th January, a group of 60 Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders in Boston issued the joint declaration, calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and asserting their common humanity.

The statement recognises 'the legitimate needs of all peoples, including all those living in the Middle East, for dignity, peace, safety and security – regardless of religion, race, or national origin', and calls for a recognition that 'the conflict can be resolved only through a political and diplomatic solution and not a military one.'

Demanding that Hamas immediately 'end all rocket attacks on Israel,' and Israel immediately 'end its military campaign in Gaza', it also called for 'lifting of the blockade on Gaza as to all non-military goods, for an immediate and significant increase in humanitarian aid to address the needs of the people of Gaza.'

In addition to faith groups, the statement won support from the local Jewish secular organisation the Workmen's Circle.

On the bread line

'The band struck up the Marseillaise while the doors of the shop opened amid vociferous cheers from the crowd. Then all the bakers came out dressed in white hats, shirts and aprons, carrying a large cake on a pole and headed by banners from the various trade unions.'

This was 1894 and the event was the opening of a co-operative at 52 Brushfield Street, Spitalfields in London's East End, by Jewish bakers who were continually frustrated in negotiations with their employers. Jewish bakers often worked even longer shifts than sweatshop workers for little pay.

This event and many others are described in *Union Bread: The Story of the London Jewish Bakers Union*, by Larry Wayne, to be published in April jointly by the Socialist History Society and the Jewish Socialists' Group.

Details of the price and how to order a copy will appear on the JSJ website: www.jewishsocialist.org.uk

Out of the bag

A secret database of Israeli settlements compiled by Israel's defence establishment has been leaked and picked up by *Ha'aretz* newspaper. Writing in *Ha'aretz*, Uri Blau reveals embarrassing information from this database: that in around 75% of settlements – construction, sometimes on

a large scale, has been carried out without the appropriate permits or contrary to the permits that were issued. The database also shows that, in more than 30 settlements, extensive construction has been carried out on private lands belonging to Palestinian West Bank residents.



Back in 2003, Britain's Jewish leaders mobilised more than 50,000 supporters for a rally in solidarity with Israel. Attempting to better that total at the height of the War on Gaza, they could barely muster 4,000. The community voted with its feet, though some who had intended to go may have believed a hoax claim that the rally was cancelled.

An email carrying the Board of Deputies logo announced that the rally was cancelled 'after intense discussions within the community, due to a feeling that such a demonstration would not be in accordance with the Board's wish to bring the conflict to an immediate conclusion.' The demonstration, it argued 'might be perceived as the community taking one side in the tragic war in Gaza and Israel, and might be seen as supporting Israel's military campaign.'

Another Jewish community is possible!

Stretching credulity, it listed the Board's demands: 'An immediate ceasefire, immediate negotiations between Israel and Hamas, and for lifting the economic blockade of Gaza, in order to allow the Gazan and Israeli people to live together in peace.'

It added: 'We would like to reach out to the British Muslim community, as well as those of no religion who have demonstrated against Israel's military campaign – we share your anguish at the destruction and loss of life caused, and hope that our action in calling off our demonstration will be a small step towards peace.'

As the news spread, it was clear that people had been taken in. After the event, the hoax was jubilantly claimed by Jewdas. They said: 'We weren't doing it to be malicious, we weren't trying to "upset" anyone ... We just thought we'd give people something to talk about over Kiddush, instead of discussing the poor quality of the gefilte fish ... we wanted ... to show another possible reality,

to suggest that "another Jewish community is possible".'

Those who believed it, even for a moment, were being given a gift: a vision of a Jewish leadership that stood up for peace and justice, rather than for mindless ethnic solidarity. The Jewish establishment has been trying to create the illusion of unified solidarity behind Israel. But they are losing. A growing number of Jews are not happy to be the PR foot soldiers of the Israeli embassy, and they do not want to be represented as such. As much as anything else, this action is a call for new, or radically reformed Jewish communal organisations, which promote peace and justice over blanket solidarity, and pluralism and democracy over hierarchy and backroom politics.

Jewdas called on all those members of the Jewish community who were opposed to the carnage in Gaza to 'have no fear and to stand against self-appointed leaders and to call for peace and dialogue now'.

Find out more about Jewdas at: www.jewdas.org



Voices from Gaza and Sderot

27th December 2008

On this day, a new stage of the Palestinian suffering started. At exactly 11:30am, children were coming back to their houses from school ... people were walking in the streets and I was going to my university ... in order to discuss a project with my instructor...

At the students' entrance of the Al-Quds building, when I was going to discuss my project, I heard an explosion, clouds of black smoke. It is Israeli shelling! Teachers, students and I ran like hell out of the university, to the gate of the school. We were in the bombing circle, we couldn't move right or left, no place was safe – the clouds of smoke covered the sun. While children, women and students were walking beside the sites, at this moment I saw the shock on students' faces; horror and perplexity everywhere. We decided to leave the place in any way possible; we stopped a cab to escape quickly to Al-Nusirate camp where we live, it is a safe place... some think!

Now, on the fifth day of this slaughter we have lost

hundreds of our people, friends, children. Every second was like many years of suffering, many scenes exploded tears and blood from my soul. A little girl rose between the havoc, "While my sisters were sleeping with me, I lost them," she said. Her five sisters were killed. I do not know why they kill our innocent children. Two little brothers were burned in their room when the Israeli fighters destroyed a mosque beside their house.

My university has been shelled less than a month before my graduation. My niece Haya asks me, "Why do they want kill me my uncle? When we will die?" Who can answer? I want to tell everybody that Palestinians are peaceful people, we want to live like other people, and all the world must know who is killing children and women. The majority of our children will never forget what is happening, but the rest will die before remembering this slaughter.

Hamza el Taweel

Hamza el Taweel is an engineering student in Gaza. He is working with Global help Initiative, formed by young people to help children, sick and elderly people in their communities: www.help-initiative.org

Naamika Zion, Sderot, 8th January 2009

"I talk with Sderot people and everyone's cheeks are rosy again," boasted Fuad on the war's second day ['Fuad' is Benjamin Ben Eliezer, a long-time centrist Labour minister]. "The heavier the blow we deliver – the wider the hearts get."

Hey Fuad, not everyone. Even if I was the only one around Sderot feeling differently – and I am not – my voice should be heard. Not in my name and not for me you went to war. The current bloodbath in Gaza is not ... for my security. Destroyed homes, bombed schools, thousands of new refugees are not in my name and not for my security. In Gaza there is no time for burial ceremonies now; the dead are put in refrigerators in twos, because there is no room. Here their bodies lie, policemen, children, and our nimble reporters play acrobatically with *Hasbara* [propaganda, literally 'explanation'] strategies in view of 'the images that speak for themselves' ... What is there to 'explain'?

I have got neither security nor quietness from this war. After such an essential calm [five months of ceasefire], that helped all of us heal emotionally and mentally and experience some sanity again, our leaders have brought us back to the same wounded, anxiety-ridden place.

Don't mistake me. Hamas is an evil, terrible terror organisation. Not just for us. First and foremost to its own citizens. But beyond that wretched leadership there are human beings. With hard labour, ordinary people on both sides build small bridges of human gestures. This is what Kol Aher, a group of people from Sderot and elsewhere on the Gaza border of which I am a member, has been doing. We have tried to lay down a human route to the hearts of our neighbours.

While we have won a five-month calm,

they continued to suffer under the siege. A young man told us he does not wish to marry and have kids, because in Gaza there is no future for children. A single aeroplane bomb drowns these human gestures in depths of blood and despair.

Qassams scare me. Since the war started, I almost didn't dare cross the street. But even more frightening is the monolithic tone in our public sphere and our media, the unbreachable wall of jingoism. It scares me when my Kol Aher colleague is assaulted by other Sderotis, as he is interviewed and criticises the war – and later receives anonymous phone threats and is afraid to return to his car. It scares me how little room there is for another voice, and how difficult it is to express it here. I am willing to pay the price of social isolation, but not the price of fear.

It scares me to see my city light up, celebrate and put up flags, and cheerleader squads hand out flowers on the streets, and people honk in glee at every one-ton bomb dropped on our neighbours...

It scares me that under the screen of Orwellian words, with the children's corpses blurred on TV as a public service to us, we are losing the human ability to see the other side, to feel, to be shocked, to feel empathy. Under the codename 'Hamas', the media has created for us a huge dark demon with no face, no body and no voice. A million and a half people with no name.

A deep, dark stream of violence flows into the veins of Israeli society like a deadly disease, and it gets stronger from war to war. It is a type of euphoria and trigger-happiness and joy of revenge ... and the burial of the noble Jewish commandment: 'When your enemy falls, do not celebrate.'

The first time I felt the state was really protecting me, was when they achieved the

ceasefire. I am not responsible for Hamas, and therefore I ask our own leaders: have you turned every stone in order to continue the calm? To extend the ceasefire? To use it to get a long-term agreement? To resolve the border-crossing and siege issues. Have you gone to the ends of the world looking for the right mediators? And why did you wave away, unblinkingly, the French ceasefire initiative after the war started? And why do you keep rejecting, to this very moment, every possible offer of negotiations? And how, from the heaps of rubble and hunger and cold and dead bodies, will moderate voices of peace grow? Where are you leading us? What future are you promising us here in Sderot?

It is extremely hard to live in Sderot nowadays. At night, the IDF pounds infrastructure and human beings, and our home walls shudder. By morning, we get Qassams – more sophisticated ones each time. A person going to work in the morning does not know whether their home will be found standing by evening. At midday, we bury the best of our sons, who have paid with their lives for yet another "just" war.

In the evening, after many difficulties, we manage to make contact with our desperate friends in Gaza. They have no electricity, no water, no gas, no food, nowhere to hide. And only the words of N, the 14-year-old whose school was bombed and whose classmate was killed, don't leave my head. She writes to us in perfect English, an email that her mum somehow managed to send: "Help us, we are human beings after all."

No, Fuad, my cheeks are not rosy, they are not. A ton of Cast Lead is weighing on my heart, and my heart cannot contain it.

Translated from Hebrew by Assaf Oron.

To find out more about Kol Aher visit their website at: www.othervoice.org

DIVIDED WE FAIL

Despite being a rabbi and therefore someone who values faith – both my own and that of others – I am also conscious that, whilst faith can be enormously enriching, it can also be a source of division. For that reason I have always been wary of faith schools, which effectively segregate children according to their religious identity and prevent young people from different traditions from mixing with each other.

To my mind this is doubly pernicious. Firstly, it leads to a society in which children of different backgrounds can grow up as strangers – at best ignorant of each other, at worst suspicious and hostile – and therefore threatens the social cohesion of society at large. Secondly, it is a religious own goal, for if we are to take seriously the injunction to "love your neighbour as yourself", then we have to know our neighbours, interact with them and see their commonality with us.

I know that there are some exceptionally good faith schools, which do not discriminate in terms of admission, which make real efforts in their curriculum to provide an inclusive education that takes account of other belief systems, and which prepare children to emerge into society at large. However, there are other faith schools that are not interested in any viewpoint other than their own doctrinaire one, and a worrying number which see the wider society as a menace to be avoided as much as possible.

If children are to view each other as fellow citizens and see themselves as an integral part of society as a whole, then is limiting their social and educational horizons most days of the week the best way of achieving this?

For many years I felt I was a lone voice – certainly within the religious world. And even if I was able to make my voice heard every now and then on the radio or in articles, there was no structure through which to link up with others or to press for change. It was with great delight, therefore, that I came across Andrew Copson of the British Humanist Association and heard of his plans to form a group that would bring together people who were troubled about the current practices of faith schools and worried about their impact on children.

This eventually coalesced into Accord, which is a broad coalition of organisations and individuals both religious and non-religious, including Women Against Fundamentalism. Accord is not anti-faith schools but is concerned about the way they operate. It seeks to get away from "yah boo" debates between people who are pro- or anti-faith schools. Instead it takes a much more nuanced approach, with the main question being: what is best for the children?

The birth of Accord was on 1st September 2008. Before the day was out, a body which links faith schools of all religious denominations – united in their separateness – had produced a three-page

press release which not only condemned us, but which deliberately tried to stereotype us as yet another anti-faith school, pressure group. This, along with an avalanche of vitriolic criticism in religious papers

– from the *Church Times* to the *Jewish Chronicle* – served to give us a prominence that was both painful and welcome. The following week there was more coverage when Accord's views were widely sought by the media on the opening of the first Hindu school in Britain.

Our response was simple: by dividing Hindu children from those of other faiths, there was an enormous responsibility upon the school to work hard to overcome the social barriers this could cause. This in turn begs specific questions that apply to all faith schools, and which form the key concerns of Accord.

Admissions Will state funded schools operate admissions policies that take no account of pupil's religious belief? This is the litmus test as to whether they are serving the local community or serving themselves.

Employment Do they operate recruitment and employment policies that do not discriminate on grounds of religion? It may be reasonable for the Religious Education teacher to be of a particular faith, but not the Maths teacher, French assistant, kitchen staff or caretaker.

Syllabus Since there is no National Curriculum for RE (why not?), and since faith schools can opt out of the locally agreed Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) syllabus (how come?), how can we ensure they follow an objective, fair and balanced syllabus for education about religious and non-religious beliefs?

Accountability Is it wise to have a system of inspection whereby special arrangements are made for faith schools that do not apply to other schools, which permit exemptions from the normal OFSTED regulation? Why should this be the case? And why are they not monitored like every other school?

Now that this initial glare of publicity is over, the hard work begins of campaigning for these reforms. It is hard work, but not impossible. There is definitely a new mood in the air. The rapid expansion of faith schools in the last decade that has occurred without much public attention is now being challenged by people who are uncomfortable at what has happened while they were looking the other way. In addition, independent evidence has recently emerged that admissions procedures are



RABBI DR JONATHAN ROMAIN argues the case for education without segregation and asks: are faith schools the best way to educate our children?

being abused, and some state-funded faith schools are acting unethically, either by covertly charging parents or by selection procedures that discriminate against children from less academic backgrounds.

So far, the Jewish community – if it can be measured by the headlines in the *Jewish Chronicle* – has interpreted the slightest criticism of the way faith schools operate as a full frontal attack on the Jewish way of life. It has refused to acknowledge that the issues are far wider, and concern the type of society that is developing. However, away from the headlines, many individuals have indicated

that they, too, have reservations and certainly want to see greater transparency and regulation.

The case for examining faith schools has recently received a boost from a report issued by the highly respected Runnymede Trust, entitled *Right to Divide?* It endorses faith schools, but suggests ways of improving them, many of which answer Accord's key questions listed above. When the government issued its own report last year, *Faith in the System*, it said it was looking forward to the Runnymede report. We hope it will now pay close attention to it, and turn its recommendations into legislation.

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain is the Chair of the Accord coalition. For further information about the campaign, visit: www.accordcoalition.org.uk

SELECTIVE MEMORY

Romanticising the Kindertransport while neglecting the history of other child refugees undermines the battle for a humane asylum policy today, says TONY KUSHNER

In a recent article in *The Guardian* (4th November 2008), Canon Paul Oestreicher, whose father had Jewish parents, recalled the terror of Kristallnacht and the desperate attempt of his family in Germany to find a place of refuge. Oestreicher does not hold back in his criticism of the world's responses at that time to the desperate search for asylum. Britain, Australia and the United States do not escape his criticism and he says, "Antisemitism was not just a German aberration." Yet there is a partial exemption to Oestreicher's critique in the case of Britain which, "thanks to a group of persistent lobbyists, at the last moment agreed to take a substantial number of Jewish children". Whilst most were "never to see their parents again", their "contribution to British life was significant now that the stories of the Kindertransport are being told".

