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

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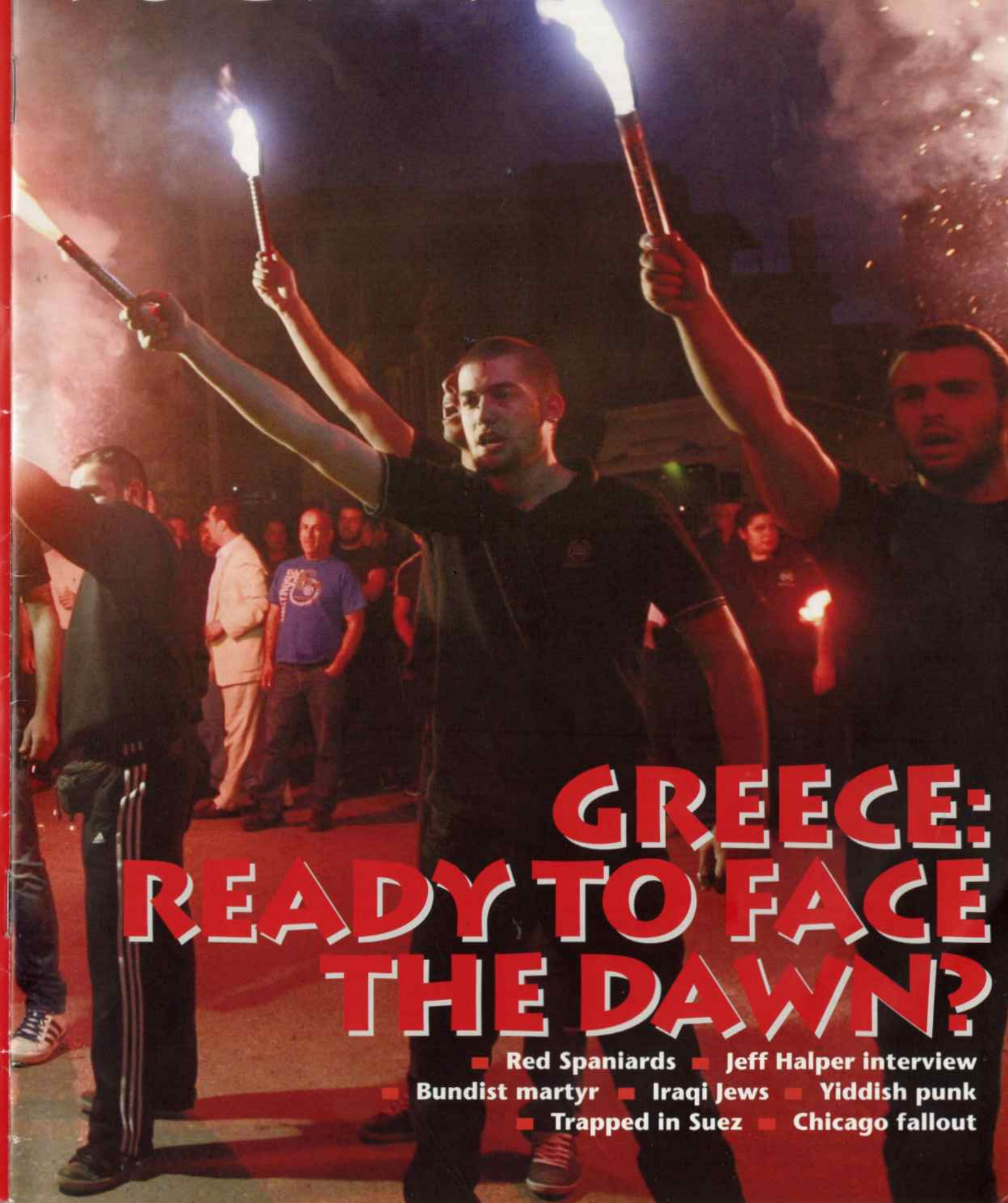
- ▶ highlight the clash of political, economic and cultural interests in our community;
- ▶ encourage the democratisation of all aspects of Jewish life and publicise and support all democratic forces in the Jewish community;
- ▶ highlight the struggle for equality for women and gays and lesbians within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

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JEWISH SOCIALIST



GREECE: READY TO FACE THE DAWN?

- Red Spaniards ■ Jeff Halper interview
- Bundist martyr ■ Iraqi Jews ■ Yiddish punk
- Trapped in Suez ■ Chicago fallout

Socialists frequently argue that when the capitalist crisis deepens and generates more fundamental and sustained challenges to the rule of dominant economic forces, the far right invariably prospers. These growing forces exploit new opportunities to falsely scapegoat those they wish to blame for the crisis, while ruling elites happily encourage lies that obscure the real causes of economic misery for so many people.

In these circumstances, anti-fascist forces usually fall into a firefighting role against racist and fascist intimidation and violence, which rarely seems to afford them the time to go into a deeper analysis of where and how far right forces are winning adherents, and what makes some groups and individuals more or less susceptible to being recruited.

Piers Mostyn (p10) provides an important forensic analysis of the roots of the current far-right resurgence in Greece, principally through the Golden Dawn party. He identifies the multiple roots of its reactionary ideological standpoints in the Greek context, and ruling class involvement with these ideologies. This is precisely the kind of deeper understanding that we need in order to mount a multifaceted and effective challenge to them.

UKIP are no Golden Dawn. Their roots are not deep at all, and their ideological weight is pretty insubstantial, but neither can they be dismissed, à la Ken Clarke, simply as "clowns". We need to reckon with their capacity to pull the "debate" well to the right on certain key issues, especially immigration and multiculturalism, but also law and order, same sex marriage, and defence. And we cannot ignore their ability to win a hearing among poorer sections of the community who reject the Conservatives.

A more sinister aspect of their recent campaigning, especially apparent on their television broadcasts, was their enthusiastic support for the Armed Forces – a support they hope will be reciprocated. This follows similar, and partially successful, efforts by the BNP and EDL to win support at various levels of the military.

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It is no surprise that some ex-members of declining fascist groups are resurfacing as UKIP candidates, and embarrassing UKIP's party managers. Fascist salutes and a propensity to blame Jews for the Holocaust go beyond party policy. But antifascists should not use these examples to brand UKIP as merely a more respectable version of the same problem. Populist racists far exceed serious fascists in UKIP's ranks. It is a different animal, with its own specific dangers.

Tackling UKIP requires a more sophisticated approach to racism. With Muslims suffering a repeated ideological battering by mainstream racists, the antiracist and antifascist forces have tended to see the threat principally through the lens of Islamophobia. However, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Romanians, and Gypsies are joining a range of Muslim communities in the front line of xenophobic attacks now, and the antifascist movement needs to catch up.

When UKIP stokes up hostility to asylum seekers and Muslim communities, it does so from a position in which it presents itself as a populist anti-establishment voice. Politically, though, it is primarily a threat to the Conservative party, and we are likely to see a certain amount of compromise by Conservatives towards UKIP that will play itself out in tactical alliances at local government level. UKIP will gain more political credibility but lose some of its radical edge as it becomes assimilated to the mainstream.

Socialists should be more disturbed by UKIP spreading its reactionary messages among working class communities. And this will hit home after 2015, when it is likely that Labour or a Labour-Liberal coalition will command a parliamentary majority and impose more austerity on the poor. That is when a renewed and sophisticated far right force could capitalise on the racist, homophobic, nationalist elements among the working class and squeezed lower middle class, to which UKIP is currently giving a voice and a home.

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Cover photo: Supporters of the far right Golden Dawn party (Chryssi Avgi) celebrate after the early election results outside their party offices in Thessaloniki, Greece, 17th June 2012. Photo: EPA/STR

Censors censured

A test case against the University and College Union (UCU) for institutional antisemitism, supported by major forces in and around the Jewish community, backfired disastrously when an Employment Tribunal dismissed the claims in scathing terms.

Ronnie Fraser, a lecturer at Barnet College took the UCU to the Employment Tribunal. He accused it of having harassed him in breach of the Equality Laws because of its handling of an extended Israel-Palestine debate, going back to 2006. In was, in essence, "institutionally antisemitic". The last straw for Fraser was when the 2011 Annual Conference passed a motion rejecting any use of the EUMC's so-called Working Definition of Antisemitism. His case was the culmination of a campaign in and around the union which has seen a number of its Jewish members resigning in protest over the years, while many other Jewish members have come out strongly in support of the union.

This division is about limits on the right to criticise Israel. The EUMC working definition works on the presumption that criticism of Israel is likely to be antisemitic. It puts the onus on critics to prove otherwise. Fraser et al would go even further; they seem to find

relatively little to distinguish criticism of Israel from antisemitism, *tout court*. In the Jewish Chronicle Fraser claimed that bringing this case "is my way of saying never again".

In hearings lasting over many weeks, Fraser's leading lawyer was Anthony Julius. MPs John Mann and Denis MacShane, who ran the All-Party Parliamentary Committee "inquiry" into antisemitism, appeared in his support, as did Jeremy Newmark, Chief Executive of the Jewish Leadership Council, and 26 other witnesses.

Much of what was said was woolly, generalised argument about antisemitism, and irrelevant in court. On the matters actually before the Tribunal, Fraser and his team lost big time. The Tribunal investigated all 10 of the allegations the claimant made, and gave judgement on them one by one, regarding "almost the entire case as manifestly unmeritorious". On one issue alone – whether the union should have revoked an invitation to Bongani Masuku of South Africa's Cosatu – the tribunal felt there was a serious argument, but it was legally out of time.

For the rest, the conclusions are as unambiguous as they are devastating: "Lessons should be learned from this sorry saga. We greatly regret that the case was ever brought ... it represents an impermissible

attempt to achieve a political end by litigious means." The evidence of Jeremy Newmark and Jane Ashworth about the 2008 UCU Congress debates was "rejected as untrue". The evidence of the two MPs, whom the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council have relied on as their closest allies on the issue of antisemitism in relation to Israel, was described as "glib" and unhelpful.

The Tribunal was "also troubled by the implications of the claim. Underlying it we sense a worrying disregard for pluralism, tolerance and freedom of expression." It viewed the "gargantuan scale" of the case, with "a host of witnesses, a 20-day allocation and a trial bundle of 23 volumes ... as manifestly excessive and disproportionate." They had to remind themselves frequently, they said, that "despite appearances, we were not conducting a public inquiry into antisemitism but considering a legal claim for unlawful harassment."

In particular, we should note the Tribunal's conclusion that, while Jewishness is clearly a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, "a belief in the Zionist project or an attachment to Israel or any similar sentiment cannot amount to a protected characteristic. It is not intrinsically a part of Jewishness..." Amen to that.

Richard Kuper

Revisionists routed

When mass protests blocked Mosley's fascists from invading the East End in October 1936, Mosley described it as a "humiliation" at the hands of "reds and Jews". The Board of Deputies had famously told Jews to stay indoors rather than demonstrate. They were roundly ignored. In the following months, many leading BUF members left demoralised. Some defected to the antifascists. Mosley promised his supporters that they would win council seats in their East End strongholds five months later. This was hot air. Four out of five voters rejected them, returning Labour councillors by massive margins.

Generations of antifascists have explicitly drawn on Cable Street as an inspiration in their struggles. But a rewriting of this history, more generous to both Mosley's movement and the Board of Deputies, was aired by Jewish academics at London's Wiener Library in March. The library recently obtained the 1930s Board of Deputies Defence Committee minutes on long-term loan, and held a day conference on inter-war Anglo-Jewish defence. The curtainraiser was a debate pitting Professor Geoffrey Alderman and Dr Daniel Tilles against David Rosenberg, author of *Battle for the East End* and an editorial member of *Jewish Socialist* magazine.

Tilles claimed that Cable Street was a disaster for the Jews; Mosley's movement grew afterwards; its antisemitism got stronger in words and deeds; and Board of Deputies strategies, especially from 1936 onwards, were successful. Alderman characterised the antifascist

mobilisation at Cable Street as a PR disaster organised by communist and socialist supporters of dictatorship, and an attack on British liberties. But he was less inclined to praise the Board, citing Lionel Cohen, a Vice President from 1934-39, as a strong admirer of fascism.

David Rosenberg demolished Tilles' claims, showing that Mosley's fascists already subscribed to Hitlerite antisemitism months before the battle of Cable Street, describing Jews as "a species of sub humanity" and "rats and vermin from the gutters of Whitechapel", and pledging to "rid the country of the Jews". It could hardly get worse. He also quoted from parliamentary debates on antisemitic terror in the East End that took place several months before October 1936. Rosenberg also challenged Alderman's red-baiting, by praising the role of local socialists and communists in aiding a mass grassroots rebellion, but pointing out that the mobilisation massively exceeded the number of local political activists

The audience turned their fire on Tilles and Alderman, disagreeing strongly and angrily with their revisionism. One audience member, whose father served three months in prison after Cable Street, said Tilles seemed to know very little about the geography of the East End. In one bizarre contribution a prominent and longstanding defence worker for the Board of Deputies made the risible claim that the Communist Party only mobilised for the battle because the Board of Deputies paid for their leaflets. Mosley could not have made it up!

David Rosenberg's book, *Battle for the East End: Jewish responses to fascism in the 1930s*, is available from Five Leaves Publications, £9.99.

The Campaign Against Prison Slavery was formed in 2002 by ex-prisoners, prisoner support groups and activists, to campaign against compulsory labour in UK prisons and for the abolition of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme

Compulsory labour features in most prison systems globally, whether it be forced hard labour as punishment, direct "reparation" for the costs of imprisonment, prison jobs such as kitchen or cleaning work that keep administration costs down, or workshop jobs where prisoners manufacture the cell doors and prison bars for the jails that house them.

Prisoners are being used to create capital for private sector companies, either through labour in prison workshops or through being handed over to the global outsourcing and security companies that run private prisons, who often "subcontract" them out to third party companies.

The UK prison population has risen by more than 30,000 in the last 15 years to approximately 86,000. Wages for work in UK prisons are as low as £3 per day. www.againstprisonslavery.org

CHANGE
THE
WORLD

RECONSTRUCTION FROM THE RUINS

JEFF HALPER is the director of a widely respected direct action movement, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD). He is also an original thinker with challenging analyses of how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might be solved. **DAVID ROSENBERG** spoke to him on his recent visit to London

"We are not a relief group. Our work is political not humanitarian," says Jeff Halper. "We use house demolitions as a vehicle for resisting the occupation, for being in solidarity with the Palestinians, for exposing how the occupation works. Our goal is to end the occupation and achieve a just peace."

Since 1967 Israel has demolished 28,000 homes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, directly affecting the lives of more than 100,000 residents. "Some homes have been demolished two or three times. We have one family whose home was demolished six times," says Halper. In a disturbing twist to the Israeli government's agenda, he notes that, "Last year Israel demolished three times more houses of Israeli citizens – Palestinians or Bedouins inside Israel – than it did of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. This has to do with the displacement of the population – it is ethnic cleansing."

Halper's direct action group has rebuilt 186 homes since it was formed. Given the scale of destruction, this construction programme is largely symbolic, but the families whose homes have been rebuilt must appreciate the humanitarian benefits as well as the political significance.

Halper formed ICAHD in 1997. Rather than rivaling or duplicating the work of other Israeli organisations that were critical of the Occupation, from Peace Now, to Rabbis for Human Rights, to Yesh Gvul and Gush Shalom, his organisation focuses on a unique practical role, and mobilises activists from existing organisations for actions that ICAHD initiates. Any new faces join a core of mainly young activists who are regulars. "It's not always possible to resist the demolition of homes," says Halper, "if they demolish them in the middle of the night or early in the morning – but if we can, we get there in front of the bulldozers. We chain ourselves to houses."

What is very striking and positive about this initiative, though, is its direct cooperation with Palestinians. "We only work through Palestinian organisations," says Halper. "We don't go out and say we are going to build this house for this Palestinian. That's not our job. We work through Palestinian organisations. It could be the Palestinian Land Defence Committee, the municipality, Fatah – whoever is connected. They go out and decide which house should be built, and then we come in. We buy the materials – all local – and hire the Palestinian workers, so that we are building under Palestinian supervision."