Oestreicher is explicit in making contemporary connections, saying that the responses of the 1930s

bring "into sharp focus the far from humane attitude of Britain, the European Union and many other rich countries to the asylum seekers of today". In implied contrast to the Kindertransport, now "We lock up children, separated from their parents, hold detainees for indefinite periods, and many are made ill by the experience." Oestreicher particularly singles out the right wing Labour MP Frank Field and the organisation he is connected with, Migration Watch, for the toughening of attitudes that leads to such inhumane treatment

of asylum seekers in Britain, saying: "This is not quite our 1938, but the parallels are deeply disquieting."

Not surprisingly, Frank Field was robust in his response (7th November 2008). *The Guardian* gave it the remarkable headline, "Immigration controls will prevent a British Kristallnacht", which is only mildly adjusted in the text: "The aim must be to prevent a mini Kristallnacht in this country." Field seems genuinely confused as to why Paul Oestreicher links "immigration with the issue of asylum". In what is hardly the most convincing advocacy of those seeking entry to Britain through claims of persecution, Field clarifies that whilst he has "some very clear views about controlling immigration", it is a "separate issue from failed asylum status".

Such debates and polemics are not new. "History" has been used to defend and attack the entry of aliens into Britain since at least the late 19th century. At the time of mass East European Jewish immigration, opponents and supporters of the newcomers either likened or distanced them from the previous large scale movement of refugees into Britain, the Huguenots. For the pro-aliens, the Jews were equally deserving of asylum and could make a contribution in the future equal to that of their illustrious refugee forebears. To the anti-alienists, such comparisons simply proved that the East European Jews were of inferior stock and would weaken the nation. Moreover, they were not true refugees and, indeed, argued figures such as William Evans Gordon MP, were more exploiters than victims in the Czarist empire. In the end, neither side could claim full victory. The right of free entry was lost through the 1905 Aliens Act but the right of asylum was enshrined in its clauses.

By the 1930s, the so-called "asylum clause" was dead and buried by the 1919 Aliens Restriction Act and subsequent aliens orders. Individual refugees, of the right "race" and politics might be granted

asylum but, as Louise London has so brilliantly illustrated in *Whitehall and the Jews* (2000), Britain in the 1930s pursued an immigration policy, not a refugee policy. At times, this policy was modified, and the Kindertransport scheme was part of that process (even if, as will be shown shortly, this most celebrated movement possessed many limitations). Yet neither must it be forgotten that the debates of the 1900s – as to whether or not the refugees were deserving (or in today's terminology, "genuine") and whether they would be assets or liabilities – ran through contemporary discussions. As I have tried to illustrate in *Remembering Refugees – Then and Now* (2006), "history" was again used to defend and attack the refugees from Nazism who, in the eyes of many contemporaries, were distrusted and feared.

It was for this reason that the British Government, embarrassed after the Kristallnacht pogrom because of the moral failure of appeasement that it had exposed, and also concerned about its own international reputation as the doors to Palestine became ever more closed, agreed to the scheme suggested to it by a group of Jewish and pro-Jewish activists: to let in refugee children from the Third Reich. To deparitularise it, non-Jewish children were also allowed in and formed close to 10% of the eventual total of just under 10,000 allowed entry. In fact, no upper limit was initially placed on numbers, a reflection of the positive aspects of the scheme.

In the climate of today, it now seems like common sense that it was only the children who were allowed in. This is a necessary ingredient in constructing the narrative of British generosity (and later refugee contribution and gratitude) that dominates the story of the Kindertransport. It is perhaps the fastest growing story relating to Britain and the Holocaust – a usable past for all concerned and marked by official plaques in Parliament and a memorial in Liverpool Street station (see opposite). In this respect, the memory of the Kindertransport matters – it is becoming increasingly difficult to strip away the mythology of this movement and show the fundamental ambivalence, and the specific history, that was behind it.

It is undoubtedly the case that the British Government thought that the humanitarian emphasis of rescuing only children would make the scheme popular in the public's mind and this (largely) proved to be the case. It required all concerned – then and now – to forget about the



children's parents; to assume that they were, in essence, beyond reach. This was not the case in November 1938. It is also forgotten that the children came to Britain on temporary, transit permits, which again reflected the emphasis that Britain was not a place of permanent immigration and the hope that the children would eventually either move back or go elsewhere. Whilst few would return, many did indeed leave Britain either during the war or afterwards.

The temporary aspect also reflected recent historical precedent – help given to Belgian and other refugee children in the First World War and then to refugees from Nazism in the very early days of the Third Reich by the Save the Children Fund and then more dramatically in 1937 to the Basque children fleeing the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. Outside Southampton Civic Centre, a masterpiece of 1930s architecture, is one of the rare public acknowledgments of the Spanish children. Marking the 70th anniversary of the children's reception in the port of Southampton (they would then be placed in what became a tented town, five miles away near Eastleigh), it commemorates the arrival aboard the *Habana* of 4,000 refugee children from the Basque region of Spain in May 1937 following the destruction of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War and to thank the people of Southampton and Britain who volunteered to care for them.

But why do we increasingly remember the Kindertransportees but hardly recognise, outside

Above: Southampton plaque commemorating the rescue of Basque children during the Spanish Civil War. Opposite: Kindertransport statue by Frank Meisler and Arie Ovadia at Liverpool Street station

Representation and misrepresentation

Tony Kushner is the author of the acclaimed study *Remembering Refugees Then and Now* (Manchester University Press, £14.99) which explores the paradox of why countries such as Britain pride themselves on their past treatment of refugees yet are suspicious and hostile towards asylum seekers seeking to gain entry today. The book examines the treatment and representation of refugees ranging from the Huguenots of the 16th-18th centuries through to Eastern European Roma today. It questions

whether the treatment of refugees has been as welcoming as politicians today claim, and looks critically at the way the heritage industry has dealt with the refugee presence.

This book is a must for readers of *Jewish Socialist*!

Tony Kushner teaches in the History Department and Parkes Institute at the University of Southampton. His most recent book is *Anglo-Jewry since 1066 – Place, Locality and Memory* (February 2009) is published by Manchester University Press.



specific locations such as Southampton (and then somewhat belatedly), those 4,000 Spanish refugee children? Is it because the narrative of the latter movement is too political and is less easily placed within a comforting narrative? Most of the Spanish children returned or moved on elsewhere and, without the horror of the Holocaust as a later context, the necessity of this refugee movement is less certain or easy to communicate to a generation for whom Guernica means far less than Auschwitz. Yet, as the plaque relates, many people were involved in the care of the Spanish children and many grassroots organisations – from right wing Catholics through to left wing socialists – helped with their care. In fact, there was much in common between both movements: the difficulties of separation from parents and treatment that varied from deep love and care through to sexual and physical abuse.

To conclude, the subject of children, and especially vulnerable children such as refugees, often leads to sentimentality. There is no problem in this per se, unless, as campaigners such as

Eleanor Rathbone pointed out in the 1930s, it leads to other refugees, including the elderly, being left without supporters or means of entry.

Today there are more unaccompanied child refugees and asylum seekers in Britain than ever before. Their specific needs require all the expertise we have gained in dealing with the psychological and emotional, as well as the material, problems they face. Their cause, however, and that of refugees and asylum seekers more generally, is not served by romanticising earlier movements such as the Kindertransport or neglecting other past refugees such as the Basque children. Yet to argue for a more self-critical engagement with the British past is as much an uphill struggle in the cultural realm as is the political battle to preserve some vestiges of a decent and humane asylum policy as demanded by Paul Oestreicher. It is one, however, that needs to be fought – in this case in the archives, in the libraries, in the art galleries and museums, in the media, in education, and in our public memorial spaces.

EXPLORING THE FACTS ON THE GROUND

RAJA SHEHADEH's prizewinning book, *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* vividly conveys how harsh and fast-moving politics has transformed the ancient West Bank terrain. **SIMON LYNN** talked to him

What changes have you seen since you first started exploring Palestine on foot?

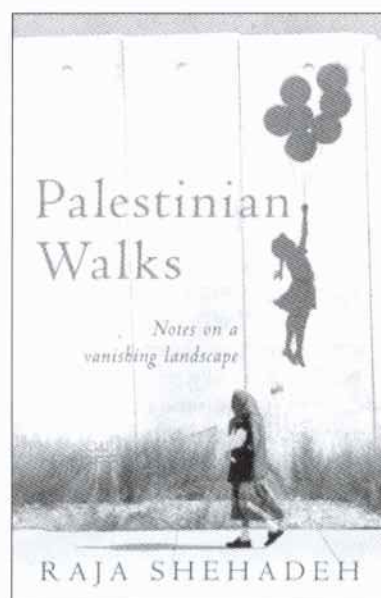
In the late 1970s the landscape was still more or less undisturbed – not as it is now. I grew up hearing about people taking a *sarha*, which means going into the hills without a purpose – to commune with nature, a natural, drug-free high, Palestinian style. I'd always yearned to experience *sarha*. I started going on hill walks and the first two I describe in the book were taken when it was still possible to walk without thinking much about possible unpleasant encounters and seeing settlements. In a sense the book is about moving from *sarha* to suffocation. By the sixth walk in 2006, I had to make 101 calculations before I set off about where to walk without encountering settlements and settlers. Where would it be safe? How could I avoid military outposts and military roads? So the book moves away from land that was open and free to land that is cluttered with settlements.

One of your walks is entitled "The Albina Case". How were you involved in legal challenges for Palestinian land?

The first challenge to the takeover of the land began in 1978 with the Bet-El case, which related to the confiscation of land. In this and the later Elon Moreh case, the Israeli High Court said that an occupying power cannot confiscate land because an occupation is a temporary affair. At the same time, the court declared that the state can take land if it is "public land". In other words, the court gave the state a way out, thus allowing the acquisition of Palestinian land for the purpose of building Jewish settlements.

In the Albina case, the land in question was in an area where there is full registration of the land, with all the formalities completed except for the very last stage, so the documents proved that the land belonged to my client, François

Albina. When I went to see the Israeli Custodian of Public and Absentee Property, who had issued the confiscation order, at first he argued that the land belonged to an absentee – but François was not an absentee. Then he claimed that this was public land, which was also untrue. Then he argued that the land had been confiscated by the Jordanian army and therefore the Israeli army could take it. Again I proved that this was not the case. We went through the whole gamut of arguments and in the end the court was satisfied that there was proof that the land was private and not public. However, they said, that when the World Zionist Organization



Settlement Division agreed to lease the land to the settlers they had believed in good faith that it was abandoned property. However they couldn't have done this in good faith, since they had the documents and could see that the land was registered to François Albina. But because the court believed it, the takeover stands. In a way this case shows that there is no way you can really win in the Israeli legal system.

Successive Israeli governments have supported settlements. There were disagreements about where they should be established but not about whether or not there should be settlements. The Israeli government created certain legal fictions and structures by which land could be taken over, however there has always been a group that said, "We don't care about these legal arguments; for us only one argument is important, which is that God gave us this land." In the Elon Moreh case, they told the court that they weren't really concerned about the state's claim that the settlement was needed for security reasons; they argued simply that the land belonged to them because of the Torah. The court could not accept this.

More recently, particularly around Ramallah, so-called "illegal outposts" are being established on privately owned land that is fully registered. The settlers are violating their own government's rules and the government is not doing enough to stop them, so the situation is more confused and complicated than ever before.

How does the West Bank countryside differ from that in the UK?

There are huge differences between the two terrains. First of all, the West Bank is very small – only 5,900 sq km – but it is very varied. It gets rain at best from November to April and none whatsoever from April to November. So, while it is lush, beautiful, green and full of wild flowers in spring, by the end of May most of the greenery has died off. Some persists because of the high level of precipitation in some areas like the Ramallah hills. But for at least six months the hills have lots of olive trees, in some cases grape vines, fig trees and pomegranates, but not the greenery you see in Britain.

One important difference is that most of the Palestinian hills are terraced. The terracing has been there for centuries and it defines the hills, giving them a special beauty. The landscape is also varied: in the Dead Sea area, for example, it is more arid and stark, with a variety of rock formations; then closer to the central hills there are areas with deep gorges and valleys. But there are no mountains only hills.

Your powerful and intimate portrayal of the developing impact of Israeli settlement and occupation is at the heart of the book. Can you describe this changing experience?

In the late '70s I and a few friends started a human rights organisation called Al Haq, which is still active. As a lawyer and human rights activist I was following the legal changes in the Occupied Territories. As I walked in the hills I would muse over what I had read about Israeli plans to change the map of the area, to build settlements and roads, to take the land by various edicts and changes in the law. I was becoming extremely worried about this. Some of these thoughts are expressed in the description of

Walk Two in the book (see extract page 10).

You were engaged in the first phase of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Why were you unhappy with the Oslo Accords?

In a way, my disappointment in the Oslo negotiations was one of the incentives to write the book. The Oslo Accords came as a huge blow to me because I, along with my colleagues in Al Haq and others, were engaged in a legal struggle over the changes Israel was making as regards land, the settlements, the roads. We were taking these up and challenging them, trying every possible means to declare them illegal, which of course they are under international law.

We were also aware that Israel was trying to separate the Israeli settlers' administration from that of the Palestinians: to annex the settlers to Israel – give the Palestinians some form of autonomy over civilian affairs while keeping the land under Israeli jurisdiction. In fact, in 1981 Israel had established the Civil Administration for the West Bank to run the affairs of Palestinians. It was run by military personnel but they were always looking for Palestinians to take it over. In a sense what happened with the Oslo Accords was that Israel found the PLO to be willing to take on that role.

After the Oslo Accords were signed, the powers established for the Palestinian Authority went a bit further than the planned Civil Administration but they didn't go far enough. In a sense I lost hope because I had expected the negotiations to bring peace and I think the Palestinians were ready for a real compromise – a two-state solution. Had the negotiations been conducted differently, we might have arrived at something that was reasonable and workable. Instead we got the consolidation of what Israel had been creating: a sort of legitimization of the occupation, which made it much more difficult to continue with the struggle as it had been conducted previously. I felt that the work I had been carrying out for over a decade and a half had meant nothing.

I wrote a legal book analysing the Oslo Accords but this was not enough to cure my pain. In time I realised that I had to pour my heart out and write in a more personal way about how I was feeling about the land and what was happening to it. This book, which describes seven hill walks, was my way of

Raja Shehadeh, left, with a Palestinian farmer in the West Bank.



dealing with the painful times that I endured after the catastrophe of Oslo. Through writing it I came to realise that, ultimately, life is like a series of walks that we take. They do not end until our life ends, so maybe there is life after Oslo after all.

I think that *Palestinian Walks* was a way for me to link my different interests. I have written so much on the legal aspects of the land and I hope this book conveys these issues in a way that is more accessible to lay readers.

The book was also a way for me to deal with the changes that have taken place on the land. I have kept a diary since 1968; after taking a walk I would jot some notes about it and these notes

were useful when I was writing the book.

The process of writing it not only helped me to understand my own feelings better, it helped me to communicate with people who usually see only the violence of the area. They miss the beauty of the land and what has been lost as a result of the politics. I was driven not by political interest but first of all by a desire to create a book that evoked the beauty of the land and would enable people to go with me on a *sarha* and to see what I see. This process was very helpful in uncovering aspects of my life and the land around me that I had stopped seeing because of the gloom that I was feeling about the situation.

'Never has a weed been more exploited and politicised...'