Halper knows that their practical work gives them credibility with Palestinians, but it also gives them a first-hand knowledge of Israel's intentions in the Occupied Territories. ICAHD uses this knowledge to develop maps and materials that assist their advocacy work with governments and civil society

groups in different countries against the occupation. Halper regards the committee's work outside the region as crucial. "We believe that peace is going to come about from outside pressures, not from inside," he says. His organisation arranges tours of the Occupied Territories. "This has always been an integral part of our work from the beginning. We try to get our analysis of the conflict out to the wider public, whether they are politicians, journalists, or academic study groups. We use maps to show them how the occupation is constructed and how it works, and what the logic is: why is there a settlement here and not there? Why is there a road here? It empowers them to go back and do advocacy. Almost all the people who come on our tours are from abroad. That is really our target population."

That world outside Israel/Palestine may be familiar with the term 'settlement' but unaware of the scale. "The word 'settlement' minimises it," Halper explains. "You are talking about cities, whether you are dealing with neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem or settlements like Ma'ale Adumim of 50,000 residents."

It is that deep and concrete awareness of the changing facts of the occupation that has led ICAHD to radical conclusions about how the conflict might be solved. "We have actually said for a number of years that the 'two-state solution' has gone. The Israeli facts on the ground – the settlements, the highways, the walls – all of that is so massive and permanent that no Israeli government could ever remove them. It can't be done politically, and there is absolutely no will on the part of the international community to do it."

But he recognises that the gradual disappearance of any likelihood of a two-state solution has created a crisis within Palestinian political movements. "We are not Palestinians. We have to wait on the Palestinians to advocate it, then we can support them. Our Palestinian partners on the left in particular are stuck, because the Palestinians can see the two-state solution has gone. But they are in a national liberation struggle and their only chances of getting a modicum of a state, and some self-determination is a two-state solution. So for them to abandon that is like abandoning the national liberation struggle. So where do you go from there?"

"You can't be in a political struggle without an endgame," insists Halper. For him and his close colleagues that endgame is some form of one-state solution, "either a democratic state or a bi-national state" but for the Palestinians, he adds "that means shifting from a national liberation struggle to a civil rights struggle. They are not there yet."

He is disturbed that resistance to the Occupation, on the one hand, and theorising about the nature of Israel and Zionism on the other, have both become disconnected from a programme

towards a solution. "There is a process going on today that I call the 'normalisation of resistance,'" he says. "There are all kinds of resistance – the kids in Bil'in, the Palestinians' Popular Committees, the Freedom Theatre in Jenin, resistance films, the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] campaigns – but they are all completely disconnected from any solution or any programme. You have an adrenaline rush when you fight the soldiers and then you go home live your normal life for six days. Then the next weekend you fight them again. It has become very ritualistic and it's not going anywhere. A lot of Palestinian and Israeli activists aren't even thinking about a solution, as if resistance is an end in and of itself. But when you have nothing to advocate, you are stuck with a tactic."

At the same time the analyses of Israel and Zionism have become more rarefied. "In the last four years or so this whole discourse of 'Zionism as colonialism' has got stronger, where Zionism is merely settler-colonialism like the French in Algeria. It has no legitimacy. Israel is simply a colonial construct." This, he says, leads to an attitude that, "There is no such thing as 'Israeli'. We are not going to legitimise it." The problem Halper perceives is that "they go to places that have a logic but are absolutely irrelevant in terms of actually dealing with the reality. The ideology has disconnected from the political reality. It is floating into the stratosphere."

He argues, "If we are going to have a democratic equal state, one-person one vote, you can't ignore the national part." Sections of the Palestinian movement who have accepted the need to focus on "one state" are retreating from an inclusive solution. "The assumption between us and the Palestinians was always that, whatever the solution – two states, one state – it would be inclusive. One of the titles of the One State Movement declarations is 'One Democratic State in Palestine'. What does that mean? Are they saying this should be a Palestinian one state. Jews can live here as Jews, but not as Israelis. Not national?"

He perceives a different kind of disconnection within Israel itself, epitomised by the recent general election, in which, says Halper, "the occupation has been turned into a complete non-issue. It wasn't an election issue at all." Whereas the parties of the right have long sought to normalise the occupation, the attitude displayed by the Labour Party was: "We are not dealing with the occupation. That is not our issue. We are a social democratic party dealing with economic issues."

He sees that as indicative of a consensus that has been moulded within Israeli society, which shares a self-fulfilling belief that peace with the 'Arabs' is impossible, and yet it is a very satisfactory situation. According to Halper, the way most Israeli Jews look at it is: "The 'Arabs' (we don't call them Palestinians) are a permanent enemy, you can't trust them. They don't want peace so we have to keep control for security. We control the whole country. The 'Arabs' have been pacified. They are somewhere over there, behind a wall, they don't



both us, there haven't been attacks for years."

Opinion polls suggest that most Israelis support a two-state solution, which implies a recognition of Palestinian rights but, says Halper, there is no desire to move towards any solution while the security argument trumps everything. He cites other opinion polls, which indicated that 95% of Israelis supported both invasions of Gaza in recent years. Those figures fell somewhat while those conflicts dragged on, but nevertheless remained very high. Halper says that these figures are "way beyond Right-Left. Anywhere in the world if you have a society like Israel that is open, educated, has every internet thing, 57 TV channels, where half the country travels abroad every year, where you have universities and libraries, and you get 95% of the people to agree on anything – it shows us something extraordinary is going on."

The implications for Palestinian citizens within Israel of this consensus are very serious. "As the country goes rightwards, the xenophobia of the Jewish community rises," says Halper. "You don't have any blocks to fascist legislation. There was a law passed a few years ago that if an Israeli citizen marries someone from the Occupied Territories or any Arab country you cannot bring your spouse into the country. If I marry a woman from Ramallah I have to leave my country. This is a fundamental violation of my human rights. It is obviously intended though for 'Arabs'. Labour didn't resist, the Supreme Court didn't resist. The situation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel is critical. They have no legal defences. Their situation is an inch better than Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza."

The more obvious clashes within Israeli society have been ideological battles between secular and increasingly brazen and powerful religious fundamentalist sectors, but there are also economic conflicts. Many Israelis took to the streets as part of the social movements, seeking a fairer economic distribution, but Halper notes that in contrast with many western societies undergoing severe economic troubles, for many sectors in Israel, the economy is booming. The foundations of this

David Rosenberg (left) talks to ICAHD's director, Jeff Halper.

ISRAEL IS CONTRIBUTING MUCH MORE TO THE CAPITALIST ELITE BY GIVING THEM THE TECHNOLOGY, THE WEAPONRY, THE TACTICS, TO SECURITISE THEIR OWN SOCIETY AND TO ENFORCE HEGEMONY ABROAD.

Alternative Tours of Israel and Palestine

ICAHND
The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
الجمعية الإسرائيلية ضد هدم البيوت



economic strength, he believes, are also the basis of Israel's political clout in the world. It is "based on arms, Homeland Security exports and diamonds – that's a pretty recession-proof economy. The worse things get, the better things are!"

Halper argues that a deeper understanding of these economic aspects, and how they intertwine with politics, also suggests how people around the world can contribute to a solution for the Palestinians, not only in the Palestinians' interests but also their own.

Despite the obvious daily injustices of the occupation, Israel continues to enjoy political support from the USA and Britain – countries that are no strangers to benefiting from injustice, but also countries seeking to build stronger economic ties in the Muslim world. Israel's continued occupation and mistreatment

of the Palestinian people are felt as running sores throughout the Muslim world.

"The assumption in politics," says Halper, "is that countries formulate their policies on the basis of interests. Kissinger used to say 'countries don't have friends, they have interests'. If you look at normal politics you are hard pressed to think what is Britain's interest in supporting the Occupation, or the United States for that matter. You are alienating yourself from the whole Muslim world. You've got the Arab Spring going on. You've got Muslim immigration from an unstable area that you don't like. You've got energy issues. You've got wars in the region. What is the interest? There is an elephant in the room that we are not seeing because we are looking at this from the point of view of interest in the 'normal' way and we are having trouble."

That elephant, says Halper, is "security politics". "The arms trade is a trillion dollar industry but Homeland Security is now as big as the arms trade. Put that in and a whole new set of interests begins to emerge. A British general, Rupert Smith, wrote a book called *The Utility of Force*. It says that the new paradigm of war today is war among the people, not inter-state wars. The US wants to control the peripheries for the smooth flow of capital but the peripheries are also moving into the core through migrations, and there is greater poverty because of neoliberalism. You are starting to have a 'securocratic' core among the elites. Israel is a very sophisticated country technologically, which has decades of counter-insurgency behind it. They have these skills the core countries are lacking. Huge arsenals of nuclear submarines and F35s are increasingly irrelevant. Israel is the pioneer of drones. The American predator drone is an Israeli drone. Israel has inserted itself within the Military Industrial Complex in the West. It is enforcing the hegemony of the core. That's where Israel gets its clout. And that explains why a country like Britain

supports Israel, more than guilt over the Holocaust or the 'Jewish lobby'."

Among American elites, though, the commitment to Israel is more contested, Halper believes. "The top echelons – the professional military – are getting more and more critical of relations with Israel. When Petraeus was a General of the Central Command, he testified before the Senate that Israel is costing American soldiers lives in Afghanistan. The Americans are so tied up with the Occupation that they can't get anywhere near normalising relations with the Muslim world. The other half of the Pentagon, though, are the defence contractors who are making a fortune. The generals would like to see a resolution and are getting more and more impatient with Israel, but they are being held in check by defence contractors. Everyone talks about AIPAC, but the defence contractors are a pro-Israel lobby that spends seven times more in Congress than AIPAC does. That, plus the fact you have AIPAC and Christian fundamentalists, is what keep the United States in line. But it has much more to do with Israel's role in the Military Industrial Complex than it does with any 'Jewish lobby'."

Another aspect of Homeland Security is Israel's role as a world leader in biometrics. It has taken over airport security all over the world and necessarily works very closely with police forces, including the British police. Halper cites the work of the geographer, Stephen Graham, author of *Cities Under Siege* in which "he talks about the Israel's role on the one hand in the militarisation of the police and on the other hand in the 'policification' of the military. They now talk about regime change and nation-building."

Halper argues that "Israel has always blurred the distinction between the civil and the military. Countries like Britain have tried to keep them separate. But now they are coming together, especially after 9/11. Israel is contributing much more to the capitalist elite by giving them the technology, the weaponry, the tactics, to securitise their own society and to enforce hegemony abroad. And if that can be done while pacifying the Palestinians, preventing a third intifada, there is no motivation on the part of the United States or Europe to resolve the conflict."

For Halper the front line of struggle is in civil society, not only in the Occupied Palestinian Territories but also around the world. "Civil society has to be the leading actor. It has to formulate the solutions not governments. Governments don't have the solution. I go into foreign ministries all over Europe and they say 'the two-state solution'. We say, you know it has gone. What's Plan B? And they say there is no Plan B. It is just keeping the lid on, that's all. The Palestinians have to be the ones to formulate another direction. If they don't do that, that makes it easy for the governments to say there is no solution. The idea that governments resolve conflicts just isn't true. Unless they are pushed by us, there is no resolution. We have to mobilise the people and get them to see that it isn't only a Palestine issue but an issue in their own community, too. Gaza is not just over there. Gaza is in Europe too. Let them understand how it is feeding into the militarised society they are living in, so they begin to put pressure on their governments to resolve this conflict."

Obama in Jerusalem

After President Obama spoke to Israeli students in Jerusalem in March this year, I attended a meeting addressed by Prof Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinian Authority's diplomatic representative in the UK. He dismissed the speech in a few words. Quoting some of Obama's statements, I asked him how they could be used to further the Palestinian struggle. He responded by saying the US president could not be trusted, the US was not an honest broker, and it was just words that would have no consequent actions.

This typified the reaction amongst supporters of the Palestinians. One comment on the Jewish Socialist Group's Facebook page, said "I won't listen. ... I still wait for Obama to walk the walk, not only to talk the talk." But we need to listen to and analyse Obama's speech. Not because we have illusions about him or the US, or expect America to deliver justice and freedom for the Palestinians, but because we should consider what lies behind the President's visit to Israel and his statements that are an unexpected departure.

Between two sections of his speech that pressed every button a Zionist or Israeli could hope to hear, and pledging US military support to Israel, Obama made three statements that deserve our attention:

Peace is necessary. Indeed, it is the only path to true security. You can be the generation that permanently secures the Zionist dream, or you can face a growing challenge to its future. Given the demographics west of the Jordan River, the only way for Israel to endure and thrive as a Jewish and democratic state is through the realisation of an independent and viable Palestine. Given the frustration in the international community, Israel must reverse an undertow of isolation. And given the march of technology, the only way to truly protect the Israeli people is through the absence of war – because no wall is high enough, and no Iron Dome is strong enough, to stop every enemy from inflicting harm.

The Palestinian people's right to self-determination and justice must also be recognised. ... It is not fair that a Palestinian child cannot grow up in a state of her own, and lives with the presence of a foreign army that controls the movements of her parents every single day. It is not just when settler violence against Palestinians goes unpunished. It is not right to prevent Palestinians from farming their lands; to restrict a student's ability to move around the West Bank; or to displace Palestinian families from their home. Neither occupation nor expulsion is the answer. Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people in their own land.

It is impossible to have a Jewish, democratic state and at the same time to control all of Eretz Israel. If we insist on fulfilling the dream in its entirety, we are liable to lose it all [quoting former Israeli General and PM, Ariel Sharon].

That is hardly a programme of demands that

socialists, anti-Zionists or Palestinians would support but we wouldn't expect the President to come to the US's key regional ally and announce that henceforth America would support the revolutionary movement of the Arab dispossessed and forcibly overturn the policies of the elected Israeli government. Would an Israeli audience have listened to the nub of the content if it hadn't been wrapped up in supportive messages?

The worst case scenario is that this is just personal rhetoric from Obama, and that no actions will result. But I think we should use his words to suggest to our communal leaders that, when their strongest ally says these things, they should listen. And Palestinian demonstrators facing Israeli forces at the Separation Wall, house demolitions and land-grabs would make a powerful image if they carried banners quoting the President of the US.

This is not a personal vanity project for Obama. His pointed invitation to students from all the Israeli universities except the newly-declared University at Ariel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories isn't going to win votes from the Zionist lobby. It's far more likely that he is representing a significant section of the American ruling class.

Palestine, an issue close to the Arab people's hearts, is becoming a more significant problem in America's strategy to ensure long term physical and ideological domination of the Middle East. Obama is telling Israelis that this is as good as it gets; go for a two state solution while you are still powerful. Forget expulsions or transfers. Forget dreams of a Greater Israel.

Obama may personally believe these things. Or not. It makes no difference. His speech reflects a recognition by a section of the major western power that the line cannot be held for ever, so America wants to get its preferred solution in place now, while it can exert some leverage.

Netanyahu's grudging apology to Turkey for the attack on the Mavi Marmara aid ship could have been made at any time but was deliberately held back till the media could report that it was brokered by the US President. America wants its regional allies to co-operate.

Behind this is an understanding that the Arab peoples are stirring, a fact dismissed by Hassassian, who saw no hope in events outside Palestine, and who did not mention the increasingly powerful demonstrations, hunger strikes and other non-violent protests by Palestinians. How much pressure will be put upon the parties to negotiate and reach a settlement approved by corporate US remains to be seen.

Socialists will have a different vision of the future Middle East from those of either the US or the present Palestinian leadership. That shouldn't stop us from supporting demands for Palestinian self-determination and freedom, nor deafen us to what the players in this conflict are saying.

Obama's speech should encourage Palestinians and their supporters to renew their struggle with vigour, using the President's words to back up their demands when appropriate. The future is shaped by those who participate, not by those who abstain.

We need to listen carefully when the President of the United States departs from the usual script, argues PAUL SELIGMAN

TRAPPED FOR

TREVOR BOULT tells the story of 14 merchant ships that were unable to leave the Suez Canal after the Six Day War

Merchant seafarers would not normally expect to find themselves in the middle of a war zone during the course of their lawful voyages. But in June 1967 the crews of 14 ships were caught up in a conflict that trapped their ships for the next eight years. The vessels – which hailed from eight different countries, including the UK, Germany, Sweden and Poland – were in a northbound convoy through the Suez Canal when Israel went to war with Egypt.