Extract from *Palestinian Walks*

I had ventured into a fascinating area. Not far from the terrace wall, tall as an altar, I saw a large rock that seemed out of place, as though it had fallen from on high. It was cracked in a number of places. I rested my elbow on it and examined it more closely. The sun was striking it a 30° angle. Engraved in the rock were two elongated lobes, one on each side, with a long mound like a giant toe between them. The whole thing was over a metre in length. At first I thought these shapes must have been made by water running down the rock over many years. But why would the water make circular grooves? I had once seen pictures of dinosaur footprints; the similarity here was striking. I lifted my eyes and tried to imagine an enormous animal standing with one foot over this rock, its head almost reaching the top of the hill overlooking Ramallah. How brief a moment is given to us to be here on earth. And how beautiful was that moment then with the hills all spread out before me, not submerged under water, not dominated by enormous animals, but full of wondrous treasures.

Before moving away from this rock I made sure to remember its location: several terraces down from the pine trees, halfway between the top of the hill and the valley, in a field full of common thistle called *natsh* (*Poterium* *Thorn*), which was likely used to make the crown of thorns worn by Christ. *Natsh* is as plentiful in these hills as heather in the Scottish

Highlands. Both are tenacious plants with strong roots. In winter *natsh* acquires thick narrow leaves that conserve water. The fields are full of small green mounds not unlike porcupines. As the dry summer months advance the leaves eventually dry up and fall off, leaving humps of wiry mesh that farmers sometimes cut and use as a broom to clean coarse surfaces of pebbles and stone. It is also used to drain water and, because of its elasticity, as a substitute for a spring mattress by people who are sleeping out in the open. In Arabic the verb *natasha* means to pluck, hence the name of the weed extractor, *Minttash*.

In Israeli military courts this weed has gained great popularity. Never has a weed been more exploited and politicised, not least by Dani Kramer, the legal advisor to the Israeli military government responsible for expropriating Palestinian land for Jewish settlements. Dani knew few Arabic words. *Natsh* was one of them. How often I have heard him stand up before the judge in the military land court and declare: "But, Your Honour, the land is full of *natsh*. I saw it with my own eyes." Meaning: what more proof could anyone want that the land was uncultivated and therefore public land that the Israeli settlers could use as their own?

Alongside Dani, another hero of the settlement project, whom I had heard a lot about but never met, was Rabbi Kook. He once described to his disciples how his

identification with the land was so total that he felt his own body torn. It was not clear whether or not the land in question was replete with *natsh*. Surely not! He was speaking metaphorically of much more profound things. It was the night of 14 May 1967, just before the war that resulted in the occupation of the Palestinian territories, the eve of Israel's Independence Day and the anniversary of the UN resolution that gave the state its legal standing. As he delivered his sermon he began to shout and his body was rocked by grief. He was recalling the announcement in 1947, 20 years earlier, when the UN decided to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. While the Jews in Palestine danced in the streets, the rabbi sat alone bewailing the division of the land. He asked his disciples: "Where is Hebron? Have we forgotten it? And where is our Shkhem (Nablus)? And our Jericho – will we forget them? And the far side of Jordan – it is ours, every clod of soil ... every region and bit of earth belonging to the Lord's land. Is it in our hands to give up even a millimetre? In that state," he said, "my entire body shaking, entirely wounded and cut to pieces, I could not celebrate." When I read this I thought: God help us. But for now I was not going to think any more of Rabbi Kook and his body, or of Dani and his legal fetish for *natsh*. I was going to enjoy my walk.

What is happening now to the hills around Ramallah?

For a number of years the only settlement near Ramallah was Dolev, which was established at the end of the 1970s. I felt that Ramallah was fortunate because it was surrounded by land that was fully registered and so could not easily succumb to the argument that it was public land and be acquired on that basis for Jewish settlements. But I was mistaken because now more and more settlements are popping up around Ramallah. There are about 12 settlements/outposts built on private land.

Only a week ago I heard that another new one called Yad Yair has appeared. When the Israeli army tried to stop it being established, the settlers attacked the army. The problem is that, even where the settlements are created in violation of the very legal structures devised by the government in order to take over land and build settlements, the army fails to take effective action and remove the settlers. They postpone and postpone. The problem is that the IDF is becoming a settler army so, when the government promises some visiting dignitary from Britain or the US that it will remove an illegal settlement or checkpoint, the army refuses to carry out the order or finds a way round it.

In the book you say, "Now when I walk in the hills I cannot but be conscious that the time when I will be able to do so is running out." What do you mean by this?

Well now it has become impossible to do the kind of hill walking that I was able to do for many years. I used to be able to leave my house, go into the hills close by and walk either alone or with my wife or with one or two friends. This has now become much too dangerous because there are army checkpoints nearby overlooking us.

There was one case when the army shot



A hilltop settlement overshadows the surrounding area.

somebody walking near his house and he was killed. Illegally established military roads cut through the valleys, and there are many more settlements with fanatical settlers who can shoot at you if they see you walking in the hills. So the only way to walk now is in a group. We have set up such a group, which is called Shat-ha, and we manage to do at least one walk a week every Friday, and sometimes on Sundays as well. We have to choose our route very carefully.

We look at Google Earth to see whether a settlement has suddenly come into being in the area where we want to walk, and are very careful not to stray off our route. We have to take taxis to go further away because the area around Ramallah has become full of settlements and is much too dangerous to walk in. But we still manage to walk, and this is very important.

Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape by Raja Shehadeh is published by Profile Books at £7.99.

This interview took place at a meeting in September 2008 in Stratford, East London hosted jointly by Newham Bookshop, Profile Books and Jewish Socialist.

In Gaza

by Michael Rosen

In Gaza, children,
you learn that the sky kills
and that houses hurt.
You learn that your blanket is smoke
and breakfast is dirt.

You learn that cars do somersaults
clothes turn red,
friends become statues,
bakers don't sell bread.

You learn that the night is a gun,
that toys burn
breath can stop,
it could be your turn.

You learn:
if they send you fire
they couldn't guess:
not just the soldier dies -
it's you and the rest.

Nowhere to run,
nowhere to go,
nowhere to hide
in the home you know.

You learn
that death isn't life,
that air isn't bread,
the land is for all.
You have the right to be
Not Dead.
The land is for all,
you have the right to be
Not Dead.
The land is for all,
you have the right to be
Not Dead.

This poem was read at the rally in Hyde Park preceding the 100,000 strong march to the Israeli Embassy on 10th January 2009

POET FOR PEACE

"My brain socialist, my heart anarchist, my eyes pacifist, my blood revolutionary". That was the self-description of poet, novelist and playwright, Adrian Mitchell, who died in December 2008. The left and the peace movement have lost a multi-talented, generous and committed supporter of peace campaigns globally.

He often helped campaigns to raise funds by reading poetry at benefit events. In 2006 he performed for the British Shalom-Salaam trust at their fundraiser for the Children's Theatre in Jenin refugee camp, destroyed by Israeli forces

in 2002. The theatre had been founded by an Israeli human rights activist, Arna Mer Khamis, in the 1990s.

Below we have reprinted *To Whom It May Concern (Tell Me Lies About Vietnam)*, which Adrian Mitchell first read at an anti-Vietnam protest in Trafalgar Square in 1964. He kept changing the final verse as the years passed and events demanded. He referred to this version as "the 21st century remix"; it will appear as the title poem in his new collection, *Tell Me Lies*, to be published by Bloodaxe Books in June 2009.

To Whom it May Concern Remix

by Adrian Mitchell

Come all ye -
wartbrain psychics
with astroid sidekicks
prostate agents
and plastic Cajuns

royal doggerellas
cluster bombsellers
alternative surgeons
torturesport virgins

heavy vivisectionists
columnists, Columnists,
priests of the beast
who are secretly policed
by highranker bankers
playing pranks with tankers

ghost advisers
death advertisers
vampire preachers
sucked-dry teachers
beheaded dead bodies
of blank-hearted squaddies

billionaire beauticians
fishing for positions
from poison politicians
with obliteration missions -
I'm alone, I'm afraid
And I need your aid
can't you see - can't you see - can't you see?

I was run over by the truth one day
Ever since the accident I've walked this way
So stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Vietnam

Heard the alarm clock screaming with pain
Couldn't find myself, so I went back to sleep again
So fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Vietnam

Every time I shut my eyes, all I see is flames
I made a marble phone-book, and I carved all the
names

So coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Vietnam

I smell something burning, hope it's just my
brains
They're only dropping peppermints and
daisy-chains
So stuff my nose with garlic
Coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Vietnam

Where were you at the time of the crime?
Down by the Cenotaph, drinking slime
So chain my tongue with whisky
Stuff my nose with garlic
Coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Vietnam

You put your bombers in, you put your conscience
out
You take the human being, and you twist it all
about
So scrub my skin with women
So chain my tongue with whisky
Stuff my nose with garlic
Coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about -
Iraq
Burma
Afghanistan
BAE Systems
Israel
Iran

Tell me lies Mr Bush
Tell me lies Mr Blairbrowncameron

Tell me lies about Vietnam

FROM WHERE

I STAND

In January the Pope decided to lift the excommunication of British-born Bishop Williamson, one of four bishops ordained without Vatican permission in 1988 by French archbishop, Marcel Lefebvre. Lefebvre was the founder of Society of St Pius X (SSPX), an ultra-conservative group which rejects the liberalisation of Catholic practice introduced in the 1960s by the Second Vatican Council, including the removal of the Good Friday prayer for the conversion of the Jews, which asks God to "end the blindness of that people".

The current Pope, Benedict XVI, is also rather conservative, and, as well as steadily reversing the decisions of Vatican II, has, according to *Searchlight* magazine "surrounded himself with extreme rightwing, racist and antisemitic advisers". Even so, the Vatican's reconciliation with Bishop Williamson shocked many Catholics and non-Catholics across the world because Williamson denies the Nazi genocide of the Jews. In an interview on Swedish television last November, he said: "I believe there were no gas chambers." His version of events is that up to "300,000 Jews perished in Nazi concentration camps but none of them by gas chambers".

Pope Benedict XVI, made the astonishing claim that he had not known about Bishop Williamson's views (or perhaps, in a flashback to his incarnation as young Joseph Ratzinger, he didn't notice anything wrong with them). He blames his Vatican advisors for

not informing him that the outcast Bishop's views were beyond the pale.

In an attempt to salvage something from the PR disaster, the Vatican has ordered Williamson to recant his remarks, but he has not done so, saying only that he will re-examine the evidence on the Holocaust. In a meeting with members of the US Jewish community, the Pope said he recognised that the 2,000-year-old relationship between Judaism and the church had passed through some painful phases but prayed for forgiveness from Jews for Christians who had persecuted them throughout history. "Painful" is one possible description, I suppose, of being burnt alive, massacred, driven out, having your property "expropriated" by the Inquisition, the Crusades and other "phases" the Church went through.

His prayers seem to be being answered by the *Jewish Chronicle*, which has carried a front page article cleaning up the image of the wartime Pope Pius XII. The article claims that, according to "recently discovered documents in the Vatican archive" Pius XII did not stay silent in the face of the Nazi genocide of the Jews. Apparently, and with fortuitous timing, it turns out that he "saved tens of thousands of European Jews from the Nazis" and the reason we've all had the opposite impression for the last 70-odd years is the result of... (you're way ahead of me) Communist propaganda. As wise old King Solomon said, there's nothing new under the sun.

Julia Bard

OBITUARY: AUBREY MORRIS 1919-2009

Aubrey Morris was a lifelong socialist and anti-fascist who cut his teeth in the political battles of the East End of the 1930s. On the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Cable street he spoke at a public meeting of the Jewish Socialists' Group, vividly describing the mood of the time, and the unity of Jewish workers and Irish dockers.

Although he helped to build the barricade with other determined anti-fascists, near to the family's bakery business in Cable Street, he was typically diffident about his role in the Battle. He needn't have been. The people who took to the streets in their many tens of thousands, against the advice of the Board of Deputies, the *Jewish Chronicle*, the rabbis, the Labour Party leadership, and the government were courageous and completely justified.

Aubrey was then in the Labour league of Youth but later joined the Communist Party. Having earned his crust in the bakery, he later became a cabbie and then a very successful travel tour operator. But his success in business didn't alter his political outlook

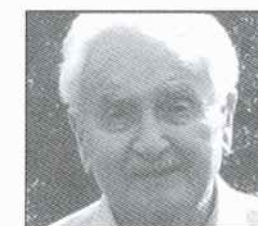
and he continued to support a range of socialist and progressive causes, especially *Red Pepper* magazine.

In later years he founded the Anjou Club, a monthly meeting and eating event, populated by people whose political outlook was also formed in the 1930s struggles. Guest speakers at the Anjou ranged from politicians, academics and writers to more frontline political activists including JSG members.

In 2006 he published an autobiography, *Unfinished Journey*, (reviewed in JS53). In the final chapter he says "my belief in socialism ... is really the baggage I've accumulated through my life, in search of the best ... I've also looked fairly deeply into the philosophies of anarchism and pacifism ... The systemic action of New Labour is without ideology or a semblance of socialist ideas."

Aubrey remained politically active until his last days. We have lost a fighter and a mensch but his memory and inspiration will live on amongst those he worked with and supported. He will be sorely missed.

David Rosenberg



YOU WRITE

FURTHER READING

Dear Jewish Socialist
In my article about Osip Piatnitsky ('The Man who was Friday', JS56) I should have mentioned books that are useful to anyone who wants to follow up the story. Obviously my

main source was Piatnitsky's own work, particularly his *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*.

For information about this revolutionary's later fate I relied on Vadim Z Rogovins' work, 1937: *Stalin's Year Of Terror*, published by

Mehring Press. Also worth reading, on how the purges affected British communists is Francis Beckett, *Stalin's British Victims*, from Sutton publishing.
Charlie Pottins
Middlesex

Send your letters to Jewish Socialist, BM3725 London WC1N 3XX or email js@jewishsocialist.org.uk

DON'T GIVE UP

Two states are not an ultimate solution but a minimum requirement for peace, argues **CHARLIE POTTINS**



Mahmoud Abbas head of Fatah (left) and Ismail Haniyeh, leader of Hamas

In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted for the partition of Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab, with an international zone around Jerusalem. The latter included the village of Deir Yassin...

In what became Israel's War of Independence and the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe), Jewish armed forces wrested a larger area than had been allocated for the Zionist state, and three quarters of a million Palestinians were made refugees. Carved up between Israel, Egypt and Jordan, Palestine was wiped from the map. But not from the minds of the Palestinians.

UN Resolution 194 laid down that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest possible date. Compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return." Since 1948 this has been reaffirmed many times, and consistently ignored. Even families who had fled during fighting but remained within Israel were prevented from returning to their homes, while in the Negev, entire Bedouin tribes were evicted. Palestinians who crept back over the border were shot as infiltrators. Some became armed raiders.

The great powers, for their part, ignored the Palestinians' existence and rights, seeking instead to guarantee the 1949 armistice lines as "secure borders between Israel and its Arab neighbours". The 1967 war brought the remainder of mandatory Palestine under Israeli control, but with it came a Palestinian population who this time for the most part stayed put. The Palestinian guerrillas joked that it had solved their problem of how to get behind Israeli lines. But it was their stand at el Karameh in 1968, contrasting as it did with the performance of Arab armies, which raised the guerrillas' prestige in the eyes of the masses, enabling Fatah and other groups to take

over the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), and begin transforming it into a mass national movement.

Though the Palestinians took inspiration from other national liberation struggles, particularly Algeria, they increasingly came to see that they were up against more than an occupying army or settler regime. With the formula of replacing the Zionist state with a "secular democratic state for Muslims, Christians and Jews", the PLO took a step forward then stopped short of recognising Israeli Jewish nationality, as though the issue was religion. A minority of left-wing Palestinians took the extra step. The larger Popular Front could not even use the word "Israel" without inverted commas, and the Left abroad, having but recently discovered the Palestinians, tried to follow their lead or kept vague about the matter.