The hostilities were to enter the history books as the Six-Day War, but its legacy was to affect the 14 unfortunate ships for the following eight years. There were four British ships: Port Line's Port Invercargill and Blue Star's Scottish Star, and the stately Melampus and Agapenor, of Blue Funnel Line.

For the crews initially involved, it was to become an often dangerous but exciting time, which many described as the best of their seafaring lives.

The peace of the summer's morning was suddenly shattered as Israeli jets streaked out of the rising sun towards Egypt. They appeared to use the ships as cover, crossing the canal at mast height: their objective, to pre-emptively bomb an Egyptian airbase. Ships' crews were able to look down at Egyptian soldiers dug in along the banks, their guns disconcertingly pointing directly at them.

The convoy increased speed, the sooner to reach Great Bitter Lake – the widest part of the canal, well known for its salinity, which is hostile to marine growth. It was observed that many vessels were seeking to find space to anchor in its confines. The Egyptian authorities came to realise that this was an untenable situation. They began to move them out, both north and south, tankers taking precedence over passenger ships. It has been estimated that some 50 vessels were able to exit the danger zone.

Aboard the Melampus the crew began to feel relieved as their turn grew steadily closer but this changed to consternation when they were advised that Egypt had blockaded both ends of the Suez Canal to prevent its potential use by Israel. Amongst the crew's immediate fears, questions arose. Would they be taken hostage? Would they ever see home again? It soon became apparent that the canal was going to be sealed for a prolonged

period. As the sands of time blew off the desert, building up on the decks of the trapped ships, by their appearance they came to be collectively known as the Yellow Fleet.

They soon witnessed the desperate exodus of Egyptian refugees and the military, fleeing the battlefield and massing on the East Bank of the Bitter Lake. Many took to the water, in boats or by swimming. In what was to become an acknowledged humanitarian act, the Melampus initiated assistance. Her motor lifeboat was deployed to aid in towing various small craft laden with refugees towards the canal banks, flying a white flag and the red ensign. Numerous men were picked out of the water en route. A German and Polish ship also delivered similar assistance. These actions were later recognised in the Egyptian press: "The Egyptian Government and Suez Canal

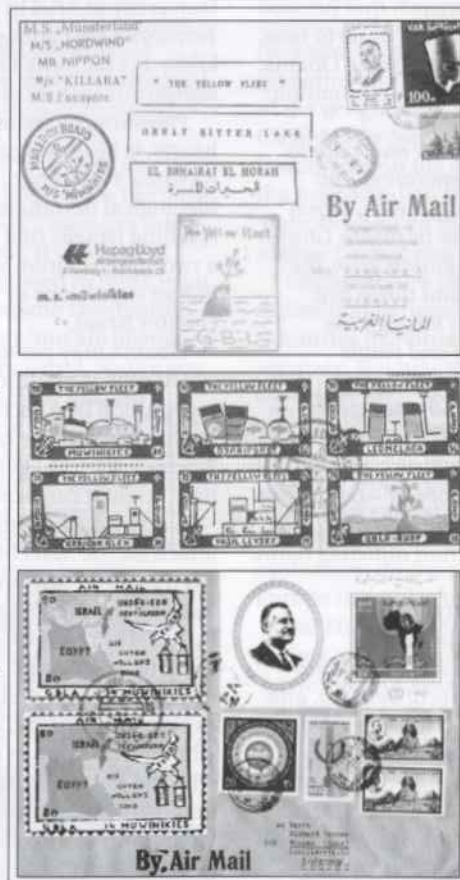
Authority convey their many thanks for your co-operation towards repatriating our soldiers and for the food and medical assistance rendered to them."

In the coming days, communication between the four British ships identified particular shortages of supplies. They decided to pool their resources. In the middle of June, the shipping agent made a timely arrival with much needed provisions and replenishment of fresh water. After a further two months, the agent advised that the Egyptian authorities had agreed to allow all British ships' crews to be evacuated, if they so wished.

At this time, Blue Funnel Line decided to considerably reduce the crew numbers of Melampus and Agapenor. Onboard Melampus, the unannounced arrival of a pilot cutter with a relief crew came as a surprise. The mood of those leaving was summed up by one of their company:

"Melampus looked majestic as we pulled away and headed for home. We all wondered if we would ever see her again."

In October 1967, the captains and crews of all 14 ships met aboard the Melampus. They founded the Great Bitter Lake Association, the main purpose of which was to promote and cultivate friendships, mutual assistance and joint undertakings. It also came to transcend the rival political ideologies of the ongoing Cold War, as ships from the Eastern Bloc and the West fostered the universal camaraderie of the sea.



This page: stamps and envelopes created by the seafarers.
Opposite page: satellite view of The Bitter Lake

EIGHT YEARS



The crews kept busy, mainly with maintenance work. Among their leisure activities were regular meetings for film nights, card games and athletics competitions.

In October 1968, the "Bitter Lake Olympics" were staged, coinciding with the Olympic Games proper in Mexico City. The 14 disciplines included fishing, sailing, acrobatics, football, archery and sprinting. Handcrafted medals were presented to the winners. Several of the sports became regular events. Lifeboats were equipped with enhanced sailing gear, and a yacht club was founded.

One particular creative activity grew to attract a specialist interest from all over the world. The ships of the Yellow Fleet began to produce their very own local postage stamps. More accurately, these were labels and had no postal validity. The imagery of the labels all symbolised the desire for freedom and escape, neither of which were proving attainable. They were affixed to envelopes and endorsed with "Mailed on Board" stamps.

On Sundays, those involved met aboard the German ship Nordwind. Bringing with them their rubber stamps, they worked together in a small "ships cancellation office". To please collectors, they took pains to comply with diverse mailing requests. The reverse of each cover was serviced with labels from all the participating vessels. Real postage had to be added for items to be mailed.

In 1969, to save even more personnel, the Yellow Fleet was moored together in several groups. Each raft became known by a composite from the ships' names within a group, such as Ledmelaga, and Portstar. The two Blue Funnel Line ships became the Agalampus.

The Suez Canal was reopened in 1975. The

German vessels Nordwind and Munsterland were the only two ships of the fleet that were able to sail under their own power. They returned to their home port of Hamburg. A turnout of 30,000 people greeted their arrival. The Munsterland was finally able to complete her round trip to Australia. The Melampus and Agapenor were towed out of the canal and discharged. They reportedly went on to trade for several more years.

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Put your left foot forward this summer...
Join a walking tour through radical times and places

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The Radical Jewish East End

Sunday 9 June 11am-1.30pm:
Anti-Fascist Footprints

Monday 24 June 6.30pm-8.30pm:
No Gods No Masters: agitators and reformers in Bloomsbury

Sunday 30 June 2.30pm-5pm:
The Spark of Rebellion in Bow and Mile End

Fee £8 (£5 unwaged)
All walks are led by David Rosenberg and can be booked online at www.eastendwalks.com or by emailing david@eastendwalks.com



THE LONG ROOTS OF XENOPHOBIA

With Greece's economy in tailspin, the far right is resurgent. PIERS MOSTYN unpicks the history of Golden Dawn and assesses the threat

Last year's dramatic elections in Greece were marked by a significant political polarisation. The new left party Syriza came second, with nearly 27% of the vote, and the fascist Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn, GD) came fifth, with nearly 7%. The far right as a whole (depending on how you define it) commanded over twice this support. Since then Golden Dawn's support in the opinion polls has grown to double figures, making it the third most popular party.

The rise of Syriza and GD reflects massive popular hostility to a political establishment which, at the behest of international financial institutions and the European Union, has made ordinary Greek people pay for the country's economic meltdown. There has been continuous popular resistance, in the form of mass demonstrations and strikes, to an austerity offensive that has seen the economy shrinking continuously for five years. Unemployment is spiralling towards 30% and there is mass pauperisation. By 2011, 28.4% were unable to provide for their basic needs, and today it's worse. Prime Minister Samaras warned of a Weimar-style collapse. Meanwhile the incompetence, corruption and venality of the ruling elite, and its responsibility for the crisis, have been laid bare.

The government has used violence, not only against unions and the anti-austerity movement, but increasingly against Greece's immigrant community. Thousands have been rounded up and detained in makeshift camps, and thousands more deported – scapegoating them for the crisis and whipping up reactionary nationalism.

This context illustrates the perils of taking for granted that a radicalisation to the right, not just to the left, can be triggered in these circumstances.

The immediate cause of GD's rapid growth is the economic crisis and the consequent plummeting of confidence in the traditional ruling parties. Other factors include the tainting of LAOS (previously the main far right party) by its participation in an earlier pro-austerity coalition government, and a populist GD strategy of street campaigning and welfare work, aimed at filling the vacuum left by the disappearance of state services.

GD's reactionary politics have become legitimised by some government ministers and media commentators pushing the political centre of gravity to the right. This has emboldened its supporters to engage in physical violence, particularly against immigrants. Protests against an allegedly "blasphemous" play with a "homosexual theme" led to it being pulled by theatre management. GD leaders are contemptuous of the law, and they talk of "civil war".

Sections of the ruling class and the state appear to regard GD as a serious alternative. Rumours that the party is being bankrolled by millionaires may not yet be proven but, with evidence that officers have tortured anti-fascist demonstrators and collaborated with GD, few doubt the party's boast that it has the support of over 50% of the police.

Whatever the immediate spark, mass fascist movements have social, cultural and political roots. To be effective, any opposition to GD must address this underlying foundation, which stretches back to the foundation of the modern Greek state.

The ruling class's political formation was marked from the outset by underdevelopment and dependence on the "Great Powers". Although there were occasional liberal or progressive tendencies, this elite repeatedly resorted to nationalism and authoritarianism to compensate for this weakness and to crush working class challenges.

The 1829 victory in the war of independence, which followed centuries of Ottoman rule, was primarily the gift of Britain, France and Russia. Different factions of the Greek ruling elite were identified with each of these competing powers. The head of state was a monarch imposed from outside and constitutionally under Great Power control. This was a pale reflection of European bourgeois revolutionary nationalism of the time, which, for all its faults, at least made some claim to self-determination and democracy. Greece was much smaller then than it is today, and didn't include the north or most islands. Its economic underdevelopment and the state's lack of political legitimacy generated political and economic crises.

As the 19th century progressed, the main solution was the "Megali Idea" or The Great Idea – an ambitious strategy of territorial expansion to unify geographically, linguistically and culturally, disparate "Greeks" who then coexisted with other communities and whose main connection was adherence to the Orthodox Christian Church. As the century neared its close, this Church was riven by schisms and splits, expressing rival Balkan nationalisms.

By the 1920s, Greece had expanded to roughly the present territory. But the underpinning reactionary, nationalist ideology, and successive political splits and crises, shaped a ruling class which, instead of unifying, strengthening and becoming more coherent, was dysfunctional, divided and unable to break from its financial and military reliance on foreign intervention.

Greek nationalism in the 19th century increasingly crunched up against competing

nationalisms in Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia and Albania. As the Ottoman Empire disintegrated and declined, local newly formed Balkan states attempted to fill the vacuum under the tutelage of rival imperial power blocs. Cultures and communities that had coexisted for centuries came to be seen as alien. This gave an increasingly sectarian and xenophobic shape to the national identity being forged by the Greek bourgeoisie.

This was ironic, given the relatively cosmopolitan Ottoman legacy: a multi-centred communalism which, whilst institutionalising sectarian discrimination, involved vibrant communal coexistence based on mutual exchange. Thus, until the 1930s, Orthodox Christians were only the third largest community after Jews and Muslims in Salonica, Greece's second largest city. And in the 19th century the Plaka, Athens' taverna-stuffed Mecca for tourists, was an Albanian quarter – its name meaning both Greek for paving stone and Albanian for Old Quarter. Albanian was used in the law courts and for public business.

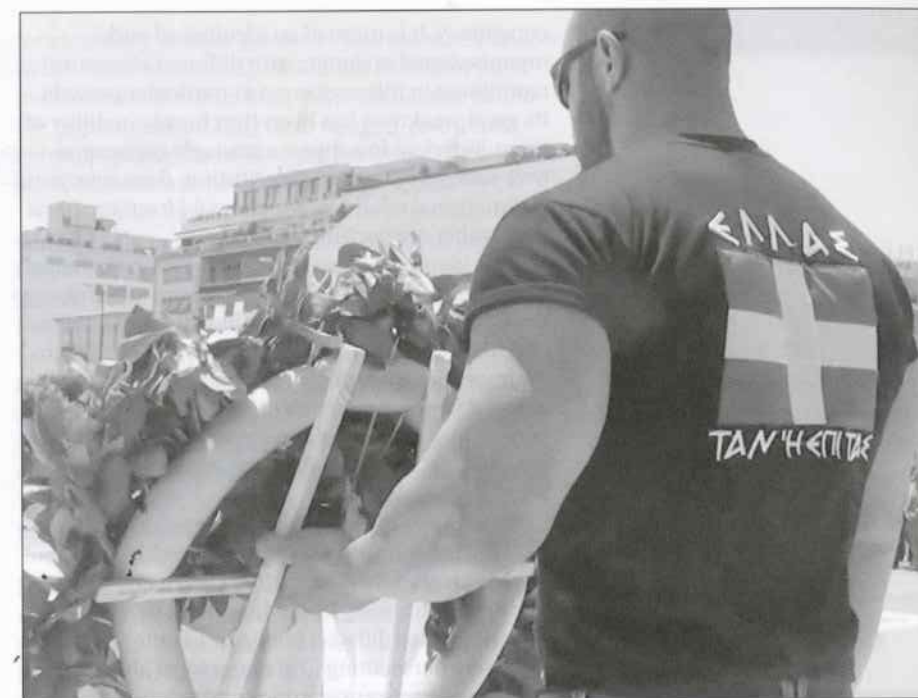
Egged on by Britain, Greece invaded Turkey in 1919, resulting in a resounding defeat and a traumatic humiliation for Greek irredentism and bourgeois nationalism. This led to a massive "population exchange" sponsored by the imperial powers, led by Britain at the 1922 Lausanne Convention. Hundreds of thousands of Christian Orthodox (ostensibly Greek) citizens of Turkey, and Muslim (ostensibly Turkish) citizens of Greece were forcibly deported at short notice and under terrible conditions to their supposed "homelands", exacerbating an already dire post-war economic situation.

A racial, religious and ideological monolith was being carved out in the name of "Greece", a job finally completed with the German invasion in 1940 and the genocide of 96% of the Jews, whose ancestors had fled there nearly five centuries before following expulsion from Christian Spain.

Marking Holocaust Memorial Day this year, Julia Neuberger observed that mass acts of civil disobedience in Bulgaria during the war ensured that not a single Nazi deportation took place, and it was the only country to end the war with a bigger Jewish population than at the start. In neighbouring Greece, by contrast, despite a heroic war of resistance, right wing collaborationism and inaction ensured the almost total destruction of the Jewish population.

The Greek elite's history of reactionary nationalism was periodically accompanied by authoritarianism and dictatorship as a substitute for its weak social base. Unlike the rest of Europe, there was no mass social democratic party until the 1970s. The Communist Party, illegal and repressed for decades, was characterised by a fatal combination of fanatical Stalinism and a tendency to split.

Facilitating authoritarian nationalism has been a long running tradition of rightist conspiratorial military organisations and terror campaigns. Arguably, this goes back to the struggle for independence in which Philiki Etairia (The Friendly Society) played a key role. At end of the 19th century, a group of army officers revived its traditions, establishing Ethniki Etairia (The National Association) as a new secret society. Within two years it claimed some 3,000 members with 56 branches in Greece and 83 abroad – described by one historian as a "virtual state within the Greek state".



In the First World War, the monarchist paramilitary League of Reservists engaged in terror attacks on establishments believed to be associated with the Republican wing of the ruling class, including press offices. The western backed counter-coup by liberal leader Venizelos led to purges of these monarchists from the armed and civil services. But further crises led to the 1922 debacle, under the Venizelos leadership, with the result that it was discredited and collapsed. The consequent political vacuum eventually gave rise to the Metaxas dictatorship in the 1930s.

Rightist military networks played a prominent role in the collaboration with Nazis in World War II by establishing the Security Battalions. After the Nazi defeat, far from being dismantled, these forces were harnessed by the US- and British-backed government to smash the Communist led resistance in the civil war that followed. This fed into IDEA, a secret organisation of rightist officers linked to an unsuccessful coup by Papagos in 1951. Many of these same officers were involved in the Colonels' Coup in the 1960s.