The disaster of Black September, when so many Palestinians were killed by Jordanian forces, did little for confidence in the Arab states providing safe bases for a guerrilla struggle. But the 1973 October

war was followed by the negotiated return of Sinai to Egypt. For a time, with the oil embargo, the Arab world seemed on the up. What if...? Not wanting to be left out of any new arrangements, the Palestinian leadership announced that it would set up a state in any part of the homeland from which the Zionist enemy was forced to withdraw. Asked in 1976 whether the PLO would then cease military operations against Israel, Yasser Arafat replied: 'Different conditions bring different policies.'

It was left to Said Hamami, the PLO envoy in London, to spell out the idea of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, withdrawn to its pre-1967 borders, as the basis of a peace. For this he was assassinated by the Abu Nidal group. But Israel, bolstered by Egyptian President Sadat's separate peace deal and US encouragement, ruled out any contacts with the PLO. Instead it used the Abu Nidal group's attempt on ambassador Shlomo Argov as pretext to launch all out war on the Palestinians in Lebanon. After the PLO had accepted US guarantees to withdraw its forces, Ariel Sharon unleashed his Christian Phalangist allies to butcher civilians at Sabra and Shattila.

The Israeli government, and those in Washington who had thought they could say "Bye, bye PLO!" were rudely awakened when the first Intifada broke out right on Israel's back doorstep, in 1987. It was a genuine popular uprising, during which Palestinians in the Occupied Territories not only won world attention with their heroic "war of stones" against tanks, but managed to organise popular committees, underground schools, health provision – in short, a state.

Israel responded to the Intifada with Rabin's "Iron Fist" of repression, soldiers told to "break bones", and operations like the raid on Tunis to kill Khalid al Wazir (Abu Jihad). But it could not prevent the world or its own citizens, not least those in uniform, seeing that this was a popular uprising, and that they were fighting a whole people, not just a few terrorists from outside. "The residents here and the PLO leadership have one vision, and I don't think they are arguing amongst themselves about the shared goal," advised General Amnon Shahak, chief of Israel's military intelligence. "They speak the same language and believe in the same objectives." It was Shahak also who annoyed Yitzhak Shamir by opining that the PLO was genuine in moves for peace. Yitzhak Rabin was hearing the same from Matti Peled, authorised by Issam Sartawi of the PLO to report back on their clandestine talks.

The Iraqi scuds showed that holding territory was no sure defence. The Intifada showed it was a liability, and that there must be another way. When Israel, with an added prod from Washington, finally agreed to talk with the PLO, it was the Intifada that set the obvious agenda – withdrawal from the Occupied Territories allowing Palestinian self-government. In other words, *two states*. Not a once-and-for-all "solution" but a minimum requirement for peace. The underlying principle for co-existence, freeing people to work together for a better future must be *equality* – Israel cannot deny the

ON TWO STATES

Palestinians those rights which it claimed for itself.

That remained far from the mind of some Zionists, Labour at that, for whom *separation* – "us over here, them over there" – was the appeal, with Palestinians to be reduced to something less than Bantustans, policed if not by Jordan, then by themselves. Nevertheless, the recognition of Palestine and its leaders, so they might take their place among the nations, was a start.

Even after Oslo, with its watered down promises emerging from secret talks, the Palestinians tried to make the most of it. What has done most to undermine and derail this "peace process" has been not just the limitations on paper, nor the humiliation of Arafat and of Palestinian Authority (of which Hamas's rise was a symptom more than a cause). It is what Palestinians saw on the ground, as settlements continued to expand, and Israel's annexation wall separated villages from their groves and fields. Israeli forces continue to control all movement, and the settlers enjoy segregated roads, while the West Bank is divided into shrinking, encircled enclaves, kept well apart from East Jerusalem which should be capital of Palestine.

Is the two-state policy dead then?

Let us eschew the word "solution", which implies that whatever arrangements are made must be fixed for all time, or that any measure must be judged by utopian standards as panacea, and ideal, rather than whether, taken with other steps, it is an advance from present circumstances. We can only judge by asking what are the available alternatives.

"From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free!" chant a small knot of demonstrators in Whitehall, braving the English cold and the authorities' indifference. It's catchy, and though it doesn't exactly focus public attention on Gaza as was meant to be the point, I've nothing against the slogan – except – how free? And for whom? People may be talking about one state again, but we have not heard the words "secular" or "democratic" lately.

Then to Wembley, and the Zionists coming from an Israel property fair (theft is property?) assure us confidently: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian".

No need for a state then, "They are just Arabs", whom Israel tolerates until it can get rid of them. So you see, on both sides there are people who would rather see one state. The only thing is, neither sees the other as having much part in it. And while the Palestinians can claim justice on their side, Israel, which already has a state (or two, to judge from the attitude of settlers in "Judea and Samaria") and a militarily strong one, has America.

Some of those siding with "from the river to the sea" Palestinian Rejectionism (whether or not it has much support in Palestine) are people who never liked "two states"; but others argue that two states is "impractical" now, because Israel has carved out so much of the Occupied Territories and the settlers are planted there. Seeing how the settlers, for all their yelling and drama were pulled out of Gaza, we may wonder how deeply the rest in the West Bank

are rooted, and what they would do if the army was withdrawn. But the bigger issue is that the new "one staters" are arguing not from Palestinian steadfastness but from Zionist success. While pretending to oppose compromise, they are effectively counselling surrender, telling the Palestinians to give up their national struggle against occupation and colonisation, and be content with asking for equality as citizens.

They cite South Africa, forgetting that, with its huge black majority and dependence on a black labour force that was restless and organising, it presented quite different alternatives for both oppressed and oppressors. Or they even urge Palestinians to wait until revolution has swept the Arab world. And meanwhile? Meanwhile, the settlements expand, the IDF launches its aggression, prominent Israeli politicians openly advocate ethnic cleansing, and Yisrael Beiteinu has increased its representation in the recent elections.

The haste with which some academics here declare "the two state solution" to be dead, like the patience with which some suffering exile in Western hotels were prepared to wait "for as long as it takes" for their Return, are not necessarily echoed on the front lines. The Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh declared clearly in November that his government was prepared to maintain a long-term truce with Israel while negotiating, adding, "A Palestinian state will not be created at this time except in the territories of 1967."

The IDF had other ideas. Yet most Israelis favoured negotiations with Hamas, and though Israelis can be swayed into backing war when told they are under attack, the majority, not just peace activists but ordinary working people, regard the pampered settler fanatics as a liability. A two-state perspective offers them security while freeing themselves of this burden.

A two-state programme now does not spell exclusion, nor rule out future unification, particularly as both states should share Jerusalem. Some years ago I was in the Gaza Strip, when someone asked Yusra Barbari, a leading women's activist, whether a Palestinian state might federate with Jordan. "We might," replied Yusra. "We might even federate with Israel. But first we must have our own state, our freedom, so that we, the Palestinians, can decide."

Whatever political arrangements are made, the bottom line must be equality and freedom. Palestinians and Israelis are quite capable and intelligent enough to find their way to a better future. What they need from us is not idle and often ill-informed debate about "solutions", but solidarity and action to change our government's policies, and our communities. Without that, we are part of the problem.



The late Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian National Authority

SHOOTING THE MESSENGE^{THE}RS

RICHARD KUPER analyses how the concept of 'The New Antisemitism' is being used to place legitimate criticism of Israeli policy off-limits

Growing up in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s it was clear that the world was against us. The Jews, that is. We were – how to put it – special. The Germans had tried to do us in and the Afrikaner nationalists had cheered from the sidelines during the Second World War. Maybe our position in South Africa was now relatively secure; none of my friends ever experienced anything more than sarcasm or mild discrimination (like the Latin test sprung the day after Passover when we had all missed the lesson being tested!). The real thing was reserved for Blacks – but better keep your head down just in case. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies blew timidly with the wind and only saw fit to condemn apartheid in 1985. But fortunately there were braver Jews in the Communist Party, the Liberal Party, the Progressive Party, indeed in any protest movement within the white community. And while, from my teenage years, I realised there was something dreadful about apartheid and took part in low-level activity against it during my Wits university years, I found my spiritual home, like so many other Jews of my generation, in the Zionist movement.

After five committed years in Young Israel and a two-and-a-half-month spell there, my passion for Israel was to be shattered in 1967, and never restored. But I chose not to focus my political activity around it. In a life dedicated to political change, I was rarely political about Israel. I signed a Jewish protest at the invasion of Lebanon in the early 1980s and one calling into question the right of return in the early 1990s. As a publisher at Pluto, I was, with others, responsible for a number of highly critical books about Israel. But I remained only superficially touched myself. Perhaps it was too painful to face the Israel question head-on; perhaps it seemed too peripheral. My Jewishness found expression in a proudly universalistic, secular, humanistic politics: the 'radical cosmopolitanism' so despised by antisemites. I vaguely welcomed Oslo and assumed that at least one world problem could soon be ticked off the list. It was only with the rise of Sharon and the outbreak of the second intifada that I felt I had to get to grips with the realities of the occupation directly. My partner's return from a trip to the West Bank at the end of 2001, determined to do something, was finally to tip me into action as well.

I was not alone. In South Africa, Australia, the United States, Europe and elsewhere many Jews were to rediscover or reactivate aspects of their Jewish heritage in new ways. A plethora of new 'Not in My Name'/'Against the Occupation' groups emerged or existing groups expanded. It seemed such an obvious thing to do and I must admit to being stunned by the hostility and bitterness that

greeted Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JJfP) in its early stages. Didn't we realise that Israel was merely defending its right to exist, that Palestinians couldn't be trusted? Didn't we know that Arafat had sabotaged the Camp David talks single-handedly? And, above all, didn't we know better than to talk like this in front of the goyim? It would encourage antisemitism and we all know where that leads. Only self-hating Jews would do such a thing.

I was at first bemused by the attack on JJfP, and by the use of the concept of the 'new antisemitism' in which Israel appears as the 'collective Jew', and then increasingly angry as I found it deployed to make criticism of Israel suspect. I still am angry. But while the accusation that we were somehow making the position of Jews worse stung, I also wanted to understand what precisely the argument was about.

CONFLATING JEWS WITH ISRAEL

One of the core claims in the 'new antisemitism' argument is that Jews worldwide are being held responsible for what Israel does. Clearly this does sometimes happen and it is wrong: Jews are not responsible and should not be held responsible for Israel's actions. Nonetheless, the accusation that Jews and Zionists are being conflated is curious since Zionism itself has systematically made just such a conflation. 'Real' Jews (it is said) love Israel and, if they don't go to live there themselves, they hope their children will. A failure to make clear distinctions between Jews and Israelis is, in my experience, the common sense of Zionism. We always thought that was what the 'right of return' was all about. Soon-to-be-prime-minister Benyamin Netanyahu writes in his book *A Place among Nations: Israel and the World*: "The escapist tendencies of Israeli politics stem from this Jewish inability to reconcile oneself to the permanent need for Jewish power." And Ehud Olmert, rallying support among Jews in the United States during the ill-judged and ill-fated Lebanon war in August 2006, declared: "This is a war which is fought by all the Israelis. I believe that this is a war that is fought by all the Jews."

If leading Jewish organisations and individuals cannot distinguish clearly between Jews and Israelis we should not be surprised if others fail the test as well. Thus, we see that the rise and fall of antisemitic incidents in Europe since the collapse of the Camp David talks in 2000 has closely followed the rise and fall of Israel's conflict with its neighbours. The connection is clear, whether or not you believe that Israel's virtual reoccupation of the West Bank in 2002, or its invasion of Lebanon in 2006, was justified. And, while it is appalling that

AND THE MESSAGE



Photo: Simon Lynn

kipph-wearing Jews in the banlieux of Paris should have stones thrown at them for what Israeli troops have just done, it surely takes no great insight to realise that the greatest contribution to arresting such developments would be a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is significant that in the heady days of Oslo there was little talk of antisemitism, old or new.

SINGLING OUT ISRAEL

The argument about the new antisemitism goes further of course, with the notion of Israel as the collective Jew, and anti-Zionism as antisemitism writ different (but ultimately the same). This is shown particularly in the complaint that Israel is unfairly singled out for criticism, indeed that it is being demonised. Of all the countries in the world, why pick on Israel?

Let me suggest some reasons. Israel singles itself out and presents itself as special, as the "only democratic country in the Middle East" with the "most moral army in the world". It invites evaluation in terms of its own founding principles and constantly reaffirms its commitment to these values ("a light unto nations"). It claims to be defending western values and presents itself as an outpost of these. It controls a number of religious

sites and what happens there is of overarching significance to three world religions; passions run high about their fate.

What other country has been in occupation of another people's land for such a long period, in defiance of international law? What country refuses to define its borders or indeed even acknowledge the Green Line or show it on its maps? The entire area of mandate Palestine is routinely labelled "Israel", from the maps used in Israeli schools to those on sale in any shop in Israel.

Furthermore, Israel is singled out by the United States in many ways. It has been far and away the largest single recipient of US foreign aid since the 1960s (approximately one-third of the US foreign-aid budget before the Iraq invasion, and still extraordinarily high). The United States, often standing alone, vetoes resolution after resolution concerning Israel in the United Nations Security Council. Israel is the only country the United States allows to possess nuclear weapons without demands for their control.

Israel singles itself out, too, not just as a bastion of "western values" but, since 9/11, also in the "war on terror", a battle it claims to have been fighting for decades. Days after the attack on the Twin Towers, Sharon called Arafat "our bin Laden",

despite Arafat's opposition to bin Laden's opportunistic adoption of the Palestinian cause. And indeed Israel is treated differently in many ways, as though it were the frontline in some division of the world between the West and "the Other", Europeans and Muslims, or some such "clash of civilisations".

"It is worse elsewhere", we hear. "Why pick on Israel?" It's true, it is worse elsewhere; but I take little comfort from that. David Clark, former adviser to the Labour government in Britain in the 1990s, has commented: "When I hear people argue that

Israel is unfairly singled out, I wish I could persuade myself that what they mean is: 'If only people cared as much for the people of Tibet/Darfur/Zimbabwe as they do for the Palestinians.' But, he went on to say: "I suspect that what they often mean is: 'If only people cared as little for the Palestinians as they do for the people of Tibet/Darfur/Zimbabwe.'"

Double standards do indeed predominate in any discussion of Israel, but rarely in the way its supporters claim. Throughout much of Europe and much of the Muslim world it looks as though Israel is indeed singled out – for favour, for support, for exemption, when others are condemned.

So I find many good reasons for singling out Israel. You could indeed say the situation was over-determined: each reason alone sufficient to justify a special concern about Israel; taken together they bring together a diverse coalition of concerned human rights, development, church and national liberation supporters.

But let's be honest. Isn't Israel singled out above all possible justification? Doesn't this encourage antisemitism? Isn't Israel demonised? The answer is, sometimes, yes. Yes, there is demonisation and it should be condemned. It is not uncommon for causes people support to be idealised and their enemies cast into outer darkness. It shouldn't happen, but it does, on all sides. It is not uncommon to find uncritical supporters of Israel labelling Palestinians collectively as "terrorists" and "antisemites". Nor is it unusual, unfortunately, to find accusations of antisemitism used as trump cards to stifle discussion, an excuse to ignore the solid foundations on which criticisms of Israel are generally based in the West.

LIMITING THE RIGHT TO CRITICISE?

Proponents of the new antisemitism generally deny they wish to stifle criticism. The problem, they say, is merely criticism that goes "too far". It must be "unfair to ask Israel to behave in ways you wouldn't ask of any other state". The question is who defines what is "too far" and the very formulations you

come across suggest that the onus is on critics to justify their right to criticise. This is well captured by Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League: "In every public forum I'm always careful to say that criticism of the state of Israel is not necessarily antisemitic." As Brian Klug remarks: "'is not necessarily' implies 'is possibly', and what this really means is 'it's usually so'."

Or take the Public Education Campaign to End Campus Anti-Semitism run by the US Commission on Civil Rights. It gives a list of forms of antisemitism that includes this item:

Symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (for example, claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel, that is use of human blood in ritual sacrifices) to characterise Israel or Israelis. Not all criticisms of Israel should be considered antisemitic however.

The presumption here is clear: most are likely to be.

Some critics drop the reservations. In a December 2006 article called "Fighting Jewish Anti-Semitism", Brandeis Professor Shulamith Reinharz made it clear that, for her, "in a world where there is only one Jewish state, to oppose it vehemently is to endanger Jews". She includes among the guilty Jewish antisemites Jacqueline Rose, Tony Judt, Sara Roy, Ilan Pappé, Noam Chomsky, the playwright Tony Kushner and Adrienne Rich.

Is it wrong to point out inconvenient truths about the current reality? As, for example, the Arab Human Rights Association did in December 2007 with its report explaining Hizbullah's apparently random attacks on Israeli civilians during the Lebanon war as having been directed against military installations that Israel deliberately located among its civilian Arab population, effectively trying to use them as human shields? Or when Israeli occupation forces act with impunity, as B'Tselem points out frequently, citing the following figures in its mailing of February 2005:

In the past four and a half years, Israeli security forces have killed at least 1,705 Palestinians who did not take part in the fighting, including 551 minors. The number of indictments filed against soldiers for gunfire-related offences stands at only 28, according to the Judge Advocate General's office. Only two soldiers have been convicted of "causing the death" of Palestinians.

Is it demonisation to publicise the work of Breaking the Silence, soldiers who served in Hebron and elsewhere, who chronicle the daily dehumanisation and oppression of the Palestinians? Or to wonder why Oslo failed when Barak, in an interview with Benny Morris in 2002, could say: "[Palestinians] are products of a culture in which to tell a lie ... creates no dissonance. They don't suffer from the problem of telling lies that exists in Judeo-Christian culture. Truth is seen as an irrelevant category"?

The problem is that these kinds of things happen routinely. Is revealing these truths "unfair" to Israel – and therefore antisemitic? All states need to be open to wide-ranging criticism; and criticism should be evaluated on the basis of the evidence put forward, not on the presumed motivation of the critics. To suggest that criticism of Israel is antisemitic is not simply an innocent description: for Jews in general and for many others as well, it

functions to evoke the catastrophic and bloody history of the Holocaust, and the failure of the West to help. It is a clarion call to unite against "our enemies" without bothering to look at the substance of the criticism.

Yet you can't simply wish away the occupation and the accusations that Israel is guilty of daily violations of international law; nor can they be justified as "self-defence". I am referring to such practices as wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, deliberately causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement, depriving people of the rights of fair and regular trial, taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property: all defined as "grave breaches" of the Fourth Geneva Convention. That Israel has a *prima facie* case to answer is clear from the numerous reports of human rights violations produced by a wide range of reputable organisations, both international and in Israel/Palestine itself including, in 2007–8 alone, those of al-Haq, Amnesty International, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, B'Tselem, Gisha, Human Rights Watch, the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, Physicians for Human Rights, Public Campaign against Torture in Israel, Rabbis for Human Rights, War on Want and the World Bank – as well as the work of the United Nations through OCHA, UNRWA and the UN's Special Rapporteur John Dugard on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

Is it antisemitic to make these points because of their "unhealthy" focus on Israel? Or to point out that Israel was founded on an expulsion of Palestinians, as Israel's "new historians" have been doing for two decades now? Or to suggest that serious accommodation on this issue will be a precondition for a lasting settlement? You might think it wrong – but antisemitic?

THE ONUS OF RESPONSIBILITY

While it is true that antisemitism can motivate criticism of Israel, it is wrong to jump to the conclusion that it always or usually does. But this is just what the "new antisemitism" argument tends to assume. This is reflected in the new "Working Definition of Antisemitism" produced by the European Union Monitoring Committee on Racism and Xenophobia (now the Fundamental Rights Agency). This emerged out of the blue in 2005 and ran against the grain of former EUMC publications. Criticism of Israel suddenly became officially endorsed as an important component of antisemitism today.

European Jews for a Just Peace (EJJP) wrote in protest in October 2005. It expressed concern both about the process of producing the new EUMC working definition and about its content. It was unclear, for example, who had been consulted in the production of this document; many eminent scholars in the United Kingdom who had previously been involved with the EUMC clearly were not. And it was particularly critical of the EUMC's list of examples of what might be antisemitic "taking into account the overall context"; they gave six general examples and no fewer than five examples of how "antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the state of Israel".

EJJP commented:

This is not to deny that there are circumstances in which criticisms of the state of Israel might indeed be antisemitic. But ... [t]his requires demonstration on a case by case basis. As formulated this listing fosters a presumption that those who criticise the state of Israel in all kinds of legitimate ways are in fact covert antisemites. We number ourselves amongst such people and we vigorously reject the implication that we are either antisemitic or "self-hating" Jews in the strongest possible terms. In our experience, such accusations are used to stifle legitimate criticism and the EUMC formulation, by lending any credence to such views, does a disservice to the genuine struggle against antisemitism.

The response was to say that this was "work in progress" and under review in the light of feedback received, but the redrafting envisaged in 2006 never materialised and this document still stands.

In the United Kingdom a recent All-Party Parliamentary Enquiry into Antisemitism issued a report in September 2006 (despite the official sounding name, the group producing the report is not an official committee within the parliamentary system). Though it took evidence from a wide range of contributors, this is not reflected in any meaningful way in its conclusions. The report adopted the EUMC "working definition" uncritically, and appeared oblivious to its shortcomings. This encouraged the National Union of Students in Britain also to adopt the EUMC definition at its conference in March 2007, calling for it to be implemented in the student movement. The danger, now, is that perfectly legitimate criticism of Israel is likely to be suspect in advance.

We must roundly reject the attempt to shift the onus of responsibility on to critics of the Israeli occupation and its human right abuses. Of crucial importance here is to encourage and work with forces of dissent within Israel itself. It is a paradox often remarked upon that criticism of Israeli government policies and of the occupation is far more robust within Israel than outside. The more these voices can be amplified, the greater the impact and the harder to make unfounded accusations of antisemitism stick.

Indeed, what seems to be at stake is an attempt to reframe the debate, not so much to exclude certain voices as to render them suspect before they even speak. The only defence against this is a struggle for pluralism within the Jewish community, for a wider range of views to be a legitimate part of community discussion. The maverick voices of Melanie Phillips and Geoffrey Alderman are given regular exposure in the op-ed pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* as legitimate currents within the community. Apart from Jonathan Freedland's eminently reasonable, but somewhat limited, critical voice there is no counterpart for independent voices critical of Israel. The *Jewish Chronicle* plays along with the Board of Deputies of British Jews, an institution peculiarly resistant to criticising Israel, which it sees as washing one's dirty linen in public. Where better to wash it, if you want to really hold it up to the light? And, if it brings criticism down upon Israel, blame must be placed squarely where it belongs.

This article is reprinted with permission from *A Time To Speak Out: Independent Jewish voices on Israel, Zionism and Jewish identities*, (ed Anne Karpf, Brian Klug, Jacqueline Rose and Barbara Rosenbaum) Verso, 2008 (reviewed on page 27).



Photo: Simon Lynn

Despite the pressure to stay silent, many Jews joined the protests against Israel's assault on Gaza

CULTURES, COMMUNITIES

DAVID ROSENBERG explores the lives of the interwoven communities in the history of London's East End

For 90 minutes I had been taking a group of older Jewish people from Hendon on a walk round the Radical Jewish East End of yesteryear. The territory was very familiar to them but they hadn't trodden its pavements for a long time. Vivid memories came flooding back – of the Communist Phil Piratin, the strategist behind the anti-fascist victories of the late 1930s who went on to become a Communist MP for Mile End elected largely on Jewish votes, and of Mossy Marks, who ran a fabulous Jewish delicatessen in Wentworth Street, standing in his long white coat with one arm deep in a barrel of herrings.

We reached the final stop on the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street. I pointed to a large squarish building, with a sundial clock inscribed with the words *Umbra sumus* (we are shadows) and the date it was built, 1743 (pictured below). I reminded my group that they had been on my 90-minute tour but said that, had they signed up for a 90-second tour, I would have brought them to this building which, at least superficially, embodies the story of the East End. Starting life as a Huguenot Church, it became a Methodist chapel, then the Great Spitalfields Synagogue (Makhzike Hadas), and finally East London Jamme Masjid – a very important local mosque.

In a 90-second tour, though, the timeline represented by the building can feed Britain's self-serving immigration mythology – how it has been a tolerant and welcoming refuge for the persecuted. In reality, communities have had to fight hostility and discrimination; the very presence of the Irish and Bangladeshi populations in London reflects the economic consequences of imperial domination and subjection. I therefore make sure that I tell the back-story of the groups that have settled, as well as their situation on arrival.

On this particular evening we had talked in detail about the different communities that had inhabited the East End, and the group had shown interest in each one. But as we stood on this corner reflecting on the changing face of the East End at different stages in history, I hadn't anticipated the next comment from one of the walkers. He looked at the mosque, shook his

head and sighed, "It breaks my heart what it's used for now."

After a sharp intake of breathe I decided to deal with it in a light-touch manner and pointed out how little its function had indeed changed – large groups of people went there to pray to their God, as they had done since 1743. The prayers were pretty similar but the people were different.

But were they that different? And does it make any sense to look at each group as if its experience can be hermetically sealed off from others?

The Jewish East End narrative of course



fascinates me. It is a multi-layered story of culture and language, religion, politics, success and failure, rags to riches and also riches to rags. But I am even more fascinated by the broader immigrant narrative that the Jewish East End experience fits into, and how that changes by the day. It is the connections and continuities rather than the dissonance between communities – the commonalities rather than the specificities that excite me.

There is no doubt that for certain periods, certain streets, estates and districts had a very particular ethnic/cultural flavour, but the mix was always there and evolving. In the late 1980s when I worked just off Brick Lane, there were few white people regularly walking to and from work within that overwhelmingly Bangladeshi area, but among the white people who did frequent the area, Jews were not exceptional. There were still several Jewish traders on Brick Lane and several more in and around Wentworth Street/Petticoat Lane market.

When the Jews came to the East End in large numbers after the pogroms and repressive laws that followed Czar Alexander's assassination in 1881, they settled in streets that also contained large Irish populations. Over a period of years, the Irish communities gradually moved further east, closer to the docks where many of them sought and some gained employment.

A demographic pattern emerged that saw the East End largely divided into separate Jewish and Irish areas, though some streets inevitably remained on the border between them. But there were also German communities, Chinese, Somalis, and Maltese too.

When people of East End Irish descent come on my walks, and talk about their families' daily struggles for life and work and against overcrowding and poverty, the clashes between generations, the desire to maintain cultural autonomy, the experience of discrimination, it all sounds so familiar. The historian Bill Fishman who grew up in one such mixed area has written movingly of the trade union and personal solidarity between the area's Jewish tailors and Irish dockers at times of major strikes in 1889 and 1912. He attributes the solidarity shown by Irish dockers at the Battle of Cable Street in 1936 to these historic bonds of mutual support.

AND CONNECTIONS

Praise for this solidarity in 1936 also came in the form of a newspaper, the *Irish Front* – "a voice for the Irish diaspora" – published at that time by two Irish writers, Charles Donnelly and Leslie Daiken, who had settled in London. The latter's original name was Yodaiken and his family were Dublin Jews. The lines between the two communities were blurred, too, in the Communist Party and its related organisations. While the CP and its youth branches in 1930s and 1940s Stepney were largely composed of Jews, many of the non-Jews who joined came from the Irish communities. The Stepney Tenants Defence League, which claimed 11,000 members by 1940, was led by two CP activists: Harry Conn and Ella Donovan – one of Jewish, one of Irish family background.

In his book, *Our Flag Stays Red*, Phil Piratin writes very movingly of the solidarity between these two communities during the 21-week rent strike at Langdale Mansions in the late 1930s. These rent strikes were run mainly by women, and a strict rota was drawn up for picket line duty against the bailiffs. Irish Catholic women would shop at the kosher butchers for Jewish women on the picket line and vice versa.

The leadership of the Labour Party in Stepney was another location where the communities were rather involved with each other. In the 1930s the Labour Party in Stepney was dominated by Irish councillors but there was a fair sprinkling of Jews. This leadership, which was often accused of being corrupt, incompetent and ineffective, brought together well known figures in the Jewish community such as Morry Davis and Dan Frankel with local Irish politicians such as Morgan Phillips and JJ Long, both of whom, incidentally, showed more sympathy to the Spanish Loyalists than to anti-fascist Republicans during the Civil War there.

A more coincidental connection lies with the Jews and the Huguenots. Many of the Jews flooding into Spitalfields from the 1880s crammed several large families into the grand houses built for single family units by Huguenots in the 1700s, at the peak of their economic success. As skilled silk weavers they carved out a significant economic niche. Their Protestant religious convictions provided the basis for their persecution in France but it evoked tolerance towards them by the English among whom they found refuge. And describing themselves as "refugees", they brought an important new word and concept into the English language.

The Huguenots at the end of the 17th century were in a different position from the East European Jews who came 200 years later. Both were persecuted but the Huguenots were refused permission to leave, while the Jews were, if anything, encouraged to leave. In this sense the Huguenot experience has more in common with Jews under Nazi rule in the 1930s, forced to endure a systematic denial of rights and the means of making a living. And like desperate and courageous asylum-seekers today, they were forced to use great ingenuity and various subterfuges to escape from the societies in which they were being persecuted.

The houses in which the Huguenots lived in Spitalfields were a hive of economic activity – especially in the attics where windows were built to let in as much natural light as possible. These were the rooms where the factory work took place while the family lived below.

In the period of Jewish immigration and the later period of Bengali settlement, those same buildings, housing many more people, continued to be a hive of economic activity, though in the Jewish and Bengali cases the factory work took place at ground level or in the basement. As you walk through Wilkes Street, Princelet Street and Fournier Street in Spitalfields today, you can see lavishly furnished basements through the gratings on the pavements in front of the former Huguenot houses. In the late 1980s you could still hear the whirr of sewing machines and watch Bengalis young and old crammed closely by their machines day and night, through the same gratings.

As the city encroached further eastwards, the Bengalis were forced by massively rising rents to abandon the Huguenot buildings and move out. The buildings have been bought up by a new generation of the very-well-to-do. From playing a role as tenement blocks incorporating factories, these houses have reverted to their original status as grand houses for single families.

A substantial number of Jewish families who fought their way out of poverty in the 1930s eventually reached their suburban "promised land" in Ilford. They could finally afford to move beyond the overcrowded, claustrophobic East End. My family reached Ilford in the late 1960s. Some did it in one great leap forward; others, like my family, through several fits and starts and temporary stops. But they moved when they had the means to do so. Today you can find many Bengali families settled in Ilford, but, ironically, they are there because they can't afford to stay in the East End.