World War Two collaborationism and the civil war also threw up right wing paramilitary formations outside the state. These included the Anti-Communist Crusade of Greece, set up in 1952, and its splinter the Pan-Hellenic National Crusade founded after the 1961 elections, during which a campaign of intimidation and ballot rigging by the gendarmerie and the TEA (National Defence Battalions) thwarted an anticipated left victory. Greek police officially co-operated with these paramilitary forces during state occasions, when they were mobilised to assist with security.

The period since 1974 has been characterised by something approaching parliamentary democracy on the European model, with the newly formed PASOK allowed to win elections and form governments. But the anti-democratic rightist tradition remained deeply rooted in sections of the ruling class. Its resurgence at a time of crisis was predictable – the only question was whether this would be through or outside the state.

This history is not one long running fascist

THE INCOMPETENCE, CORRUPTION AND VENALITY OF THE RULING ELITE, AND ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CRISIS, HAVE BEEN LAID BARE.

conspiracy. It is more of an ideological and organisational melange, with different elements combining in different ways at particular periods. Its great weakness has been the chronic inability of the ruling class to achieve a strategic consensus over such issues as the constitution, democracy and international relations, which could form the basis for a stable overarching project.

This ideological mix has centred on: nationalism; xenophobia, racism and antisemitism; adherence to the Christian Orthodox Church; anti-communism; and (though far less in recent times) monarchism. At times, certain aspects have garnered mainstream popular support to which the left has not always been robust or coherent in opposing. In the case of nationalism, sections of the left have sometimes acted as cheerleaders.

An upsurge of antisemitism, particularly after 1922, not only fed into collaboration with Nazis, but carried on after the Second World War. The tiny number of surviving Jews who sought to reclaim property were vilified: a public prosecutor claimed they were persecuting Christians; local liberal politicians made antisemitic comments; by the summer of 1947 there was a full-scale press campaign against Jewish claims. Some courts decided that Salonica Jews who had been deported to the death camps, had "abandoned" their property.

In the 1990s, the break-up of Yugoslavia fed into a sharp rise in a very reactionary nationalism based on Christian Orthodox solidarity with Serbia, rank hostility to the newly formed state of Macedonia, and a revival of irredentism in relation to southern Albania. Technically, Greece had remained at war

with Albania for decades, and normality had only started to return in the 1980s. Manipulated by US-British Cold War power play over Cyprus, the periodic eruption of tensions with Turkey has been the focus for a similar combination of territorial claims and racism against Greece's indigenous Muslim population in Thrace.

The upsurge in Greek anti-Macedonian chauvinism played a notable role in early stages of GD's formation in the 1990s. One of the party's main annual mobilisations commemorates the 1996 Imia military crisis, in which three Greek soldiers died in a clash with Turkey over tiny uninhabited Aegean islets. And there has been deepening prejudice against Muslims and Roma. These substantial communities, which are based mainly in the north, with roots dating back centuries, have been subject to a campaign of state discrimination.

All fascist movements feed off pre-existing reactionary popular currents. Greek fascism has been able to draw on a broader and deeper range of ideological and organisational traditions, located far more centrally in the political formation of the country's ruling class and state. It comes as no surprise that GD leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos is a former marine reservist who had links to the Colonels' junta in the 1960s.

Self-defence and mass action on the streets are playing an increasingly vital role in the fight against GD. But unless these social and ideological roots are also tackled, this many-headed hydra will only re-emerge in other forms.

You can find out more and get involved via www.facebook.com/GreeceSolidarityCampaign

HAYMARKET & THE JEWS

The hanging of Chicago strikers in the 1886 Haymarket Affair shook people's faith in US justice, as described in this article written by **MORRIS U SCHAPPES** in *Jewish Life* (now *Jewish Currents*) in November 1956, about its impact on the USA's Jewish population

The first May Day demonstration, 1st May 1886, in the form of strikes for the eight-hour day, had been held in many cities in the United States. In Chicago alone, 40,000 had struck. The main slogan was the demand for the eight-hour day. The employers were alarmed and prepared for action. On 3rd May the police fired on strikers demonstrating against scabs at the McCormick Harvester plant, killing four workers and wounding many more. On 4th May, a meeting to protest the police attack was held in Chicago. As the peaceable meeting was ending and the workers were beginning to disperse, again the police attacked in full force. A bomb exploded.

To this day, no one knows who threw that bomb in Haymarket Square, Chicago, which caused the death of seven policemen and four workers and wounded scores of others.

But since 26th June 1893, when Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld issued his great document pardoning the three living defendants, the world has known there was a frame-up of workers involved. Three academic workers summed up the case in one sentence in 1940: "The verdict was the product of public hysteria, a prejudiced judge, perjured evidence, and a strange theory of conspiracy."

The commercial press, which had all along been

fighting the movement for an eight-hour day out of which grew the Haymarket meeting, now howled for the blood of the "Anarchists", as they called the revolutionary trade unionists or Anarcho-Syndicalists who were heading that movement in Chicago. A pious echo of this incitement was voiced by the Rev Isaac M Wise in *The American Israelite* in Cincinnati on 14th May when he warned anarchists and socialists that "Judge Lynch is a tremendous expounder of the law."

In such an atmosphere, no criminal lawyer in Chicago would take up the legal defence of the eight indicted, and it fell to four courageous civil lawyers to assume this role. First to step into the situation was the firm of Saloman & Zeisler. The senior partner, Moses Salomon, was only 28, and was then the counsel for the Central Labor Union of Chicago, led by the Anarcho-Syndicalists, which asked him to take the case. His partner, Sigmund Zeisler, was only 26 but had already lectured in Roman Law at the Northwestern University Law School. To add weight to the defence battery, they succeeded in enlisting two eminent men, Captain W P Black and William A Foster.

Opening the case for the defence before a fraudulently selected jury and a biased Judge

Joseph E Gary, Moses Salomon in vain urged the jury to evaluate the evidence strictly on the charge of murder and not "to convict any of these defendants either because he may be an Anarchist or a Socialist". Following him, Sigmund Zeisler explained that a social revolution could not be "made", that it "is a thing which develops itself, but no single man, nor a dozen men can control the inauguration of a revolution," and that the charge of conspiracy, when levelled against people who publicly proclaimed their views, was fantastic.

The battle of the defence lawyers was in vain. The jury, which included a relative of one of the slain policemen, brought in a sentence of death for seven of the defendants and 15 years for the eighth. The unexpected brutality of the sentence, while it was ferociously applauded by the general press, shocked elements among the workers and liberals into opposition.

"The verdict is a crime against the workers," declared *Di Nu-Yorker Idishe Folkzeitung* on 20th August 1886. Yet, while the conservative *Idishe Gazeten*, *The Jewish Reformer* and *The Jewish Messenger* in New York supported the prosecution and the verdict, *The American Israelite* apparently thought the lynching had gone too far. On 3rd September 1886, Rev Wise came out in opposition to the death sentence because of "an extenuating point, viz: Those men may be true in their pretensions, that they acted for the benefit of their fellow-men, from convictions which are undoubtedly false and unreasonable, but not criminal, per se."

While the State Supreme Court was confirming the verdict and the Federal Supreme Court was characteristically refusing to review the case, the amnesty movement against the execution grew to immense proportions. At first even the organised workers, except for the left wing, had been paralysed by the furious red-baiting attack. Terence V Powderly, head of the 700,000-strong Knights of Labor, forbade Knights to take part in the defence – lest they be called anarchists and socialists. But these orders from on top soon began to be flouted by the workers in the labour assemblies. In New York, the large District Assembly 49 combined with the Central Labor Union to form a joint committee of 25 for a campaign of petitions and mass meetings. On this committee, Samuel Gompers, Gregory Weinstein, M Weiner and Louis Weiss were active.

As the execution date, 11th November 1887, approached, the expanding clemency movement led hundreds of thousands to express themselves for clemency. Among the Jews who spoke up were Rev Sabato Morais in Philadelphia, Rev Emil G Hirsh in Chicago, and Felix Adler in New York. The *Idishe Folkzeitung* of 14th October 1887 lists the names of Jews in Carmel, New Jersey, who had raised \$10 for the defence fund, in contributions of 15, 25, and 50 cents. While *The Jewish Exponent* in Philadelphia on 4th November was opposing "leniency" and fearing "an evil precedent" if the hangings did not go through as scheduled, the petition campaign grew.

In Chicago during the last week, 41,000 signatures were obtained from people of all classes and beliefs, among them Julius Stern, a past president of the Chicago Law Institute. At the governor's clemency hearing in Springfield, Samuel Gompers, officially as president of the American Federation of Labor, was among those who argued

for clemency. But the governor was more responsive to the voice of Marshall Field than to that of the petitioners. He commuted the sentences of two to life imprisonment; four were hanged, and a fifth committed suicide to beat the hanging. The crack of broken necks was heard around the world.

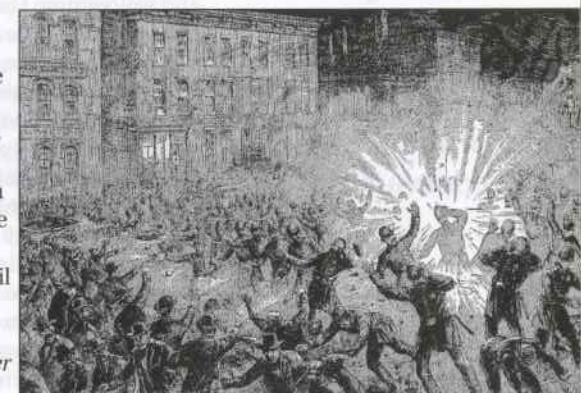
The Jewish immigrant masses were profoundly stirred by these horrible events in a land to which they had come in search of equality, freedom and justice. The activity of the Jews among the anarchists influenced thousands, through an organisation of Jewish anarchists founded in October 1886, *Pioneren der Freiheit* (Pioneers of freedom). Jews who had no interest in anarchism as such, rallied to defend the Haymarket martyrs against injustice. A few became confirmed and organised anarchists, becoming, as S Yanovsky puts it, "a profound hater of all that went under the name of justice, law and legality".

One of the classic Yiddish proletarian poets, Dovid Edelshtat (1866-1892), was stirred to the depths. He was only 20 when the trial took place, a Russian-speaking intellectual more interested in events in Russia than in the United States.

The Haymarket Affair "Americanised" Edelshtat, turning his heart and mind to the masses about him. He plunged into the defence activity, and was himself arrested for his pains. When he began to write poetry in Yiddish for the anarchist press, he had a new social content and the ring of passion. Yet it was not until almost two years after the execution that he composed his first poem on the Haymarket, "Ver Varen Zai?" (Who Were They) – published in translation in *Jewish Life*, November 1954). Around anniversary time in 1890, Edelshtat published poems on August Spies and Albert Parsons, who had been hanged, and Louis Lingg, the suicide, and fourth one, "The 11th of November". In 1891 he wrote "The 11th in a Strange City" and the year after that he wrote "The 11th in a Strange City" and the year after that he began to translate some of Parsons' own poetry. Edelshtat did not live to see the pardon of the three imprisoned in 1893.

When Governor Altgeld finally issued his pardon on 26th June 1893, carefully analysing the misconduct of the prosecutor, the jury, judge and the witnesses, the commercial press was almost unanimous in its vituperation of this signal act of justice. *The American Hebrew*, in an editorial on 7th July entitled "A Flagrant Wrong", parroted the outcries about the "murderous butchers" who had been hanged, denounced "this gross blunder" of Altgeld's and adjudged that he had covered himself "with contumely and contempt". No wonder there was fury at this act of belated justice! As the Yiddish *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, official organ of the United Hebrew Trades, wrote on 30th June: "The capitalist class has, by one of its own governors, been acknowledged as a gang of low-down murderers!"

Although the terrorisation spread by reaction intimidated many workers, the resistance, expressing itself in the amnesty campaign, strengthened the class conscious elements among the workers. Less than a year after the hangings, new organisational victories were achieved.



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CHOICES, CONFLICTS

A Jewish socialist goes to shul

As well as being places of prayer, synagogues have also traditionally been a focus of communal life. Three writers reflect on the choices for those who are not religious but consider themselves equal members of the community

Sitting in my local synagogue last Yom Kippur, wondering what I was doing there, it seemed to me that I ought to give a little more thought to the double life I have been leading for the past four years.

Since reaching adulthood, I rarely stepped inside a synagogue, except for family weddings and barmitzvahs. I regarded myself as a secular Jew and still do. Five years ago my father died. I wanted to say *Kaddish* for him as I had for my mother. But in his case, this extended beyond the funeral and shiva (seven days of mourning) for the full year of mourning. Maybe I was identifying with him, as he had attended his own shul weekly after retirement. I found it comforting and also rather liked it. Here was the familiar ritual of my childhood, in a beautiful building, with a rabbi who is always warm and welcoming. On Shabbat, it tends to be quiet and generally a pleasant and meditative experience. On the basis that less is more, however, it is best not to arrive too early. About an hour before the end of the service is usually about right.

There are two synagogues in my city, Orthodox and Progressive. Mine is the Orthodox one – a surprise to many who know me, particularly because of the way in which women are banished upstairs to the gallery and have no formal role in the service. For me it didn't seem at all odd. The Orthodox tradition is the one that I am familiar with and which has resonance for me. The Progressive movement always seemed to me to be much more religious and indeed spiritual. As my partner once said to me, I am about as spiritual as a plank of wood.

So why am I still going four years later? In my defence, and I do feel that I have to defend this, my attendance has diminished. One reason is that there is no great body of Jewish socialists where I live, and it would be quite nice to feel part of a community. I'm using the conditional here because, completely predictably, being a Jewish socialist and a diasporist in an Orthodox community doesn't really work. The community is much more varied and socially liberal than it used to be, and most families seem to have at

least one member who has married out or is gay. This can even be acknowledged, which was not true in my youth.

But the majority of members are probably on the right politically, and this naturally includes Zionism. Much of the time it isn't really discussed, in my hearing at least, except that every now and then the rabbi makes a sermon about Israel. This is a man with a great heart, who accepts anyone who wants to attend and doesn't question their status in Jewish law unless he feels he absolutely has to. But his family are all in Israel and he believes that no Jew should publicly criticise the country and its government. He doesn't do these sermons very often but every time he does, it makes me want to walk out. Once I wrote to him afterwards to say that the point he was making was one where even the *Jewish Chronicle* had conceded that Israel was in the wrong. Next time he saw me, he was concerned to make things all right between us, but he didn't argue the political point.

I know that it is pretty hopeless and that if I carry on attending services I will continue to be in a bind. My current compromise is to go a few times a year, mainly for *Yizkor* services, when special memorial prayers are said, and for family *yortsays* (anniversaries of deaths). Even so, there are things I would miss: the solemnity of the *Kol Nidre* service (opening the Day of Atonement), which is melodious and has the virtue of being short; the communal Passover seder, which is well-attended, with a good atmosphere and the business side of which is dispatched speedily; the calm of a Shabbat morning service and the opportunity for an hour's peaceful meditation, accompanied by an occasional bit of friendly gossip.

But maybe the point to be made from all this is that Jewish socialists no longer have the kind of cradle to grave sense of community support which was offered by the Bund, or even the Communist Party in Britain in the old days, and this is a large part of the attraction of synagogue for many of its members.

Myra Woolfson

Please leave your self outside

We were late. The barmitzvah service had already started so we three, my husband, son and myself, stood discreetly at the back and waited for a pause in the proceedings. During the murmurings and shuffles we crept to some seats and sat down.

This was a north west London Liberal synagogue, where families were sitting together. The rabbi stood on the bimah (raised platform) and behind him was the Ark which held the sacred scrolls of the Torah. The majority of the congregation sat in rows facing him but we had sat in the only vacant seats left. There were six rows at right angles at either side of the bimah, and we were in the farthest one.

The service continued. The rabbi spoke about

the barmitzvah boy – his love of poetry and his participation in antiracist work in the community. There was another pause in the proceedings and I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"Excuse me," whispered a woman with a permanent smile, "but the rabbi doesn't like anyone sitting in these particular seats."

I nudged my husband and son. "I'm sorry...." We all started to stand.

"No, no..." she smiled even wider. "They can stay. Women aren't really supposed to sit here."

Anger is a strange thing. Sometimes it isn't a red mist. It isn't passion and heat but the opposite.

Everything about that day – the awkward pride of the boy, the joyful pride of his parents and the

AND DILEMMAS

Praying on people's fears

I always thought shul was boring but, as a young child, it was a comforting kind of boredom, like kicking around at home in familiar surroundings. The best bit was the walk there with my father, who encouraged me to climb on every wall, however high, narrow or dangerous, and entertained me with running commentary on the hats, clothes, shapes and sizes of other members of the congregation we encountered en route.

Those people featured in my life in a range of contexts – in the street, in shops, at school, at social gatherings – as well as in the synagogue. Most of them were the children of immigrants, who had grown up in the East End, and I remember them with affection.

As I grew older, I started to hate the conformity, and hypocrisy that seemed to underpin membership of the United Synagogue, the mainstream Orthodox movement to which our shul belonged. I don't think the rabbi cared whether we drove the car on Shabbat – it had more to do with what some people thought other people might think. So we took the car out, but not while the congregation was walking past on their way to or from shul.

In smaller communities, the rabbis are still prepared to tolerate such transgressions; they just want to welcome local people through their doors. In the big cities, though, there has been a turf war, resulting in a quiet (though predictable) coup. The leadership of the United Synagogue has mainly been taken over by the Lubavitch sect. In archetypal fundamentalist style, they use 21st century techniques to offer what they claim is "authentic", "traditional" Jewish life.

Now we are two, three or four generations from the immigrant experience, and a lot of young parents lack confidence in their ability to transmit the religion and culture to their children. These are the families the United Synagogue targets, and this has been bolstered by the other big change in the community: the new imperative to send Jewish children to Jewish schools, for which the entrance qualification is synagogue attendance.

Traditionally, many people joined synagogues so they could be buried near their families in a Jewish cemetery. The longer you have been a member, the stronger your interest in staying, however alienating the experience, as you will have paid for your funeral many, many times over. The rabbis don't care whether or not these old people turn up to services, as long as they keep up their very large subscriptions.

Now the marketing is targeted at young, well-heeled professionals. The people who fill the seats of my local synagogue wear the kind of clothes you see in *Vogue*. And to protect their children from the fate of having to go to the local community school, they listen attentively to the Lubavitch rabbi's stock of homilies that masquerade as ancient traditions.

I won't voluntarily endure this combination of boredom and artifice, which plays on people's insecurity and enmeshes them in a web of rules and rituals, many of them newly invented, which they don't dare question or transgress.

We all have our own, often problematic, ways of identifying with our community. I'm not a religious believer but I don't want to abandon or destroy the complex cultural foundations of Jewish life, which include religious expression for those who want it, and which should be a comfort and a resource to us.

In his old age, the late Majer Bogdanski, a lifetime Bundist and a member of the Jewish Socialists' Group, went every Saturday to sing at Bevis Marks Sephardi Synagogue in the City of London. Majer was not Sephardi; he came from the heart of Poland's Ashkenazi community; he was well versed in the liturgy although he was a secular socialist, not a religious man. But he loved the ritual and the music, and was welcomed and respected at Bevis Marks.

There are synagogues and communities that are not judgemental, if only because they can't afford to be. So it's extraordinary that so many in the mainstream prefer to pick and choose their customers from among the respectable rich, treating the rest of us as expendable, and then crying crocodile tears about how the community is shrinking.

Julia Bard

warmth and love in that room all turned to dust in an instant.

I stood up.

She moved with me solicitously and whispered.

"I didn't want to tell you when you first sat down as I didn't want to embarrass you..."

I wanted to reply, "You're the one that ought to be embarrassed," but of course I couldn't on that occasion, in that room, in that institution.

And so, instead, in the car home I pledged loudly and with a lot of swearing that I would never step inside a synagogue again. I now realise that every time I do I leave an essential part of myself – my universal humanity – outside. When I step inside one of those fucking buildings, I am asked to shed it as a houseproud host sometimes asked you to do with your shoes. "Can you please not bring your

feminism and criticism of the Israeli state in here. I've just had the carpets cleaned and I'd like them to stay that way."

You are now a synagogue Jew, and everything you have learned, experienced and argued for must be suppressed.

Places of worship and prayer will never cease to fascinate me but I prefer them empty. Liturgical prayer of whatever denomination sends shivers up my spine but unless it is in a secular concert hall I'll listen on my iPod. When I die I want my children to say a *Kaddish* for me. Just the one will do. Rituals are for the obedient and that is not how they were brought up. But it is a beautiful prayer and I am a Jew. In the sacred words of Ira Gershwin as sung by Fred Astaire "They Can't Take That Away From Me."

Ruth Lukom

I CANNOT REMAIN

In 1943, a Bundist in London made the most dramatic sacrifice possible to help his suffering people. **DAVID ROSENBERG** describes the life and death of Szmul "Artur" Zygielbojm

In 1943, a Bundist in London made the most dramatic sacrifice possible to help his suffering people. David Rosenberg describes the life and death of Szmul "Artur" Zygielbojm

Holocaust researchers have released new information about the scale of the Nazi killing sites, suggesting that the figure of six million Jewish deaths may actually be an underestimate. Any revised figures should include one Holocaust victim who died in London: the Polish anti-fascist Jew Szmul "Artur" Zygielbojm, who committed suicide at his Paddington flat in May 1943 as the heroic Warsaw Ghetto resistance was finally extinguished.

Zygielbojm was born to a very poor family in the village of Borowice. Economic circumstances forced the family to prioritise work over education for their 10 children. Zygielbojm became a factory worker, making boxes, when he was 10, and was apprenticed as a glove maker at the age of 12. The workplace did more than provide material sustenance. It politicised him, setting him on a path to become a renowned trade union organiser in Poland and leading member of the Bund, the Jewish socialist party that was active throughout the country but especially in Warsaw and Lodz, where one in three of the population were Jews.

Known by his party name, "Comrade Artur", he rose to prominence in Warsaw as a key figure in the Jewish Metal Workers Union and leader of the Leather Workers Union – one of the few unions in inter-war Poland that catered both for Jewish and non-Jewish Poles. In 1924 he was elected to the Bund's central committee and became Secretary of the Central Council of Jewish Trade unions, a Bund-dominated alliance with 100,000 members. From 1930 he was editor of trade union journal *Arbeter Fragen* (Workers' Issues).

Despite having little formal education, his writing talents also flourished in the Bund's daily *Folkstoytung*, where he frequently penned reviews of theatre and other arts performances. Several of his brothers and sisters were involved in Yiddish theatre, and he too developed a deep interest in Yiddish culture and literature. He spent a year in the USA and Canada in the early 1930s, promoting and seeking support for the Bund's Yiddish cultural initiatives.

Back home, the political and economic situation was deteriorating, and in the mid-to-late 1930s, antisemitic, pro-fascist forces flourished. Jews suffered physical attacks by fascist thugs of the Nara – the youth organisation of the Endeks. The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party-Left (PPS-Left) led practical anti-fascist resistance. Zygielbojm was committed to unity across Poland's ethnic/religious divides that the fascists were trying to exploit. He

helped organise a half-day general strike by Jewish and non-Jewish workers protesting against a pogrom in Przytyk in 1936 in which three people died and many were wounded. He also combated antisemitism as a Bund councillor in Lodz, where he had moved in 1936 to strengthen the Bund and the trade union movement. Jews were excluded from local and central government enterprises but, where Bundists and PPS councillors formed a majority, they could challenge this discrimination.

When the Nazis invaded Poland and headed for Warsaw, Zygielbojm returned to the city too. Amid chaos and fear, Poland's right wing political establishment fled, but the Bund and PPS formed workers' battalions that tried to repel the invaders, and Zygielbojm was central in this resistance. They could not defend the city long and, as it fell to the Nazi occupiers, Jews especially had reason to be fearful.

To ensure the acquiescence of Warsaw's Jews, the Nazis created an administrative body between themselves and the people. They established a Judenrat (Jewish Council) to enforce their regulations. In November 1939 they commanded Warsaw's Judenrat to create a walled ghetto. When they heard this decree, many Jews descended on the Judenrat building. Zygielbojm, a reluctant Judenrat member, tried to convince his fellow councillors to oppose this command but most felt they had to do what the Nazis demanded. Zygielbojm resigned, declaring: "I would not have the right to continue living if the ghetto is carried through and my conscience does not remain clear. I know that it will be the duty of the chairman to report my resignation to the Gestapo at once and I consider the consequences that this will have for me personally. I can, however, not act differently." He addressed the anxious crowd assembling outside, urging disobedience and defiance: "Don't go voluntarily to the ghetto. Don't lose courage. Remain in your homes until you are removed by force."

He was ordered to report to Gestapo headquarters "to discuss important matters" but his comrades in the Bund hid him then organised an audacious escape in which he travelled in disguise through Nazi Germany on a false Dutch passport. They entrusted him with two formidable tasks: to tell the world what was happening to Poland's Jews and to mobilise for their defence and rescue.

Zygielbojm emerged in Belgium, where, at a Socialist International meeting in January 1940, he shocked delegates with his eyewitness reports of Nazi atrocities. When the Nazis sent their occupying forces westward, Zygielbojm had to flee again, eventually reaching America. He addressed dozens of Jewish and labour movement audiences

SILENT...

there, telling them about the Nazi barbarities. He urged them to pressure their government into action to save the Jews.

In early 1942, the Polish Parliament in Exile invited Zygielbojm to join their National Council in London, recognising him as a representative of the Bund and of Jews incarcerated in the ghettos. The political complexion of the council was a mixed bag of right and left, nationalist and religious. The one other Jewish councillor was Schwartzbard – a Zionist. Zygielbojm, as a socialist and internationalist, had to try to win support for policies he believed would aid the anti-Nazi and progressive cause among a body whose members resented Nazi occupation but were not necessarily friendly to Jewish needs or progressive politics.

The antagonism between Bundism and Zionism that was forged in their parallel formation in 1897 had been exacerbated in Poland in the years before World War II, when Bundists accused Zionists of accommodating to antisemitism. Greenbaum, a leading Zionist politician in Poland, had been fêted by antisemites for declaring that there were a million superfluous Jews in the country. Among Zionists, only the small Left Poale Zion actively fought antisemitism alongside the Bund and the PPS. A Bund leader, Erlich, called Zionism "the Siamese twin of antisemitism". So Zygielbojm was wary of collaborating with Schwartzbard and vice versa.

From London, Zygielbojm maintained a network of clandestine contacts – Jewish and non-Jewish – relaying detailed information on the tragedy unfolding in his homeland. In May 1942 he received a report from Warsaw Bundists that listed mass murder sites. It estimated that 700,000 Jewish civilians had already died through starvation, shootings and gassing. Zygielbojm released this to the *Daily Telegraph* and other newspapers before the Jewish press, believing this would ensure it reached a wide audience who would accept its authenticity.

He sent telegrams to diplomats and political leaders, and conveyed information to the general public through BBC radio broadcasts and at public meetings. He bombarded the press with letters and press releases. At a packed Labour Party meeting in Caxton Hall in September 1942, Zygielbojm revealed gruesome facts that, he said, "make blood curdle in

the veins". He asked the audience to "imagine the people who see their nearest ones being dragged away to their death every day". Each one "knows that their time must come", he said, and declared that, "The conscience of every person must be shaken; the serenity of those who ignore the facts must be exploded," and he called on people of all nations to "force the Nazi murderers to stop the systematic massacre of a people".

Three months later, Zygielbojm was visited at his Paddington flat by Jan Karski, a remarkable figure in the Polish underground, whose promising diplomatic career was halted by the occupation. Karski smuggled himself into the ghetto to relay messages between underground resisters. In

London he handed Zygielbojm a letter from Leon Fajner, a Bundist in the Warsaw Ghetto. It asked western Jewish leaders to go on hunger strike outside British and American government offices until they obtained guarantees of action to save the Jews. "Let them accept no food or drink, let them die a slow death while the world is looking on... This may shake the conscience of the world," Zygielbojm promised Karski he would find a way to act on this demand.

In spring 1943, Zygielbojm wrote a sombre letter to his brother Fayvel in South Africa. He expressed frustration that his strenuous efforts had failed, and grief for his wife Manya, sons Yossel and Artek, daughter Rivkeh, and other close relatives he presumed had perished. He never knew that Yossel had survived and was a Red Army Partisan fighter. He described himself as "tired... almost at the end of my tether... with an unbearable feeling of helplessness". But he found the energy and anger to express disgust at those who "use the dreadful facts to promote their party politics", telling Fayvel that the Zionists are using the Jewish martyrdom as part of their fundraising campaign.

Two crushing events coincided on 19th April 1943. Nazi tanks and soldiers entered the Warsaw Ghetto to destroy it and massacre its remaining inhabitants after most had been deported to death camps. And American and British leaders convened the Bermuda Conference, where they ruled out accepting significant numbers of Jewish refugees.

Inside the ghetto, Bundists, Communists and



On 12th May 2013 at 7.30pm the Jewish Socialists' Group is holding a memorial event for the 70th anniversary of Szmul Zygielbojm's death and to remember the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance. Speakers include Warsaw Ghetto survivor Wlodka Blit-Robertson, and there will be Yiddish songs from the ghettos from Rachel Weston. Venue: MIC Hotel and Conference Centre 81-103 Euston Street London NW1 2EZ.

WITH HIS DEATH HE INVOKED THE VISION OF A WORLD OF FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE, IN WHICH BRUTALITY WOULD HAVE NO PLACE



May 1996, at the newly unveiled plaque. Left to right, Polish ambassador, Ryszard Stempowski, with Paul, Adela and Arthur, Zygielbaum, the daughter-in-law and grandsons of Artur Zygielbojm.

Zionists under joint command, boosted by a small number of weapons received from the Polish resistance outside, fought a courageous three-week guerrilla campaign to defend the ghetto. In this most unequal of battles the Nazis paid a high price for their eventual victory.

On the night of 11th/12th May 1943, Zygielbojm gassed himself at his Paddington home. He left several letters – one to his landlady expressing regret for the distress he was about to cause her. The other letters were to political leaders and to his Bundist comrades and friends, confirming that his suicide was a political protest:

"I cannot remain silent; I cannot live while the remnants of the Jewish people in Poland, whose representative I am, are being exterminated. My comrades in the Warsaw Ghetto perished with their weapons in their hands in their last heroic battle. It was not my destiny to die as they did, together with them. But I belong to them and in their mass graves. By my death I wish to make the strongest possible protest against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people ... as I was unable to do anything during my life, perhaps by my death I shall help to break down the indifference of those who have the possibility now, at the last moment, to save those Polish Jews still alive from certain annihilation. My life belongs to the Jewish people in Poland and, therefore, I give it to them. I wish that the surviving remnants of the Polish Jews could live to see, with the Polish population, the liberation that it could know in Poland, in a world of freedom and in the justice of socialism."

Zygielbojm's suicide protest was not against the Nazis – he condemned their atrocities daily – but against the allies' failure to help Jews in their moment of greatest need. Newspapers across the world reported his suicide with powerful public impact, but the allied governments did not shift their policy. Saving the Jews was not a war priority. Zygielbojm's son, Yossel, learned of his father's death when his Red Partisan unit took a former Nazi base on the River Vrbas in Yugoslavia that same month. A newspaper, the *Voelkscher Beobachter*, was left behind. It contained an article mocking his father's suicide.

In Warsaw today, where the ghetto once stood, an artistic memorial is etched in glass on a building in

Zygielbojm Square. Montreal has a Zygielbojm Memorial Park. A Tel Aviv street is named after him. In Britain, where his life ended, there was no memorial. But in the run-up to the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, in April 1993, Jewish Socialists' Group activists and elderly Bundist survivors established a Szmul Zygielbojm Memorial Committee to campaign for a local memorial. With endorsements from writers, historians, rabbis, trade unionists and MPs, the committee requested the notoriously right wing Westminster Council to mount a plaque to honour the borough's former resident.

A young council officer responded enthusiastically but met repeated hurdles. Zygielbojm's flat was in a house divided into five flats. The council needed the permission of five heads of household. The Zygielbojm Memorial Committee was worried that they would encounter one antisemite. The problem, though, turned out to be a Jewish resident who was afraid that the plaque would become a target for fascists.