With the government's dispersal policy towards refugees, changes to the means of transport and likely points of arrival, we are unlikely to see in our lifetimes another wave of mass settlement in the East End by a single well-defined group. Most likely the East End will evolve into an area typifying the greater and greater cultural mix that inner London is becoming, where people from every continent coexist and are even starting to appreciate each other. That shouldn't break anyone's heart.

Top: Wentworth Street, (commonly known as Petticoat Lane) today, with the City of London's Gherkin in the background. Photo: Emmanuel Gandelman
Bottom: Petticoat Lane as it was in 1900.



Above right: David Rosenberg at the community mural opposite the Jewish Soup Kitchen in Brune Street. Photo: Emmanuel Gandelman
Below: The founding plaque on the building in Brick Lane which started life as a Huguenot church and is now a mosque.



A LIFE IN PRINT

ERNEST RODKER remembers his grandfather, John Rodker, and the Whitechapel Boys

John Rodker was born in 1894 in the Jewish quarter of Manchester, the son of immigrant Polish Jews who had joined the mass exodus fleeing the pogroms of the 1880s. His father, David, one of 11 children, was a corset maker, becoming relatively well-off compared to many in the immigrant community. The family moved to Whitechapel when Rodker was six, where he went to the local Board School, and then to the Jews Free School until he was 14.

After school he continued with evening classes, learning especially French and German, and working for a short while in the Civil Service. Although he never achieved the fame and celebrity of some of his contemporaries, he did become an important and influential figure within the artistic community in the years just before and after the First World War, and then in the following 30 years as a translator and publisher.

My first meeting with John Rodker, my grandfather, after the war, was when he came to meet me and my mother, as part of a welcoming party as we arrived back in England in 1946, having been evacuated to America in 1941. We stayed in his house near Baker Street for a year; his publishing company, the Imago Press, was based there. I well remember playing chess with him, badly, in his comfortable drawing room with impressive pictures around the walls, two of which I learned later were by David Bomberg. I can still see him packing crisp, pristine books into corrugated paper parcels, sometimes with my help, and tying them up with great expertise.

By 17, Rodker was already involved with the group of young friends who were to become known as the Whitechapel Boys. They were all first generation British Jews, whose families lived within the packed and impoverished East End community that gave the group its name. As well as Rodker, the youngest, there were: Joseph Leftwich, who wrote poetry, was to become a Yiddish and Hebrew scholar, and kept a diary of the group and of those times, particularly the year 1911; Samuel Winsten, who was also to write poetry and came to know George Bernard Shaw and write his biography; and Isaac Rosenberg, the oldest, a poet and painter, who would become one of the major First World War poets. Isaac Rosenberg at the time had just entered the Slade School of Art, joining a group of students that contained some of the most talented artists of the next 50 years, including Mark Gertler and David Bomberg, who became part of the Whitechapel group. Contemporaries at the Slade were Dora Carrington, CWR Nevinson, William Roberts, Adrian Allison, Edward Wadsworth and Stanley Spencer.

The group would meet locally and spend hours walking through the run-down streets talking and arguing about art, politics and their ideas. They would also meet at the Whitechapel Art Gallery and the adjacent Public Library. On other occasions, Leftwich noted, they walked to and from Epping Forest, some 10 miles away, discussing the many social upheavals of the day. Some members of the group had joined the Young Socialist League, without becoming particularly active, but they

must have given attention to the recent hunger marches and massive strikes, and to the nearby siege at Sidney Street, as well as the hotly contested Bethnal Green by-election that July (of 1911). The impact of these discussions was reflected in some of Rosenberg's poems of that time and in the group's subsequent attitudes to the fast-approaching Great War. Interestingly, they were moving away from the orthodoxy of their parents though not their Jewish background.

Of the group, John Rodker was probably developing the broadest interests. He was widely read and wrote poetry early on, and from his interests in radical theatre, dance and the modernist movement he made contact with a wide circle of creative and influential people. He was to exploit these contacts in the following years by strongly recommending the talents of Rosenberg and Bomberg. Although Rodker stopped writing poetry by 1925, he first made his name as a poet. He already spoke French, eventually well enough to translate some major French literature, citing the influence of French poetry of 1850-1910 on his work.

In the early years of the Whitechapel Group, Rodker concentrated mostly on his poetry, stimulated by the example and writing of Rosenberg. In 1914 he published his first book, *Poems*, influenced by Imagism, under his own name, with a striking cover designed by Bomberg in the Vorticist style. It was perhaps with the production of this slim book of verse that Rodker got his first taste for publishing. The book was produced from his address at 1 Osborn Street, Whitechapel, where he had set up house with a young, aspiring actress, Sonia Cohen. Their daughter, born in 1915, is my mother, Joan. She has helped me with this article.

In the next 15 years Rodker appeared as poet, critic and editor in a wide variety of literary magazines of the day. He became the foreign editor of *The Little Review* in 1919, supported by Ezra Pound, who he succeeded. In the 1920 July-August issue Rodker wrote about Dadaism; the essay was noted as the first to appear in an English literary magazine. Soon after, he gave space to two French surrealists, giving surrealism its first important introduction into England. He followed this by translating and publishing Lautreamont's fundamentals of surrealism, *Chants de Maldoror*. For a time Rodker was better known in Paris than London, and in his later years was awarded the Legion d'Honneur for his contribution in promoting French literature to a wider public in England.

Rodker did not support the war, taking an anti-militarist line. He went on the run and lived rough to avoid conscription, but was eventually arrested and after a number of confrontations with the military authorities (refusing to obey orders and going on hunger strike), he was court-martialled and sent to Princetown, Dartmoor. Samuel Winsten was already in prison as a conscientious objector. Rodker's dramatic war-time experiences are recorded in *Memoirs of Other Fronts* (1932) among other publications.

Having left Sonia Cohen in 1917, Rodker married Mary Butts, an avant-garde writer, and together they set up the Ovid Press. It produced an impressive list of titles before it closed. He started with Eliot's *Ara Vos Prec*, followed by Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and then published the artists Gaudier-Brzeska, Wyndham Lewis and Edward Wadsworth, who designed the Press logo. In 1920 he published *Hymns*, his second book of verse.

At this time Rodker also became involved in attempts to print Joyce's *Ulysses*, and was responsible for publishing the second edition in 1922, most copies of which were confiscated by Customs at Folkestone Port. He also published the third edition.

Rodker separated from Mary Butts in 1927; they had one daughter, Camilla, who died in 2008. He married again in the 1930s to Barbara MacKenzie-Smith, a painter. They had one son, Paul, now living in Canada. By the late 1920s Rodker was already involved in another significant enterprise with Frederick Etchells, an ex-painter. Having moved to become an architect he was translating Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture* and *The City of Tomorrow*. They were published by Rodker in 1927 and 1929 and were widely commended. It was during this period that three of Rodker's own writings were published. In 1926 *The Future of Futurism*, a monograph on the development of literature, was considered to be his most revealing



piece of criticism. Then in 1929 *Adolphe* 1920, a prose piece, was highly rated by Pound as continuing in Joyce's footsteps. Lastly, in 1930, Nancy Cunard's Hours Press published Rodker's *Collected Poems 1912-1925*.

In the years that followed, Rodker made many accomplished translations from the French, including; Amedee Ozenfant's influential *Foundations of Modern*

Art; Jules Romain's three-part erotic novel *The Body's Rapture*, published in 1933 and Henri Barbusse's *Inferno* (1932). He edited the journal *Soviet Life and Letters* and, as his interest in psychoanalysis increased, he translated Hirschfield's *Sex in Human Relationships* (1935) and Marie Bonapart's *Female Sexuality* (1953) among numerous other titles.

In 1951 Rodker married Marianne Rais, whom he had known since she was a young woman and whose mother had collaborated with him on many translations. Rodker continued in publishing until he died in 1955. His last important project was to publish, under the imprint of the Imago Press, the German language edition of *Freud's Complete Works*.

In April 2009 the newly converted Whitechapel Art Gallery, amalgamated with the Library, will reopen with a major exhibition about the Whitechapel Boys. On show will be one of the pictures I remember so clearly from my grandfather's drawing room, a portrait of him by David Bomberg.

John Rodker (left) with James Joyce and American bookshop owner Sylvia Beech

DO JEWS HAVE HORNS?

It was 20 years ago not quite today that I started learning my living as a journalist, and the fact that I can mark this anniversary with the launch of my first book, *Jazz Jews*, is nothing but coincidence.

Jazz Jews was originally contracted for publication in spring 2003; its release is now finally scheduled in spring 2009. I wouldn't have survived in journalism had I not consistently met deadlines, but *Jazz Jews*, like the universe post-big bang, has just grown and grown. To such an extent that about two-thirds of the way through writing it, I wondered if I would ever reach the end.

And none of it would ever have happened had the *Jewish Socialist* editorial committee not invited me to write a feature on jazz and Jews more than eight years ago, having previously published a review feature of mine on the CD, *Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz*.

In researching it, I phoned Jim Godbolt, then editor of the in-house monthly of Ronnie Scott's jazz club. I hoped that Godbolt would give me contacts, as the late tenor saxophonist Ronnie Scott, the club's cofounder and one of this country's finest ever jazz musicians, had been Jewish. So too had many of Scott's

collaborators who were prominent in establishing Britain's "modern jazz" scene in the 1950s.

Godbolt was unhelpful – I didn't even get the chance to state my name – yet in the following month's edition of his magazine, there was a full-page editorial by him headed "Jews and Jazz", alluding dismissively to my call. Referring to me, Godbolt wrote: "What findings could possibly result from his investigations? All I could think of was that Jewish guys played jazz because they wanted to – as simple as that... Jewish people were attracted to jazz in the same way as were indigenous Scandinavians, British, French, Swiss, Italians and Russians."

I pressed on, and my article duly featured in *Jewish Socialist*'s winter 2000-01 edition. As I've written in my book's preface: "I don't think I've ever worked so hard on an article and been less satisfied with the result. Fortunately with this book, my publisher has given me a chance to put forward more carefully considered and better informed arguments."

The first interview I conducted for what has turned out to be an eight-year project, was with the London-based Israeli saxophonist/clarinetist Gilad

MIKE GERBER explains how researching one article took him on an eight year journey exploring the harmonious connection between Jews and jazz

IT WAS AT CAFÉ SOCIETY THAT BILLIE HOLIDAY FIRST PERFORMED THE ANTI-LYNCHING SONG *STRANGE FRUIT*, WRITTEN FOR HER BY JEWISH LEFT-WING POET AND TEACHER ABEL MEEROPOL UNDER HIS PEN-NAME, LEWIS ALLEN

Right: Billie Holiday, performer of *Strange Fruit*

Atzmon. My coverage of Atzmon forms part of a long chapter I've written on Israeli jazz. Israel has produced many world class jazz musicians in the last two decades, including Atzmon. In covering Israel, I have not evaded the controversial issues, including the place in Israeli jazz of Arabs, Ethiopians, and the Black Hebrews of Dimona sect that originated in Chicago. The chapter concludes with consideration of the row over Atzmon's anti-Zionist proclamations, which have provoked charges of antisemitism, including from anti-Zionist Jews.

One theme I investigate is why jazz and Jews have often been closely associated in the public's mind, even very early in the music's history when, so far as is known, few Jews were involved, and those who were, were obscure. Antisemites often played upon this perceived connection between jazz and Jews to malign both – motoring mogul Henry Ford did so in his newspaper the *Dearborn Independent*, as did Nazi Germany. So too, occasionally, did the Soviet Union during the Stalin era.

I've written chapters on Jews in jazz under the Nazi and Soviet bloc dictatorships, including an interview conducted in the Czech Republic with Petr Broch, a half-Jewish musician who as a boy survived Terezin concentration camp and thereafter pursued a career in communist Czechoslovakia. Another figure I met from a former communist country, Bulgaria, was pianist/composer Milcho Lelev. Bulgaria's protection of its Jews when the country was under Nazi control is well known, and Milcho Lelev, who I caught up with in Los Angeles, had great affection for his old country. But Milcho quit Bulgaria for the US in 1970 after the communist regime interpreted his composition *Anti-Waltz* – correctly he told me – as anti-Establishment. I've also been in touch with Leo Feigin, who organised concerts in the Soviet Union. He moved to Israel, then settled in England where he founded Leo Records, initially releasing avant-garde jazz recordings that were smuggled out of communist Europe.

As a Londoner, I was well placed to study Jews in British jazz. Ronnie Scott died in 1996, but I interviewed drummer Laurie Morgan, who often worked and jammed with Scott when they were pioneers in Britain's bebop movement in the years following the second world war. Morgan, who is half-Jewish, has in recent years performed extensively with jazz musicians from London's West Indian community. The late George Melly, the outrageously OTT vocalist-interpreter of the classic blues songs of such greats

as Bessie Smith only consented to be interviewed when I invoked the names of Jazz Age Jewish stars Al Jolson and Sophie Tucker. Melly's mother was Jewish, and he wrote about the Jewish side of his family in his highly entertaining autobiography, but



Melly told me he didn't identify as Jewish. Yet following my meeting with him, George proclaimed himself outright as Jewish in a newspaper article he wrote.

I have tried to give worldwide coverage. This includes the considerable role South African Jewish jazz musicians and facilitators played supporting township music during the apartheid era. As one of my correspondents, Henry Shields, who runs the Marimba restaurant, one of Cape Town's main jazz clubs, told me: "The general feeling I detect among older black and coloured musicians is that Jews promoted and supported and were more part of the solution ... than being any part of the problem."

The first 15 chapters of *Jazz Jews* covers the United States, justifiably, as it is the homeland of jazz, and Jews have played a very substantial role as musicians and facilitators. Among these were some of the first Americans to breach the colour line, notably clarinetist/bandleaders Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, who gave great prominence to black musicians, and Barney Josephson whose New York club Café Society in the 1930s welcomed black and white clientele when this was taboo elsewhere.

It was at Café Society that Billie Holiday first performed the anti-lynching song *Strange Fruit*, written for her by Jewish left-wing poet and teacher Abel Meeropol under his pen-name Lewis Allen. (Incidentally Abel Meeropol later became an adoptive parent to the children of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, executed under McCarthyism.)

Another Jew, Milt Gabler, released Billie's first recording of *Strange Fruit* for his Commodore label,

America's first specialist jazz label. I interviewed Gregory Herzog, whose Jewish father Arthur Herzog, an habitu  of Caf  Society, wrote several songs with Billie.

I don't gloss over the tensions between blacks and Jews in popular music, a reflection of the wider relationship between these two nevertheless often allied ethnic groups in American society, though jazz-wise, there is much to chronicle that is positive in that relationship.

Without question, the most influential musicians in jazz history have, until very recently, largely been black artists, especially Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman. Yet quite a number of Jews can be counted among the all-time greats, among them Goodman and Shaw, Buddy Rich, Lee Konitz, Stan Getz, Barney Kessel, Mike Brecker, Paul Bley, Bud Freeman and Mel Torm . Hundreds more can be considered world class – some not so well known even to many jazz fans, such as tenor saxophonist and flautist Lew Tabackin who I corresponded with. Two contrastingly fascinating characters I consider are Willie the Lion Smith, the legendary black stride pianist who considered himself Jewish, and clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow, the white Jewish Chicagoan who considered himself black.

I have not neglected the many top class female Jewish jazz musicians. Helen Forrest was one of the best big band "canaries" of the swing era. Barbara Carroll, a bebop pioneer pianist/bandleader and now also vocalist, it was my privilege to see perform and interview. Many brilliant Jewish female artists have emerged in recent years, including: soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom and Brazilian vocalist Flora Purim, both of whom I interviewed in the States, banjoist Cynthia Sayer, a mainstay in Woody Allen's New Orleans Jazz Band, who I've corresponded with, and the Swedish vocalist Rebecka Gordon who I met in London after catching her gig of songs from her *Yiddish 'n Jazz* album. Mostly I have covered female musicians in a single chapter titled "Women's problems" – it enabled me to focus on issues that have held back female musicians.

A chapter is dedicated to the many great Jewish popular song composers of the first half of the 20th century – George Gershwin, Harold Arlen, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin and others – whose songs still figure disproportionately in the jazz standard repertoire. I contend that the best of these musically highly sophisticated songs played a part in the way jazz evolved.

The US was obviously going to fill a major chunk of *Jazz Jews* whatever happened, but what really pushed up the page count was the interview material I amassed during intensive research in the States, made possible by a grant I received from the London-based Jewish Music Institute. Armed initially with only a couple of contacts, I made fantastic progress Stateside, interviewing more than 30 jazz figures in eight weeks, four of them spent in New Jersey, travelling daily up to New York, the Mecca of jazz, and to Newark, where the Institute of Jazz Studies is based on the Rutgers University campus. The institute's director is Dan Morgenstern, a German-born Jew who fled the Nazis to become one of America's foremost jazz pundits, and he gave me the benefit of his vast

knowledge and experience in more than five hours of interviewing.

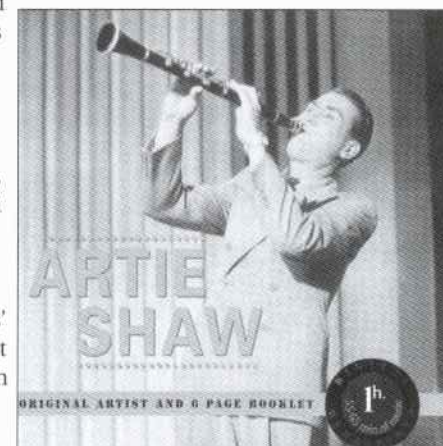
America was a fabulous experience. I got to meet such figures as: Stan Levey, an ex-boxer who became Charlie Parker's drummer; Randy Brecker, brother of the late Mike Brecker and one of the foremost jazz trumpeters of the last 40 years; Lalo Schiffrin, who worked with Dizzy Gillespie but is famous beyond jazz for his film and TV compositions, notably *Mission Impossible*; Stanley Crouch, who commented on things jazz and Jewish from a black critic's perspective; and the black multi-reeds player Buddy Collette who recalled Jewish LA-based musicians' major support for the establishment of the first racially integrated branch of America's musicians' union.

But the highlight of many has to be my interview with the legendary Artie Shaw at his house in California, some way out of LA where I was based for the final four weeks. Artie and Benny Goodman have fair claim to be the considered the finest ever jazz clarinetists – Artie just gets my vote. Many, however, give Goodman the edge, including saxophonist Loren Schoenberg, a Jewish New Yorker I interviewed at the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, where he is Executive Director. Loren worked with Goodman in the latter's final years, and was also close to Artie.

When I interviewed Artie in November 2002, two years before his death, he was in his 90s, physically frail but intellectually lucid and opinionated as ever. Anyone who has read his autobiography *The Trouble with Cinderella*, first published in 1953 when he was on the point of giving up on the music business, will know what a tortured soul he was, for many years in denial about his Jewish ethnicity following his childhood experience of antisemitism. He was upfront about his Jewishness in later life but, like Jim Godbolt, he was dismissive of my theme – why would anyone want to write about jazz and Jews?

I hope I've come up with some good answers to that in the concluding chapter of my book, titled "So what?" after a Miles Davis composition. Surely there can be no argument about the validity of the theme of my penultimate chapter, "Rooted Cosmopolitans", a study of the many attempts to fuse jazz with Jewish music. This phenomenon began with the immigrant klezmer of the Jazz Age, developed into the Yiddish swing of the 1930s and 1940s, and over the last four decades, Jewish-jazz music has expanded in multiple directions.

Jazz Jews is a 25-chapter tome – the fruit of more than 70 interviews and God knows how much correspondence, of hours without number spent poring over printed sources, surfing the net, listening to the music. Now its publication is pending. With a mixture of anticipation and trepidation, I await its fate.



Jazz Jews by Mike Gerber, Five Leaves Publications, £24.99 hardback. On offer at a pre-publication price of £20 post free with orders to: Five Leaves, PO Box 8786, Nottingham NG1 9AW.



ANTISEMITES OFTEN PLAYED UPON THE PERCEIVED CONNECTION BETWEEN JAZZ AND JEWS TO MALIGN BOTH

FELLOW-TRAVELLERS

BE WARNED

THE NEW CIVILISATION? UNDERSTANDING STALIN'S SOVIET UNION 1929-1941
Paul Flowers
Francis Boutle Publishers

Paul Flowers will be known to many readers of *Jewish Socialist* as a writer and activist living in London. His writing is in general marked by its humour and its non-sectarian spirit. This book, based on his PhD, is a study of the various accounts of the Soviet Union to have been published in inter-War Britain from all points on the political spectrum.

The range of views canvassed is certainly comprehensive: from Leon Trotsky and Victor Serge, through communist fellow-travellers, Labour MPs and union officials, to journalists on *The Economist* and *The Times*, and even fascists such as Douglas Reed, Henry Williamson and Oswald Mosley.

The New Civilisation? invites readers to grasp the extraordinary number of people who were prepared to believe in the humane character of Stalinist Russia, even at the time of the gulags and the Moscow Trials. Flowers is a talented researcher, and a great deal of care has been spent on this book.

The most enjoyable bits are the quotes taken from writers who should have known better. Take this, for example, from the novelist Henri Barbusse, writing on Stalin:

He is a man of iron. The name by which he is known describes it: the word Stalin means "steel" in Russian. He is as strong and yet as flexible as steel. His power lies in his formidable intelligence, the breadth of his knowledge, the amazing orderliness of his mind, his passion for precision, his inexorable spirit of progress, the rapidity, sureness and intensity of his decision, and his constant care to choose the right men.

The skill to choose assistants wisely was less likely to be applauded at the end of the 1930s, when many of Stalin's comrades were in the dock. Flowers cites another novelist Nigel Balchin, who grasped the problem with the allegations against Trotsky in particular:

For many years prior to the Russian Revolution Trotsky was in exile, posing as a communist. We now know that he wasn't a communist

at all. He was, and always has been, a fascist. In fact he may almost be said to have invented fascism. For there he was subtly working for



fascism years and years before anybody else, Mussolini and Hitler included, realised that there was such a thing. The reasonable assumption is that Trotsky hated communism so much that he went abroad and plotted to bring communism about in Russia, so that when communism had been brought about in Russia, he would have something nice and big to overthrow. Few of us, I suspect, would have thought as far ahead as that.

The New Civilisation? is a very enjoyable book, and it feels unkind to raise notes of criticism. Yet because of the range of views cited, some authors are quoted merely in passing, when what they really deserve is a deeper analysis. This is true of Bertrand Russell, for example, whose complex short book *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* deserves more than a 30-line potted summary. It is also true of H L Beales, who is described tersely by Flowers as "a radical sociologist" and treated in the text as an admirer of Stalinism. This, Beales may well at times have been, but he was also a pioneer of adult education and labour history and one of the first British publishers of the Russian anarchist Prince Kropotkin. There would be more to find about Beales' views of Russia, I suspect, than the single source cited in this text.

Having said that, Paul Flowers is a writer of humour and sympathy. If you have a friend who still needs persuading of the folly of fellow-travelling, then this book would make a kind present – and an awkward read for them.

Dave Renton

Right: Josef Stalin – admired by those who should have known better
Below: Leon Trotsky – not guilty as accused.



REAL LIFE DRAMA

I've been "using" Augusto Boal since his books came out and his methods became second nature to many of us creating devised, angry theatre with community groups all over the world. I did a week's course with him five years ago. It began with him asking us to tell him why we were there. I remember blushing – blushing! – when I told him I had been using his methods and had begun to change them and adapt them for the purposes of each project I ran. He was delighted. "Use them! Adapt them! That's what they are there for!" he beamed.

I was instantly in love. No preciousness there! So unlike so many theatre practitioners who say: this is my method: it must be so, just so. Not Boal. Just: take the methods, make them yours, make them work for you and your groups. So I was delighted to revisit this book. However, as I did, I had a bit of a shock.

I wasn't revisiting this book. I had never read it. I remember picking it up years ago, and instantly putting it down. I was after a practical manual to aid and abet my practice. *Theatre of the Oppressed* is primarily a history of theatre and its relationship to politics. "This book attempts to show that all theatre is necessarily political because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them ... in this book I also offer some proof that the theatre is a weapon, a very efficient weapon. For this reason one must fight for it..."

So although I have been using versions of the Boal method for many years, I had actually not read this very basic work, which is at the cornerstone of all else

he created. It is a journey through Greek theatre, the evolution of the chorus to include a protagonist then more actors with views apart from the mass, and the political implications of that. His views are wide and include perspectives on what Hollywood cinema, sport and, his particular bugbear, empathy, have done to our revolutionary spirit:

"I am convinced that Hollywood has done more damage to our countries with the 'innocent' movies than with those that deal directly with more or less political themes. Idiotic love stories of the type of *Love Story* are more dangerous, given the fact that their ideological penetration takes place subliminally..."

Towards the end of the book he cites his own practice and the evolution of it and this is powerful stuff: the development of theatre work with oppressed peoples and the use of theatre as a revolutionary tool. However, as he goes on to place this work into context I found a great deal of repetition and confusion, that found me skimming ever more rapidly. I remember reading the following phrase before my eyes closed: "Finally one of the aesthetic objectives of the system – no less important than the rest – consists in trying to resolve the option between character-object and character-subject which schematically derives from the belief that thought determines action or, on the contrary, that action determines thought..."

Nevertheless, Boal, more than any other practitioner, has informed my own practice as a practical theatre facilitator, and I cherish his journey and practical work.

Clair Chapwell

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED
Augusto Boal
Republished by Pluto Press,
£12.99

Clair Chapwell was a founding member of Spare Tyre Theatre in 1979, and pioneered Spare Tyre's work with older people. Now freelance, she writes and directs shows with communities, facilitates training sessions, and teaches people how to run drama and music sessions with people over 60.

THE OCCUPIED AND THE PREOCCUPIED

Most Jews in Britain seem to hold two sets of views on the Israel-Palestine conflict. One set concerns what they actually think of the conflict, how it came about, became exacerbated and how it might be solved. The other set are views on what Jews here should or shouldn't be allowed say about it.

There is a myth spread by Israel's supporters that the founding of the state of Israel enabled Jews everywhere to stand up and make their voice heard as never before. The irony is that Israeli-funded organisations and Jewish communal leaderships in the diaspora spend so much effort and material resources on preventing free speech and open debate, and on attempting to ensure conformity of views in defence of the Israeli government of the day.

In Britain hard-line Zionists are a vocal but relatively small group. And, in truth, so too are the non-Zionists and anti-Zionists. There is a core of establishment-oriented Jews who express a general support for Israel and don't wish to criticise community spokespersons who they think know best, and prefer to present a united front to the outside world.

But perhaps the fastest growing group are a significant segment of the community who are reflexively pro-Israel but worried about the

direction Israel is going in, and seriously embarrassed by the excuses Israeli leaders give for policies that are hard to defend. They are worried about attitudes of non-Jews on Israel/Palestine which they think might be infused with antisemitism. They think that Israeli is being unfairly singled out when other countries do bad things too but they can't and don't deny that bad things do happen in Israel/Palestine. They are worried too about having conflicts with family and friends by being open about their thoughts.

A decisive shift in their view can make a difference. Israel relies on the support of governments who presume to know what their Jewish communities feel about the Israel-Palestine issue. These governments have generally assumed that unquestioning pro-Israel attitudes were dominant.

The late Richard Hauser, a Jewish human rights activist, once observed: "The Palestinians are occupied and the Jews are pre-occupied." And this critical and growing group are the pre-occupied Jews par excellence.

Independent Jewish Voices emerged as an initiative aimed at challenging the stifling of dissident opinion on Israel and encouraging free

A TIME TO SPEAK OUT: INDEPENDENT JEWISH VOICES ON ISRAEL, ZIONISM AND JEWISH IDENTITY

Editors: Anne Karpf, Brian Klug, Jacqueline Rose, Barbara Rosenbaum
Verso, £9.99



Melanie Philips, who labelled Independent Jewish Voices "Jews for genocide".

THEY MADE ENOUGH OF AN IMPACT, AND UNSETTLED OUR "LEADERS" ENOUGH TO HAVE THEIR JEWISH CREDENTIALS CALLED INTO QUESTION AND BE DENOUNCED AS "SELF-HATERS". IN A RATHER UNHINGED COMMENT, MELANIE PHILIPS EVEN LABELLED THEM "JEWS FOR GENOCIDE".

expression and debate. Campaigning through petitions, adverts and public meetings since 2007 they made enough of an impact, and unsettled our "leaders" enough to have their Jewish credentials called into question and be denounced as "self-haters". In a rather unhinged comment, Melanie Philips even labelled them "Jews for genocide".

This book – *A Time to Speak Out* – takes that campaign a step further. Its 27 essays are written by a broad spectrum of critical Jews – journalists, academics and a range of professionals. The professionals use their personal expertise well. Abe Hayeem – an architect – describes the campaign among his professional colleagues to expose and oppose the use of architecture as a weapon of the occupation; Geoffrey Bindman brings his legal expertise to undercut Israeli claims that their repressive policies are justified within international law when the opposite is often true. His piece is complemented well by Francesca Klug's who reminds her readers how such international human rights legislation, which supporters of Israel scorn and condemn when it leads to denunciation of Israeli actions, itself grew out of responses to Jewish experience in the Second World War.

Some writers use personal experience to great effect, such as Emma Klyne, who fell foul of the Zionist establishment/Israeli embassy when, as chair of the Jewish Student Society at SOAS, she started inviting speakers that the Union of Jewish Students nationally disapproved of and crossed a line she hadn't known was there.

Anthony Rudolph's description of his personal journey from his early commitment to the vision of the socialist-Zionist youth movements, through to his current incandescent rage at the continued occupation and the desire of Israeli leaders to willingly embroil Israel in America's aggressive policy towards Iran, peels away the layers of denial within which many Jews still wrap themselves.

By far the best pieces are those that have a very clear sense of audience – the preoccupied Jews, that challenge commonly held assumptions, and state their position boldly. The three essays that stand out in this regard are: Richard Kuper's on the "new antisemitism" (reprinted on page 16); Stanley Cohen's hard-hitting exposé of the complicity of many among Israel's academic fraternity and institutions with the occupation, which shatters the myth that Israel's universities are bastions of liberal opinion unfairly targeted by pro-Palestinians; and *Jewish Socialist's* own Julia Bard, who counterposes the idea of Jewish self-determination in the diaspora and a positive diasporism to Zionism's dishonest narrowing of the form and parameters of Jewish self-determination to that of a Jewish national state in Israel.

Each of these essays has a wealth of direct arguments that contradict "commonsense" understandings perpetuated by mainstream Jewish and Zionist bodies and publications. They compel readers to examine the unquestioned assumptions that lie beneath them and

challenge them to reframe their view.