The next plan was to place the plaque in the gardens behind the flats where no doubt Zygielbojm found some solace, but a byelaw stipulated that they could not be used for memorials. A library with a white façade stood opposite the end of Zygielbojm's road. A plaque would stand out prominently on this background. The library staff were keen but the committee were again tripped up by the stipulation that a library could only celebrate literary figures. Zygielbojm was a glove maker and factory worker, not a famous author; his editorship of a trade union journal in 1930s Poland was ignored.

Eventually, the council established that it could use the end of terrace wall which meets the main Porchester Road. The plaque was finally unveiled in May 1996, three years after the memorial campaign began.

During that time, the committee established contact with Zygielbojm's surviving family. Yossel (now known as Joseph) whose wife and child were killed by the Nazis, had settled in California with his second wife Adela, a Polish Holocaust survivor. They had two sons Arthur and Paul. Joseph was determined to attend the ceremony. Sadly, he died a year before the plaque was unveiled. But other family members flew over. Adela Zygielbaum unveiled the plaque together with Britain's then Polish ambassador, Ryszard Stempowski, in the presence of 200 supporters. The elderly Jan Karski, living in America, sent a touching handwritten message regretting that he was not strong enough to travel.

The unveiling was followed by a celebration of Zygielbojm's life at the nearby Yaa Asantewaa African Community Centre, where Paul Zygielbaum spoke movingly of his grandfather's sacrifice. It was, he said, "not for the Jews alone. His words and deeds embodied vital lessons for mankind about what it means to be a human being. About compassion, dignity, commitment and courage. About the ultimate value of life and of each human culture... with his death he invoked the vision of a world of freedom, justice and peace, in which brutality would have no place... Let us look ahead with determination to the building of a world in which all people can live in peace and mutual respect. This is what Szmul Zygielbojm would have wanted."

WHAT BECAME OF THE RED SPANIARDS?

My great-grandfather was Lorenzo Juan Martinez. He was born in the early 1900s in Spain, and married Maria Marti, a schoolteacher and, like him, a left-wing Republican.

One night, the police arrived at Lorenzo and Maria's house and took him away. He was never seen again. The remains of Lorenzo Juan Martinez are believed to be in one of the mass Republican graves in the cemetery of Espinardo, City of Murcia. That same night, they also picked up his wife Maria and put her in prison in Valencia. She was on death row from 1939 to 1945.

All their property was seized, and their 16-year-old daughter (my grandma), Pilar Juan Marti, was left on her own to look after her three small brothers. Her older brother, José, a captain in the Republican army, was at that time trying to cross the border to France with thousands of other Republican refugees.

Three years earlier, on 18th July 1936, a group of five generals trained and hardened in the Moroccan war started a military coup against the Republican Popular Front government. It was the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.

The two sides in the war comprised, on the one hand, the right wing Nationalists, who included the professional army, the fascist Falangist party, the Catholic Church, the monarchists and their allies, the German and Italian Nazis (Hitler and Mussolini). On the other side were the left wing Republicans, who included the trade unions, factions of socialist, communist and anarchist groups, and regional armies. Although more numerous than their right-wing opponents, they had little or no help from other democratic countries, apart from volunteers in the form of the International Brigades. They had few professionally trained soldiers and little, mostly antiquated, equipment.

The war lasted three years, and according to some experts it could have finished sooner. Franco, the last of the generals still alive at the end of the conflict, came to power after the country was exhausted and unable to oppose him in any way.

The war held the international community's interest throughout the three years, as it was seen to be a rehearsal for what was to become the Second World War. The Nazis, in particular, found the Spanish war a good ground on which to test their newly produced war equipment. The bombing of Guernica by the Condor Legion in 1936 was, for instance, the first aerial bombing of civilians, and its aftermath was also the first to be filmed and shown at newsreel cinemas in Europe and the US.

The siege of Madrid was perhaps the event that most moved the international community. Surrounded by nationalist troops, the city, supported by the Republicans from the Guadarrama mountains, resisted heroically and against all odds, with little food and continuous overhead bombings. Despite their defiant call of "No pasaran!" (They shall not pass) the rendition of

Madrid signalled the end of the war. The Fascists pressed the Republicans towards the east, ending in the Catalanian north-east region from where they fled in a continuous flow to the French border. In April 1939, just a few months after the end of the Spanish Civil War, Hitler invaded Poland and the Second World War began, sealing the fate of Spain and the Spanish refugees.

Franco, a sympathiser of both Hitler and Mussolini, felt reassured by the strength of the Axis forces and opened a campaign of revenge and extermination against those Republicans left in the country. Tens of thousands of people disappeared through executions and imprisonment. The rhetoric of the fascist victory was one of brutal vilification of the Republicans, presenting them as evil, manipulated by foreign interests and interested only in the destruction of Spain.

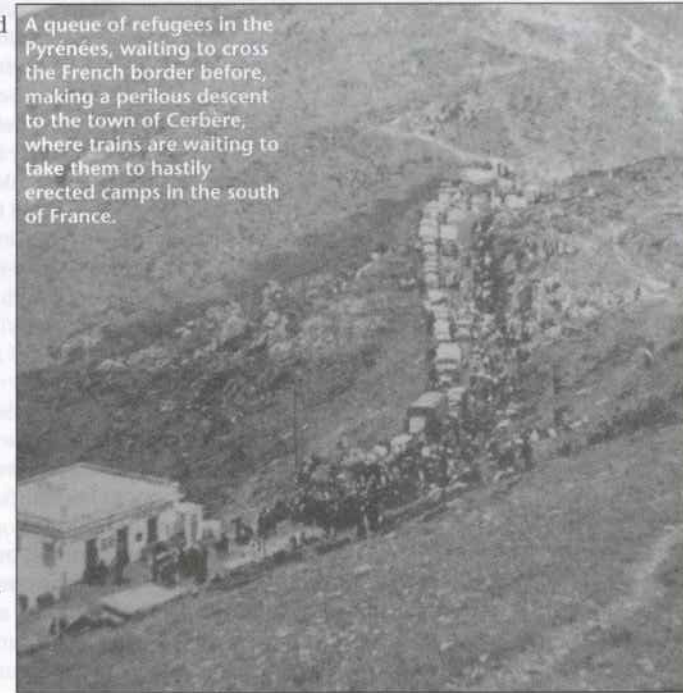
At that time, French government policy was to co-operate with the Nazis, which included capturing Spanish Republicans fleeing over the border into France, and handing them over to the Germans. The Nazis started by using the Republicans in forced labour camps. Later, when faced with larger numbers of captured Spanish prisoners, Hitler consulted with Franco, who told him that they were no longer considered Spanish, and that no questions would ever be asked about their destinies, effectively signing their death warrants.

The Republicans who fled to France suffered different fortunes. Those who ended up in concentration camps in the South of France were transported to French colonies in North Africa and there took part in the campaigns of World War II. Some managed to escape and join the Resistance movement. Those who were kept in the French camps were used as slave labour to build fortifications, and eventually transferred to camps in Austria, where the vast majority died.

My grandfather, Miguel Muñoz Garcia (who was later to marry Pilar Juan Marti), was the only Republican in a deeply religious, right wing family. He was made a lieutenant in the Republican army and fled to France only to be captured and kept at the St Cyprien internment camp as a political prisoner of the Vichy government. Many of the Spanish Republicans were moved on from St

NATASHA MUÑOZ grew up in a family which embodied the tragic fate of the Spanish anti-fascists who fled to France after the Civil War. So, when the English Defence League marched through her neighbourhood, she was honouring their courage by continuing the chant, "No pasaran!"

A queue of refugees in the Pyrénées, waiting to cross the French border before, making a perilous descent to the town of Cerdère, where trains are waiting to take them to hastily erected camps in the south of France.



IN 1977, DURING SPAIN'S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY, A LAW OF AMNESTY WAS PASSED WHICH, TO THIS DAY, HAS EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED THE INVESTIGATION OF WAR CRIMES. IT EQUATES TO A JUDICIAL PACT OF FORGETTING.

Cyprien and taken to the main German concentration camp of Mauthausen-Gusen, while others were piled into cattle trucks destined for the French concentration camps in North Africa. Somehow, Miguel managed to escape from the transport that was taking him across Spain to North Africa, and in Algeciras, started to make his way back to Valencia. Within a couple of months of being back home, Miguel was recaptured and sent to a hard labour camp in the north of Spain, where he was to spend the next five years.

Miguel and his future brother-in-law, José, never saw each other during the time that they were fighting in the Republican Popular Army. After taking part in the battle of Ebro, they both retreated to France where their fates took very different turns.

Gusen was built as a sub-camp of the

Mauthausen concentration camp complex. It was classified as a Category III camp – the worst category which, for the prisoners meant Ruckkehr unerwünscht (return not desired) and Vernichtung durch Arbeit (extermination by work). It is

said to be relatively unknown because so few of the prisoners sent there lived to tell the story of its horrors. Mauthausen-Gusen was where the Nazis incarcerated Spanish political prisoners. By 1941, three years after the main camp opened, approximately 60% of the prisoners were Spanish Republicans. They were called the Red Spaniards.

José's mother, Maria, never heard from her son again. The times when she would talk about it, she would say that he had probably joined the French Resistance, fighting the Nazi occupation in France. Then he would have found refuge in the Soviet Union, she said, met a lovely Russian girl and established a family. He would, of course, be unable to contact his family from so far away. At the end of the 1960s, Maria received a letter from the German government saying that José Juan Martí had been killed in the Nazi concentration camp of Mauthausen-Gusen, in Austria on 22nd April 1942. We have no further details of the circumstances of his death.

Tens of thousands of Spanish political prisoners died in this camp, and the few who survived after its liberation in 1944 had nowhere to return to. They could not go back to fascist Spain, and were effectively stateless. These people were psychologically traumatised by what they had witnessed and physically shattered by the extreme conditions they had endured and, as a result, most of these liberated prisoners committed suicide. Some of them survived due to the financial support of Jewish

communities, particularly those in the US, as well as organisations such as the Amical Mauthausen, which though set up for French people, also extended a hand to the stateless Spanish.

The post-Civil War period in Spain brought death and destruction that continued until the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945. It was not until Franco found himself isolated from the international community that he started to detach himself from the politics of extermination that had been his trademark from the times of the Foreign Legion. He then embarked on a new period in which he sold his anti-communist record as a point of common interest with the newly emerging superpower of the USA. Nevertheless, in Spain until his death in 1975 Franco persecuted anyone who opposed him, and maintained a relentless hostility towards anybody whose political record indicated any form of alliance with the Republican cause in the Civil War.

Not many people survived the camps to tell their story; many lie in mass graves, some known, some still unidentified. But this is not the only reason why this is a forgotten Holocaust, why these are forgotten people. Franco died of natural causes in 1975. I was five years old and I remember the event very clearly – some of my earliest memories are of living under a fascist dictatorship in a family on the (active) far left of the political spectrum. My very early friendships were defined by politics; I felt a profound need to establish early on whether my playmates' families "liked" Franco. I could only relax and play when I was sure that they weren't enemies.

In 1977, during Spain's transition to democracy, a law of amnesty was passed which, to this day, has effectively prevented the investigation of war crimes. It equates to a judicial pact of forgetting. This is a law so firmly protected by the Establishment and the far right, that even Baltasar Garçon, the Spanish investigative magistrate and jurist responsible for issuing an international warrant for the arrest of General Pinochet, has been prevented from working as a judge in Spain due to his investigation of Francoist war crimes.

But we, the grandchildren and great grandchildren of the Red Spaniards, have not forgotten. It was the memory of Lorenzo, Maria, José and Miguel that inspired me to join Unite Against Fascism – We are Waltham Forest when I heard that the English Defence League were planning to walk our streets in Waltham Forest. We didn't let them. The humiliation they received at the hands of our organised community has significantly contributed to the breakdown of their organisation. I was proud to say "No Pasaran!" and it was a victory for which my family had suffered great sacrifice. A sacrifice that is still buried, forgotten and unhonoured. A sacrifice for which they and countless thousands of other Red Spaniards have, to this day, not received justice.

I am aware that I have over-simplified a very complex event in order to put this story into context. I hope Jewish Socialist readers will go on to find out more, and, in particular, recommend reading anything written by Prof Paul Preston, who has done the work that Spanish academics are not able to do in their own country.

FROM WHERE

The Respect, and sometime Labour, political figure George Galloway is rarely out of the headlines. Whether it be saluting Saddam Hussein, puncturing the neocons of America or making such ambiguous statements on rape that the leader of his party, Salma Yaqoob and the Respect candidate for a major by-election resigned, he ploughs his own furrow. He is not a fool, but he operates in a way that, sooner or later, his close colleagues give up on him.

In February this year he created something of a story by walking out of a debate with some Oxford students, saying he would not debate with an Israeli (a 21-year-old philosophy student with joint British/Israeli nationality), no doubt to the great pleasure of the student who became an overnight hero among those who defend Israel's occupation. The walk-out raises a number of issues. It is said that Galloway was unaware in advance he would be debating with an Israeli. I want to be clear – he did not say he would refuse to debate with Jews, or with Zionists (who are often not Jews), but with Israelis.

He may have been unaware in advance of the nationality of the other participant in the debate, but it was obvious he would have been debating with a Zionist of some description. The walk-out might have been impromptu but, lest there be any doubt, he followed this on Facebook by saying, "I refused this evening at Oxford University to debate with an Israeli, a supporter of the Apartheid state of Israel. The reason is simple; No recognition, No normalisation. Just Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, until the Apartheid state is defeated. I never debate with Israelis nor speak to their media. If they want to speak about Palestine – the address is the PLO."

People have had fun online digging out old photographs of Galloway arm-in-arm with the Israeli showbiz magician Uri Geller, but the issue became bigger than the eccentric behaviour of one MP when his position was supported by the blog Socialist Unity, where people flooded to comment for and against the walk-out.

George Galloway seems unaware that the PLO has never flinched from debating with Israelis. Indeed, the position of the international boycott, divestment and sanction movement is clear. The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) said: "[T]he largest coalition of Palestinian unions, mass organisations, refugee networks and NGOs that leads and sets the guidelines for the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, supports all principled action in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality that is in line with universal human rights and international law. In its 2005 BDS Call, Palestinian civil society has called for a boycott of Israel, its complicit institutions, international corporations that sustain its occupation, colonization and apartheid, and official representatives of the state of Israel and its complicit institutions. BDS does not call for a boycott of individuals because she or he happens to be Israeli or because they express certain views. Of course, any individual is free to decide who they do and do not engage with. The global BDS movement has consistently adopted a rights-based approach and an anti-racist platform that rejects all forms of racism,

including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism."

So, the PLO debates with Israelis – I've attended such debates, and even organised one. The Palestinian BDS committee does not call for a boycott of individual Israelis, and here, from Gaza is a statement from Gaza Youth Breaks Out: "George Galloway is an idiot for not debating with the Israeli student. It was a great chance to tell the misled British students of Oxford about the truth. You want to discuss peace, let's speak about justice first. Let's see what Israel has done since the Nakba until today. I am ready to debate any Israeli anywhere in the world. Israelis would never win a debate because they've got nothing in favour of their side. Israel is the one that is killing, blockading, arresting, destroying, torturing and spreading hate while Palestinians are just resisting and showing steadfastness in front of the Israeli terrorism machines. For this I must say that George Galloway doesn't care about Palestine and spreading the truth as much as he cares about his look and reputation!"

Israel is a state which includes 20-25% Arabs and a growing non-Jewish/non-Arab population, as well as Jews holding many opinions on the Occupation. But even among those who recognise that Israel is less than monolithic, those who support the walk-out appear to have difficulty in differentiating the persona of one Israeli student from those of official government spokespeople who have the power of life and death over Palestinians.

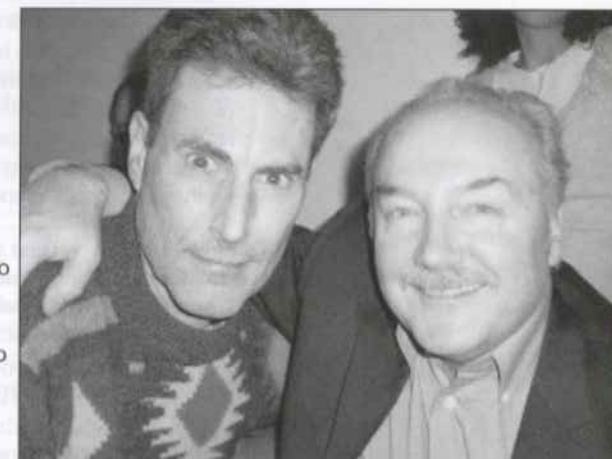
Among those craving attention on the Socialist Unity Blog (a sin I am guilty of) was one "Nadia Chern", who opined "How is being Israeli a matter of accident? After all, it is not about where you are born but where you or your parents chose to settle and dispossess another people of their land. How is referring to yourself as an Israeli a matter of accident given the last 60 years?" I certainly have issues with my Scottish mother and Irish father for the accident of my being born in England before my mother returned to the goldene medina north of the border, and I would struggle to call myself "English", but Chern is going a little further. She is not the only person who seems to think that you are bad because of where you or your parents (or grandparents or great-grandparents, given the history) settled. Perhaps she thinks all Jews should just go home.

One of the sensible voices in this debate was Jon Lansman, who wrote, "As for George and the Jews – I don't think he's an antisemite for a moment. Indeed it wasn't an antisemitic remark as I define the word, though it was certainly ill-judged, wrong and very counter-productive."

In the meantime, I would imagine that the Israeli Embassy is being flooded with citizenship applications by those keen to ensure that George Galloway does not talk to them.

Ross Bradshaw

I'M STANDING



George Galloway with Israeli, Uri Geller, or maybe it's just an illusion

Refugees – civilians and wounded soldiers – waiting to be transported to the camps.

~Thanks for the photos to Adrienne Tyrey producer of the blog, remembering the retirada
<http://rememberingretirada.wordpress.com/>

DISGRACELAND

The Shondes have been a fixture in the punk scene across America for around five years, playing a mishmash of post-punk and indie rock with a distinctly Jewish flavour. **MARCUS BARNETT** caught up with their fiddle player Elijah Oberman recently during their first European tour

This exciting four-piece Brooklyn-based band takes its name from the Yiddish slang for a "disgrace" or something shameful. The Shondes' first record, *The Red Sea*, was produced by the distinguished figure of Tony Maimone (of legendary punk experimentalists Pere Ubu), and provides an excellent musical and political introduction to their work. An unsettling listen, its classically structured and offbeat offerings recall '90s riot grrrl veterans Sleater-Kinney as much as klezmer and Jewish music, the overtones of which are evident throughout the record. A steady number of hacks compliment them as "old world romantics". Their new record *Searchlights* was recently released in Britain.

Several things set The Shondes apart from their peers. Firstly, their violinist Elijah Oberman, whose mournful fiddle lends a Yiddish feel to their DIY punk rock. Feeding directly into this is their political commitment: as well as being pro-Yiddish they perceive their own Jewishness as a historical legacy that emphasises justice, understanding and solidarity between all peoples. The band are politically involved as individuals and lend themselves collectively to causes deemed controversial and divisive within the Jewish community and society at large. Having played benefit gigs for Jews Against The Occupation, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (a transgender legal aid organisation) and Birthright Unplugged (which organises educational visits to Palestinian cities, villages and refugee camps), The Shondes are far from ashamed or disgraced by their own Jewish radical perspectives.

How did The Shondes come together?

Louisa and I were in a band called The Syndicate, and when it broke up we were determined to keep playing music together. So we convinced Temim to learn the drums, and our first guitarist, Ian, to join the band. When Fureigh replaced Ian in 2008, we really started gelling and honing our sound.

How did Europe treat you? You visited the site of the Warsaw Ghetto and the monument to the Ghetto Uprising, which must have been an unusual experience for American diaspora Jews?

It was amazing! Everyone treated us so well – listening, talking with us, feeding and housing us, taking us on tours of their cities. Warsaw was one of my very favourite places. I thought it was a beautiful city, and the people at our show were just so excited and into it, fist-pumping and playing air guitar along with Fureigh. It was extremely moving to see the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising historical sites, and it was also awesome learning about Polish resistance to the Nazis, which I'd known very little about previously.

How do the audiences in Europe and the UK compare to America?

One thing we learned is that we're not funny in Europe! Cross cultural humour is hard, and I've never realised before how much being silly is part of the way we interact with

our audiences when we're on stage. So it was really weird for us and awkward sometimes when people didn't get our jokes. We were like, um... "I guess let's just get back to playing songs now." Americans are maybe a bit more demonstrative (not to mention American Jews), which maybe is why we had such a good time and felt so at home at our two Polish shows where the audience interacted with us more as we're used to in the US. But I also particularly loved our London show, Ladyfest Paris, and an awesome queer festival we played in Bremen.

What has the reception been like for *Searchlights*?

It's been wonderful. From the press we've gotten some great pieces, including a comparison of our song "Are You Ready" to The Go-Go's "Can't Stop the World". And our fans are just the best. It always means so much to hear from fans what our music means and has meant to them. It really keeps you going. Playing live is the most amazing experience of connection with fans. We put out so much energy when we play, and then our audience is so energetic and gives us so much right back. This exchange of intensity creates such a connected experience when it goes right. It's one of the best feelings in the world.

Do you think you've explored realms and ideas in *Searchlights* that you didn't or couldn't think you could do on *The Red Sea*? What has changed in The Shondes in between those two records?

So much has changed but at the same time, I think we have a core sound and spirit in our music that remains consistent. I still really relate to where the songs on *The Red Sea* and *My Dear One* came from, even though we are in a pretty different songwriting place now. One of the common threads is drama and emotion. I make music and listen to music as one way of feeling things, and I'm not really interested in listening to or playing music that doesn't make me feel much.

Some of our more disparate musical influences, like Jewish liturgical and secular (klezmer) music, punk and feminist punk, classical... all have that in common. They are incredibly emotional and dramatic and allow listeners and players to come together and connect through those feelings. So while I think our song writing has evolved a lot, and I think we're a more upbeat, danceable, and poppy band than we used to be back in the *Red Sea* days, the drive behind it is pretty much the same.

Can you explain more about your own take on Jewish identity as well as your understandings of queer/LGBT identity, Palestinian solidarity and how such identities are navigated?

The main connection for us between all of the identities you mentioned is embracing and celebrating social justice histories. We all identify differently as queers and Jews, and have different upbringings, but fighting for justice for all people is a huge influence. Being Jews in solidarity with Palestinians feels like a natural outgrowth of the kinds of Jewish principles we celebrate.



Do you think that the mainstream Jewish community's general abandonment of radical political causes and the Yiddish language in recent generations, coupled with its replacement by Hebrew and a vociferous support for Israeli state policy, represents a certain cultural degeneration from within the community?

On my pessimistic days, maybe. But there's so much good going on too (and yes, mostly outside the mainstream Jewish community I think). There are still many Jews who celebrate Yiddish, who hold radical holiday observance and create their own traditions, and who stand up for Palestinian rights.

I think the mainstream Jewish community has a lot to come to terms with, and I see at least some movement to the left even there. Terms like "anti-occupation" were completely absent in the mainstream conversation 10 years ago, and now they'll talk about anti-Zionists. That's because of the hard work of anti-Zionist, Jewish activists to make ourselves visible within our communities and to the world. At the very least, we've successfully forced the mainstream Jewish community to acknowledge our existence, which is progress.

When I studied in Israel, the American-Jewish kids I met were pretty macho, anti-intellectual, ignorant of the Middle East, and more than a little bigoted. It was incredibly disheartening to meet them. Do you sense a changing Jewish-American identity for this generation – and if so, for better or worse? As a radical, queer Jewish punk band do you see yourselves within it, comfortably or otherwise?

Since the creation of Israel, there's been a movement towards hyper-masculinisation, achieved through militarisation and claiming power through colonising and oppression (in Palestine). It's really apparent in the Zionist propaganda of the time that that was part of the trappings of creating the state and a nationalistic identity. I know there have been many feminist critiques of Israel which analyse that. I think that mixes with a particular type of US masculine

fantasy pretty easily and horrifyingly.

As a feminist, I also relate to sometimes feeling more horrified by the particular flavour of misogyny of your own people, being particularly reactive to it because it's so intimate. At the same time, I also know so many radical Jews who reject that kind of masculinity, and the misogyny, heteronormativity and nationalism that under-gird it. As a person, as a band, as Jews, there's no way that we aren't in relation to that dynamic, but mostly it's a relationship of opposition and undermining. Each of our genders and politics subvert that masculinity in different ways and I think that that's apparent from our performances whether we're speaking directly to it or not.

Who would you see as your immediate allies and contemporaries in The Shondes' political struggle?

Anyone who wants to be! Feminists, queers, radicals of all stripes who are interested in living their lives subverting the systems of domination that make all of our lives hell.

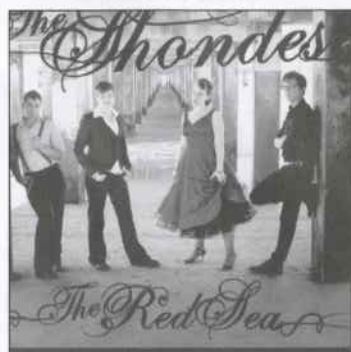
Have you thought about exploring Yiddish more in your music? It's pretty peculiar to think that you must be one of the only punk bands to have ever dabbled with it. It's such a punk language. The only others that immediately spring to mind are God Is My Co-Pilot or John Zorn.

It is such a punk language! Can I quote you on that? Our drummer Temim's brother is in a hard-rock band called Yiddish Princess with vocals all in Yiddish, and they're fantastic. None of us speak Yiddish well enough to write entire songs in it, but I know we'll continue to use words, phrases, and translations of Yiddish thought and proverbs in our music because I love them and they're inspiring. And also so lowbrow! Inspiringly lowbrow. There, I've said it.

What does the future hold for The Shondes?

Well, we've got an album's-worth of new songs we can't wait to put out, so we'll be figuring out how to do our next release and moving from there!

ISRAELI AND
PALESTINIAN
CONFLICT AND
REVOLUTION
Morris Maschler
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IDEAS THAT STAND THE

ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS: CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Moshé Machover
Haymarket Books
£17.99

"Zionism is a colonizing project, and Israel, its embodiment, is a settler state."

This uncompromising statement appears on the second page of this book and informs all of its content. It is the first point in a summary of the Israeli Socialist Organisation's analysis of Zionism and the Israeli-Arab conflict. This revolutionary Marxist group, better known by the name of its journal, Matzpen (Compass), was formed by a small number of Israeli Jews and Palestinians in 1962.

The book is a collection of articles reflecting Matzpen's positions, all authored or co-authored by Machover between 1966 and 2010 – a period of tumultuous change in the region and the wider world. The author is delighted to present his "valuable corpus of socialist theory and political positions on Zionism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... to a wider public and a new generation of socialists."

We might expect a collection of old essays, written by an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy whose field is Mathematical Logic, to be dry and inaccessible. This is not the case, although the language of the older pieces inevitably reflects the terminology of the political discourse of the time.

Around 1980, I was asked at short notice to support Moshé at a formal debate with pro-Zionists at Bristol University Students' Union. It quickly became clear that the majority of the audience came holding partisan positions, and I suspect we would have lost the debate whatever the standard of our oratory. As it happens, I was under-prepared whereas Moshé was clear and incisive.

That same skill in communication is apparent throughout this book, while the logic and precision of the mathematician is reflected in its intellectual rigour and consistency. While one may differ from some of the premises and conclusions presented, they are clear, comprehensible and eminently readable.

It is, indeed, a book of ideas. When Machover writes that both supporters and opponents of a Palestinian state "tend to do so for wrong reasons", it is apparent that the theory and approach behind one's conclusions matter.

Machover starts a 2006 lecture by saying: "How shall we think about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Please note how comes before what.... We must not start with moral judgements... We should first address the issue in descriptive and analytic mode."

For that reason, this would not be the first book to read if you know nothing about the facts and history of the situation. If you don't know what has happened in the past, and what is happening on the ground today, then discussions of, say, oppression, will sound rhetorical, whereas in fact they reflect a daily reality that is not detailed here.

From Matzpen's early days, the group stood for

the rights of Palestinians, including the rights of refugees to return to their homeland but also "the right of the Hebrew nation to self-determination". (It is worth noting that the Israeli Jewish population has tripled in the 46 years since Matzpen formulated that position.)

Holding fast to the idea that a nation that is currently the oppressor must not itself be oppressed in some theoretical future is a difficult position. However, it is not only consistent with socialist principles, but eminently practical. Whether one agrees with the concept of a Hebrew nation or not, it is evident that any conflict resolution must offer all significant groupings a believable and acceptable vision of the future, even if it is not the one they currently believe in.

Despite many white South Africans believing that a democratic country would immediately result in a bloodbath and the massacre of all non-blacks, the African National Congress was able to convince enough whites (especially the wealthy capitalists) that there was a way forward that ultimately offered a better chance of their survival (this is my analogy, not Machover's).

It is interesting to see how well predictions have stood the test of time. When some on the left saw Palestinian "autonomy", suggested in the 1978 Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt, as offering hope of a first step towards a better situation and possible statehood, Machover came out in firm opposition, predicting a rapid colonisation of the West Bank and "a long period of intensifying struggle". We know who was right.

Simply calling Zionism a "colonial project" is insufficient to develop a theory of resistance. Matzpen saw Zionism as a colonial project of a specific type – excluding the indigenous population (like, for example, the European colonisation of North America) rather than exploiting them (as in most of Africa).

Matzpen also insisted on situating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and its potential resolution, in a regional context. This view has been somewhat revived by the ongoing social storms in the Arab region, even if the desired outcome of a regional socialist union or federation, within which both national groups would have equal rights, may still appear rather distant.

What of the way forward, the "resolution" of the book's subtitle?

The short introductory essay, from 2010, is titled "Why I am not an Israeli Peace Activist". While recognising the good intentions of those who do struggle for peace, it emphasises the unequal nature of the participants in any "peace process" and concludes that "peace will be an outcome of liberation, not its starting point". In another essay, we read that Zionism is creating a series of facts that are favourable to its long-term goals. At each

TEST OF TIME

partial stage, it wants one thing: that the Arabs acquiesce in the facts that have been created (and those that will be in future). For this, the word of the stronger party is "peace".

What then? A two-state solution? Or a single state for both peoples?

Neither is acceptable as a longterm solution if you believe, as Machover does, that the only possible way forward is within a broad regional solution that breaks with imperialism and all colonial forms. It is "theoretically absurd to present formulas for solving the problem within the territory of Palestine alone".

While the Palestinians have a right, according to Machover, to choose a Palestinian state as part of their self-determination, it does not present a "just solution to the national question". From a Marxist perspective, bourgeois nationalism focuses on the liberation of the "homeland" rather than that of the people.

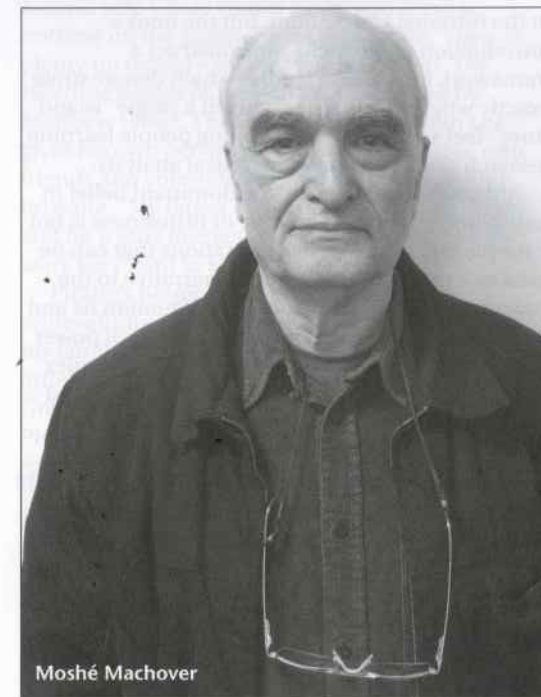
The compass of the author's Marxist principles and theory provide a strong framework, but that can also be a rigid cage. However, given that regional and global players have such major interests and involvement in the area, and noting Israel's chosen role as a regional superpower acting on behalf of its US sponsor, it is valid to point out the challenge of seeking an equitable, longterm solution that does not confront these realities.