The less effective pieces are those that concentrate too much on what made certain individuals sign this or similar statements (Michael Kustow) – it's only a statement after all – or those who take the puerile accusation of self-hatred too literally, too seriously, and are determined to deconstruct its theory (Jacqueline Rose). Kustow expresses himself more purposefully when he writes about the reticence, self-gagging and denial that prevents certain individuals from speaking out than when he is name-dropping signatories. Rose writes interestingly of layers of meaning but needs to recognise that the self-hating accusation is a truncheon not a treatise. It's meant to hurt, to sting, to marginalise, to mobilise hatred but it is not based on any kind of serious analysis.

Elsewhere in the volume there are many useful points cogently argued that support those Jews determined not to be silenced by pressure of family, friends and community. Don Guttenplan asks whether it has been "out of solidarity with fellow Jews, or merely out of fear of communal ostracism, we held our tongues while a whole people has been brutalised and degraded." He describes what this silence has brought: "An Israel bristling with atomic weaponry, its borders in many cases protected by massive concrete walls ... Gaza sinking into anarchy and immiseration, West Bank farmers walled off from their olive groves and another generation of Palestinian children who encounter Jews only at the barrel of a gun."

Brian Klug reminds readers that "this is 2008, not 1948 and yesterday's solutions were not designed for today's needs ... Israel is hamstrung by its self-definition as *der judenstaat*, the state of the Jews. It needs to become the state of the Israelis ... Israel needs to shed the burden of Jewish fears and hopes that led to its creation and become its own state pursuing its own good ... for non-Jew and Jew alike."

Many of us were brought up to believe that Judaism was a questioning religion, that it was good to question, only to be told later that when it comes to doubts about Israel it is better not to ask. The fault lines within Jewish life have long been there, but now they are becoming more obvious. Tony Lerman's piece argues that the fault line exposed by the reaction to Independent Jewish Voices is that between particularism and universalism. He concludes: "[T]he particularists see a vigilant ethnocentrism as the answer to what they perceive as multiple threats to Jewish life. The universalists believe that the re-assertion of universal values and a Jewish tradition of social justice and vigorous argument are the only path both to a just peace for Israel-Palestine and to a Jewish future engaged and at ease in the world."

Read this book and buy another for a friend or relative who is grappling with the issue of speaking out about what they think may be unjust. Because when we are loud enough the walls will come tumbling down.

David Rosenberg

THE STORY THAT DESERVES TO BE TOLD

Just as the eyes of the world were fixed on Israel, a film about real-life Jewish heroism has been released in cinemas. *Defiance* is the story of the Bielskis, three brothers who form a community of Jewish refugees in the woods of Belorussia during the Second World War. The eldest brother, Tuvia, is played by Daniel Craig, whose resolutely grim onscreen presence works well in a film that is often harrowing and always uncomfortable. The Bielskis, the sons of a farmer who has just been killed by Nazi collaborators, shelter hundreds of Jews in the huge uncharted forests of Belorussia, teaching them to fight and assigning jobs to everyone. They even liberate huge swathes of Jews from a nearby ghetto, defying a Rabbi's command that they must "wait for God". The Bielskis are poor and uncultured – Tuvia is a petty crook, who is used to the disdain of others. He repeatedly reaffirms his own unintelligence, telling his former school teacher (one of the many refugees he saves) that he never did understand what he was talking about. As a leader, however, Tuvia quickly emerges to find the respect that was missing from his former life.

In one of the film's most interesting twists, the middle Bielski brother, Zus, leaves the camp to fight with Red Army partisans. Unlike his elder brother, who declares that "our revenge will be our survival", Zus is filled with bloodlust, determined to kill as many Nazis and collaborators as he can. With the Red Army, whose leadership consists of an antisemitic whistler and a maudlin drunk, he begins to fight. In one scene, Zus's ambush on a Nazi train is juxtaposed with a joyful wedding back at the Jewish camp; as the groom stamps on the glass, the brutal attack on the train is launched. Later on, the film-makers show the Red Army denying medicine to the Bielskis when there is an outbreak of typhus at their camp. Even worse, when the Nazis prepare for an assault on the forest that will leave the Jewish refugees massacred, the Red Army Partisans strategically retreat, leaving them all to die.

The contrast between the Bielski group and the Red Army makes for an interesting parallel. Near the beginning of the film, a man who describes himself as "an intellectual" joins the burgeoning Jewish refugee community, and he is gently mocked by the Bielski brothers. But the intellectual is actually a socialist publisher and, like the rest of the Jews, becomes accustomed to the hard work involved in building a village in the forest, cutting wood and constructing houses. In the community, all are equal – all receive equal amounts of food and respect. When this status quo is usurped by a fighter (also portrayed in the film as something of a misogynist) arguing that those who protect the community should get more food, he is shot. But one of the rather obvious messages of *Defiance* is this: the Bielski refugee community comes far closer to communism, than Stalin's Red Army does.

Another commendable aspect of the film is its portrayal of women's bravery. Initially, a conversation between Zus and a young woman reveals that he does not think women need guns; when she suggests that they do, he argues that they

have men for protection. Later on in the film, however, the women are taught to use guns. Many women are seen fighting heroically in defence of the refugee community, going out on dangerous food missions (the Bielski followers operate Robin of Sherwood style, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor) and even defending fleeing refugees from a Nazi onslaught. One woman is shot by the advancing soldiers – she dies with her finger pressed on the machine gun trigger, still firing at the enemy. A different sort of courage is demonstrated by another Jewish woman. Raped by a Nazi guard, she responds to the subsequent pregnancy with immeasurable courage. (On a side note, if anyone wants to see a good World War Two film about female heroism – and indeed Jewish female heroism – I thought *Black Book* was excellent and remain extremely miffed at the moralists at *The Guardian* declaring it nothing but "soft porn".)

The Bielskis, whose actions ultimately saved the lives of 1,200 Jews, never asked for recognition for their bravery. At the end of the war, the youngest brother, Asael, joined the Russian Army and was killed fighting. The elder two brothers left for America and lived out the rest of their days quietly, working as truckers. This makes watching the film, which in many ways resembles a more typical Hollywood "hero" story, quite a guilty experience. But then, if it conquers the still commonly held misconception that the Jews walked passively into the death camps, this can only be a good thing. *Defiance* might not be the greatest film ever made, but of all the World War Two films that seem to be very much in vogue right now, this is probably the story that deserves to be told the most.

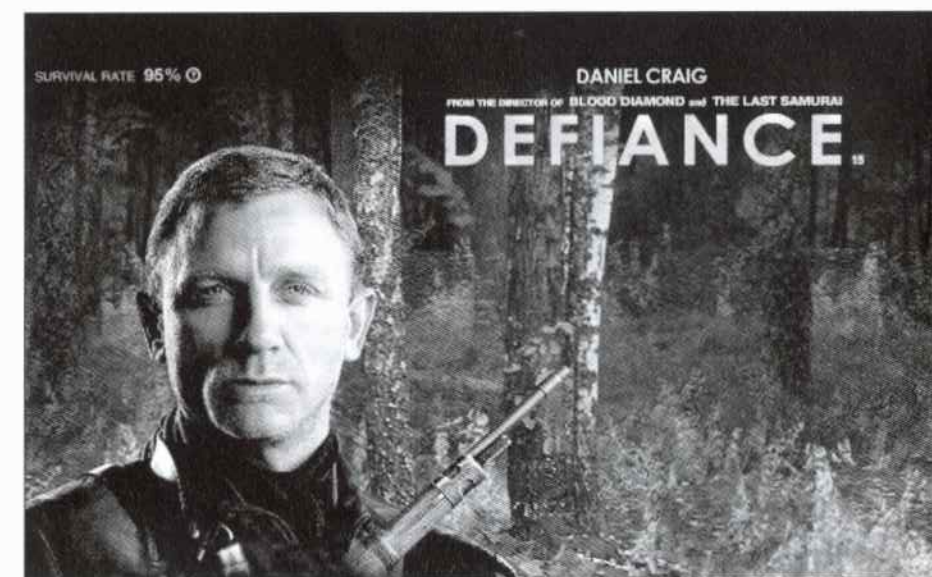
Vicky Thompson

DEFIANCE

Dir: Edward Zwick, 2009



Members of the Bielski Partisan Unit, Nalibocka Forest, May 1944.



RAF SALKIE
has found some
arresting texts

When, in the last issue of *Jewish Socialist*, I read Neil Roberts' article on Rudolf Rocker, a German anarchist who became a heroic figure among London's East End Jews, it whet my appetite for Rocker's own version of these exciting and dangerous times. His book *The London Years* (AK Press, 2005) tells the story of his life in Britain until 1918, when he was deported back to Germany.

Like many prominent socialists of the time, Rocker spent years in prison. He was arrested shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914 and was interned throughout the war as an enemy alien – first in the Olympia exhibition centre in Kensington, then on a prison ship off Southend, and finally in Alexandra Palace in North London. His health suffered badly, and he describes in detail his regular conflicts with the commandant at the Ally Pally, a Major Mott who sounds about as rational and considerate as General Melchett in *Blackadder*.

The gentle but determined tone of Rocker's writing is captured nicely in his comment on these four years: "I am no psychologist, but it seems to me that there is something quite wrong about the whole idea of imprisoning people who have done nothing themselves to deserve such punishment... It was all mad. But half the world had gone mad then, and we were only some of the victims of this world-wide madness."

This leads me cunningly to my next book. As I write, thousands of people who have committed no

crime are locked up in some of the rich countries of the world. You can see a detailed map of refugee internment sites across Europe at www.migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/carte-fr07.pdf (not recommended for people of a sensitive disposition).

Unless I've missed something, we don't have Rocker's excuse that we are in the middle of a major European war. It's a more modern type of madness that lies behind the way we treat refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The No One is Illegal group have been among the fiercest opponents of official anti-refugee brutality in England, and founder member Teresa Hayter's book *Open Borders: The Case against Immigration Controls* (Pluto, 2004) is a merciless critique of the wicked system of border controls, impoverishment of refugees, and bureaucratic thuggery that passes for

policy. She argues that immigration controls are irredeemably racist, and that they will never work. She's right.

Few things make me angrier than opposition to immigration. It's the unique mixture of racism, stupidity, smugness, and the self-righteous defence of privilege that I find so repellent. It isn't "understandable" fears among the "white working class", and we don't need a "grown-up debate" about immigration. As *Blackadder* (him again) said, my feelings when I hear this sanctimonious drivel rhyme with clucking bell.

Does the world have any chance of solving problems like poverty, global warming, or nuclear proliferation as long as we distinguish between "us" who have rights, and "them" who have none? Of course not.

Critics say that the idea of a world without borders, where everyone's fundamental human right to move around the world is taken seriously, is utopian and unrealistic. Hayter's reply to people who want "fair" immigration controls is telling: "This stands political reality on its head. The struggle against the totality of controls is certainly uphill – it may well require a revolution. However the achievement of fair immigration restrictions – that is the transformation of immigration controls into their opposite – would require a miracle."

I like to end this column with some light relief, but not this time. John Le Carré's latest novel, *A*

Most Wanted Man (Hodder & Stoughton, 2008), is about refugees, the war on terror, extraordinary rendition and political corruption. One of the main characters is a woman who works for a small organisation in Hamburg that supports refugees – heartwarming

but hopeless, rather like Spurs and West Ham at the moment. Another is a man fleeing from Chechnya, surely up there with Rwanda and Congo as contenders for sites of the worst crimes against humanity of recent times.

So happy new year everyone, and let's get on with enjoying good books, fine wines, and the denial of basic human rights to most of the world's population.



FUNDAMENTALS

Pastor John Agee, who says Hitler was sent by God to hunt us out, was dropped by Senator McCain, but welcomed by Bibi Netanyahu. It's a hard act to follow, but President Obama picked a preacher called Rick Warren to bless his inauguration.

"He is a man who compares legal abortion to the Holocaust and gay marriage to incest and paedophilia," says Michele Goldberg in *The Guardian* (18/12/08). "He believes that Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other non-Christians are going to spend eternity burning in hell. He doesn't believe in evolution. He recently dismissed the social gospel – the late 19th- and early 20th-century Protestant movement that led a religious crusade against poverty and inequality – as 'Marxism in Christian clothing'."

Rev Warren has changed his own clothing lately, donning a more liberal, minority-friendly topcoat for the media. But Obama should have seen through it.

As for his former rival and new Secretary of State, when life at the White House was a strain, Hillary Clinton found comfort in a Bible class connected to a secretive sect called The Family. Forget about the meek inheriting the earth. "We work with power where we can," says The Family's Doug Coe, and "build new power where we can't." It worked with Indonesia's murderous dictator General Suharto.

Hillary's devotional links could explain some of her stands on moral issues. But how about bearing witness? During campaigning she told of dodging sniper bullets when landing at Bosnia's Tuzla airport. News footage showed her getting a civic reception, the usual child with a bouquet, and no bullets within earshot. All this jetting around gets confusing. Maybe the sniping was at Tulsa, Arizona. Now Hillary will focus on foreign affairs, leaving hubby free for the domestic kind, but I am worried about her primaries promise to "obliterate" Iran. Surely that's not turning the other cheek. Guess I should have attended more Bible classes.

NICE FRIENDS

When a crowd of Jews gathered under the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square some years back to sing their own version of familiar carols, drawing attention to Bethlehem under Occupation, I thought it was a brilliant idea. Among others who appreciated it was Afif Safieh, the Palestinian envoy to Britain, who brought his family along.

Since then, the alternative carols have become almost a tradition, attracted a mixed bunch, and moved indoors to the hospitable St James, Piccadilly. The novelty's worn off for me so, I gave it a miss, though I don't see anything wrong in it.

The indignant champions of Israel at Engage are

less tolerant, though it seems they can't make up their mind now, whether to frighten Jews that their *kinder* are being lured into Church to sing carols, or join indignant Christians protesting that their traditions have been hijacked. (Peace and goodwill? What's that got to do with the Yuletide spirit?) Leading the outcry were the Anglican Friends of Israel. They're sensitive souls, so you'd better mind what you say about Conservative students and Orange bands, or the libel writs will echo like the thunder.

Among the outstanding Anglican Friends is Professor David Marsland, guest speaker a few years back at the Springbok Club on "what I'd do to terrorists", and so on. His speech is on the website of the club, which wants to restore white rule in southern Africa and remove undesirable aliens from Britain. Its founder Alan Harvey was a National Front supporter who went to South Africa. Since returning to Britain, Harvey has joined the Tory party, and though retaining some curious links, is said to be very "pro-Israel". They used to say you could choose your friends, but Israel's Right must make do with those it finds. I've no idea what kind of carols they sing.

THE OTHER FRONT

Who says the Israeli government had no plan for its war on Gaza, or didn't consider the consequences? Not so, as Nathan Jeffay reports: "Even as their surprise military campaign remained secret, Foreign Ministry officials scurried to put in place another dimension of modern warfare that they considered crucial to their success."

"In Sderot, a town pummelled by rockets that Hamas had launched from Gaza, a pressroom was set up to offer Israel's perspective on the war the officials knew was coming. Coffee and cookies were readied for the hordes of journalists that were expected to arrive with the war. A photographer was poised to shoot images of the damage that was likely to be effected by the rockets that Hamas would fire in retaliation. A rotation of Foreign Ministry representatives and diplomats was drawn up, and within hours of the 27th December 2008 attack itself, military staff arrived at the pressroom with publicity materials to make their case to the world." ('Learning From Lebanon, Israel Sets Up Press Operation', *Forward*, 31st December 2008).

The guerrillas were sporting enough to launch their rockets, and the Western media accepted being kept out of Gaza and fed the Israeli line. But some residents in Sderot and other southern towns would ask why, with all these preparations, they were not helped to evacuate their children at least? Look, if the Palestinians' kids have to take it, why shouldn't yours? People really should be given a PR and news media course.