On the other hand, insisting that "Palestinians must achieve their liberation through fighting to overthrow the ruling classes and imperialist allies in the region" may not seem to offer any immediate prospects of victory.

Another objection to a "solution" within "Palestine", is that this "box was purpose-made for Zionist colonization... Can it serve as an insulated container for the conflict's resolution?" A good debating point, but one that should not preclude shorter term objectives.

Indeed, Machover makes clear that we must struggle for immediate demands, such as solidarity with "the Palestinian people against the daily extreme oppression and atrocities to which it is subjected", an immediate end to the military occupation and the removal of all discrimination. A single page towards the end of the book, headed "And in the meantime...", identifies such tasks, while warning that these demands will not be achieved to any great extent "as long as the balance of power is not radically changed".

Here I am much more optimistic than Machover. My reading of the reality inside Israel-Palestine and the global situation suggests that I may see radical change in my own lifetime. Just as few people in 1980 realised they were seeing the last decade of apartheid, situations can change quickly – not necessarily to the perfect socialist revolution, but resulting in a better situation for the people.



Moshé Machover

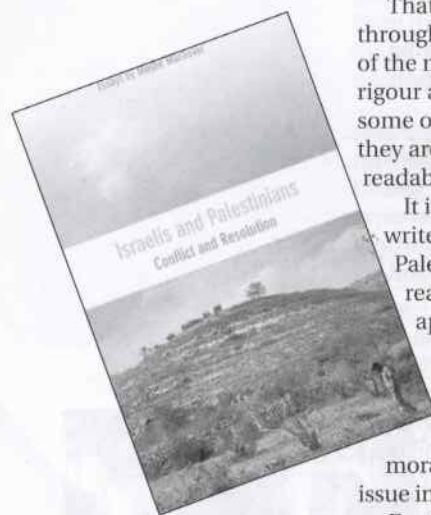
I frequently found that just as I was preparing to skim a section that seemed to repeat an earlier point, a striking new idea would leap from the page. For example, I hadn't considered that Zionists (in prosperous countries) have largely dropped their prime rationale for Jews to emigrate to the safety of Israel: the alleged perpetual antisemitism that was claimed to make Jewish existence in the diaspora insecure. In a reversal of this theory, emigration to Israel is now promoted in order to secure the future existence of Israel.

Some essays shine. "Zionism, National Oppression and Racism" is a most lucid explanation of the difference between racism and national oppression. In the case of the Palestinians, both forms of oppression are practised by the Israeli state. This matters, because if you don't know what you are fighting, you cannot state your demands or formulate a solution.

In that long-ago debate in Bristol, my mistake was to read passages from various sources to demonstrate that I was presenting solid facts and not assertions or opinions. Many of my quotes were relating to atrocities and injustices committed by the Israelis. As Machover points out, in any conflict both sides commit atrocities; they neither prove nor disprove the overall moral case.

In this review, I have avoided too many quotations, instead trying to impart a flavour of the content, style and spirit of this interesting publication. If you want the detail, you'll have to read it for yourself.

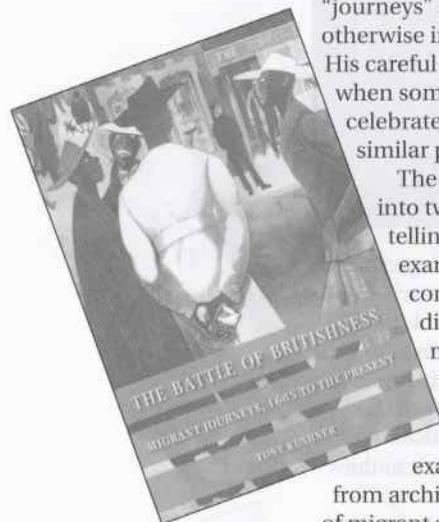
Paul Seligman
@PaulMSeligman



Who controls the past?

THE BATTLE OF BRITISHNESS: MIGRANT JOURNEYS, 1685 TO THE PRESENT

Tony Kushner
Manchester University Press,
£70 hardback



This book is a nuanced, critical discussion of a selection of competing migration narratives that have either been used or forgotten by politicians and others seeking to define Britishness in different eras. It was published before Michael Gove prescribed chronological narrative history teaching in the National Curriculum, but the book's introduction and conclusion construct a framework for six case studies which demonstrate exactly why those who seek to tell a single "island story" feel so threatened by young people learning research skills and applying critical analysis.

Although it challenges "the dominant belief in past homogeneity", *The Battle of Britishness* is not a simple tale of successive migrations that can be used as a multicultural counter-narrative to the government's official chronology of monarchs and European wars. It focuses on the politics of power in relation to histories and memories of complex and contradictory migrant journeys to, from and via Britain over four centuries. Tony Kushner's forensic examination of migrants' different "journeys" highlight historical global forces that are otherwise invisible in discussions of Britishness. His careful explanations of exactly how, why and when some of those journeys have been celebrated while others are forgotten alerts us to similar processes taking place now.

The three themed sections are each divided into two related chapters. In each case the telling of an iconic migrant journey is examined and challenged. Kushner contrasts how those journeys have been differently narrated at different significant moments and identifies the competing interests of the times to demonstrate the political contingency of these memories. Using both familiar examples and forgotten ones excavated from archives, he shows how past negative stories of migrant arrivals have been transformed into positive ones in order to exclude "undesirable" newcomers who cannot then be compared to the assimilated migrants.

The first chapter in the "Early journeys" section focuses on Huguenots and the creation of the "refugee narrative". Introducing a theme developed in subsequent chapters, Kushner argues that: "it is only with hindsight that the Huguenots and Jews are viewed as being genuine and deserving refugees". Huguenot narratives of "persecution" and "escape", some of which were carefully constructed to appease the 17th century establishment, were marginalised from mainstream British history until the 1985 tercentenary commemorations. After that, Huguenot business and cultural contributions to the British way of life and British tolerance have continued to be highlighted. In contrast, the "early journey" focused on in this section's second chapter is that of the forgotten "Volga Germans", who were also European Protestants. They were escorted by British officials from Southampton back to Russia, where they had been long been settled but which closed its doors to them after they migrated on a failed attempt at farming in 1870s Brazil. Here, the materiality of the

journey itself is explored, and Kushner introduces themes of transmigration and global networks to show how the Battle of Britishness is part of a much larger intercontinental story.

The second section, "The Nazi era" picks up on these themes in analysing the shifting narratives of salvation and damnation constructed around the Kindertransport from 1938-1939 and the St Louis, whose passengers were forced to return to Europe after being refused landing in Cuba in 1939. Kushner shows how the variety of Kindertransport journeys, disregarded in the immediate post-war years, have more recently been melded into one story which builds on the Huguenot refugee narratives of "escape", and supports the image of a welcoming Britain. Much is left out of those histories: the official position then was that the children would "re-emigrate at 18" and should be given "no encouragement" to qualify for the professions. Glaringly absent from the welcoming national narrative, because they were never seen by the British, are the Jews prevented from entering the UK.

The first chapter of the third section, "Colonial and postcolonial journeys", examines the layers of narrative that have accumulated about the SS Empire Windrush, which arrived in Tilbury in 1948 with Jamaicans and migrants from other Caribbean islands. Since the 50th anniversary of the Windrush's arrival, the ship and its passengers have become icons representing multicultural Britishness. Kushner includes a typical quote from a recent newspaper article attributing the birth of a "new Britain" to the arrival of the "first wave of West Indian guest workers" when the Empire Windrush docked at "Southampton". Kushner states: "...inaccurate in all its details, this narrative still works by meeting 21st century expectations of the ship's significance." More important than geographical inaccuracies, it makes invisible the centuries of settlement and struggle of African diasporas in metropolitan Britain and its Empire. The politics of historical amnesia is a theme developed further in this section's sister chapter, which focuses on the journeys of West African stowaways, Indian seafarers (Lascars) and others, ending in marginal existences or exclusion. Kushner cites examples to show how the misery and racial violence experienced by the "colonial" subjects of the British Empire becomes visible now, when their British children challenge the celebratory stories of Britishness.

The book has flaws, which are especially noticeable in relation to non-European references. People from the Indian subcontinent are described confusingly as "South East Asians" instead of "South Asians". "Afro-Caribbean" is used in unexplained preference to "African Caribbean". The term "tribe" is used unproblematically to describe a 30-million strong people, misspelt as the "Igboo". Nevertheless, *The Battle of Britishness* is packed with fascinating examples that convincingly support Kushner's arguments and which, together, amplify how the contemporary "politics of power" are impacting on the story of Britain that will be narrated through the new history curriculum.

Georgie Wemyss

Georgie Wemyss is author of *The Invisible Empire* published by Ashgate.

Not the whole story

On the final page of this new biography, the authors praise Phil Piratin with a quote from his friend David Leigh Kerr: the former Labour MP said his comrade was a *mentsh*.

I'd like to say that I got a strong sense of that passion (the Welsh would say "hwyl") from this detailed account of the political life. But this work, although dutiful, does not convey the emotional life of the Jewish communist who became MP for Mile End in 1945. The last words go to cartoonist and fellow communist Ken Sprague: "He had granite in his hands and honey in his heart. He knew when to be tender and when to be strong."

I reread the book, searching for evidence to sustain this view, but the quote remained abstruse, and left this reader puzzling over Piratin's real character. Did he have doubts? Was he devastated and disillusioned by events in 1956? Why did he join the Democratic Left?

There is much in these pages that speaks to us now: Piratin's focus on living conditions, on providing more and better housing, and on organising squatters. The book also captures his views and actions on fighting fascism, on Israel, on Stalin's purges.

I'd have liked more direct quotes; the habit of using very brief partial quotes does nothing to lend narrative to this history. And it's a shame that his decision to side with Eurocommunists in the Democratic Left in 1991 is described entirely in the authors' view, "he followed them into the abyss".

It's difficult, when you look forward to a new book. I knew the authors would be diligent, and was confident this would be a reliable text. It is also, though, sometimes rather turgid. This is not aided by the packed text – it's as if a complex man's life exists only where there is an archived committee minute to demonstrate it.

I appreciate that biography is a tough challenge; it would be spurious to describe emotions at a meeting, say, unless there were a decent eyewitness account. Yet this is done, once or twice, as in the account of the debate on his Private Members' Bill, paving the way for our health and safety provisions at work. Why not use transcripts such as Hansard? Authors have a duty to make the text live.

Author Kevin Marsh asserts in his preface that, "readers ... who are active in political and trades union life will no doubt be able to identify how activism impinges on private and family life...."

We're told that first wife Beattie earned much of the family income. Not only that, but she kept house, cared for the family and took part in politics herself.

How melancholy, then, to learn, from another source, that she wrote to the Ministry of Labour to plead that her husband be called to enlist, so desperate was she for the allowance.

And just as I was hungry to know more, I found Beattie disappearing from this book entirely;

second wife Cissie comes along and there is nothing on the acrimonious separation. There is plenty on record – in *The West End Front: The Wartime Secrets of London's Grand Hotels* by Matthew Sweet. The Piratins' son Malcolm Lee gives his own perspective on a father whose own friends and comrades viewed him as stern and brusque. "My father could do very unkind things and he wasn't overgenerous. My mother had to work very hard to keep going."

Piratin's heroic work in supporting and representing working class people clearly did affect his family. Lee also recalls that his mother received little financial help from her estranged husband. In *Granite and Honey* we're told that, by the time Piratin was an MP, the finance for his office came from parliamentary allowances or the Communist Party. He gave his MP's salary to the party and, in return, was to receive an allowance equal to that of an average skilled worker. "In reality, party wages were often lower than stipulated, not always paid on time, and sometimes not paid at all."

I may be criticised for taking a feminist view of the book, but I take my lead from the late, great man himself. He urged: "involve the people" and stressed that this applied equally to women. He said of the Stepney Tenants' Defence League, "Every feminist claim was proved. There was nothing the men could do that could not be equalled by the women, and, in fact they were mostly more enthusiastic, and hence more reliable."

The authors' words, however, are telling. Marsh and Griffiths say Piratin "was proud of the role played by himself and other communists in helping to politicise them." Really, are we to believe that these strong East End women, fighting against appalling living conditions which threatened their children's lives, required "politicising"?

Phil Piratin, scourge of the Blackshirts, defender of the East End, died in late 1995 at the age of 88. A year or so before, he'd walked the two mile route with thousands of marchers on a Unite Against Racism demonstration in his beloved East End. May we all walk in his footsteps.

Lynne Walsh

GRANITE AND HONEY: THE STORY OF PHIL PIRATIN, COMMUNIST MP

Kevin Marsh and Robert Griffiths
Manifesto Press,
£14.95



Exodus after 2500 years

NEW BABYLONIANS: A HISTORY OF JEWS IN MODERN IRAQ

Orit Bashkin
Stanford University Press,
£21.50



Iraqi Jews were the most integrated Jewish population in Arab countries, surviving intact into the 20th century after nearly 2,500 years. *New Babylonians* is a major contribution to the documentation of this unique and remarkable community and their turbulent history. This includes the impact of the end of the Ottoman Empire, and of the British Mandate until 1932, their determined resistance to Zionism and almost complete displacement from 1949-51 following the establishment of Israel.

There is a growing fascination among historians and peace activists with this community, whose history is used by Zionists to perpetuate a picture of a people in dhimmitude – subject to Arab and Muslim antisemitism and persecution – their exodus from Iraq portrayed as exemplifying the impossibility of Arab and Jewish coexistence. Orit Bashkin instead reveals how Iraqi Jews, who identified themselves as Arab Jews, closely coexisted with and embraced Arab and Islamic culture and society, participated fully with other minorities (Kurdish, Turkish, Shi'a and Christian) as friends and patriots within an emerging Iraqi nationalism, and made a major contribution to the anti-colonial struggle for equality and human rights, the development of education and advances in secularisation, gender liberation, and left-wing political organisation.

Bashkin uses newspaper archives, literary manuscripts, letters, writings, eyewitness accounts and the now voluminous sources of Iraqi, Israeli and Palestinian academics and authors. With warm empathy for this moving material, she delves deep into the intellectual, social and cultural history of many Arab Jews who saw Iraq as their homeland and Arabic as their language. People who "figured so prominently in the greater cultural arena", in the Iraqi and wider Arab press, literary and music scenes. She provides gripping accounts behind the epoch-changing events such as the 1941 *Farhud* (pogrom), the 1948 war in Palestine and the 1950 *Wathba* (demonstrations) and their aftermaths that led to the eventual exodus of Iraqi Jews.

From the 1930s, due to the increasing influence of Pan-Arabism, which infiltrated the Iraqi nationalism that Jewish Iraqis had supported, and with the presence and influence of Nazis and fascism spread by the war in Europe, the position of the Iraqi Jews became riskier. Their communities suffered each time events in Palestine such as the 1936-38 Arab revolt unfolded, leading to the *Farhud* on 1st-2nd June 1941, in which rioters murdered between 150 and 180 Jews, and injured 600 others. British troops stood by to protect their own soldiers and did not intervene to prevent the rioting, looting and killing until the worst had been done.

Bashkin stresses how Arab neighbours protected and saved their Jewish friends and property and how Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) colleagues deflected and condemned the accusations that Jews were aiding the British.

The *Farhud* marked a turning point. Iraqi Jewish life became much more fraught and resulted in some Jewish youth joining the Zionists, who the British had

allowed into the country since the 1920s. Until then, they had been sidelined, their influence rejected by all sections of the community, including the rabbis. The Jewish community had always separated their Judaism from Zionism which meant that the ICP had a major impact in the life of the Jewish community.

The ICP was banned after a failed coup but in September 1945 leading Jews under Yusuf Harun Zilkha founded the League for Combating Zionism. This was a haven for Jewish and Arab communists, attracting large sections of Jewish youth, workers and leading members of the Jewish *effendia* to counteract their growing insecurity. Zilkha maintained that the Jewish religion could not form the basis for a national community, that the solution to the Jewish problem should be sought within the community. Equating Judaism with Zionism imperiled Jewish communities in Arab countries.

The war in Palestine in 1948, in which the Iraqis were defeated, caused much anger and aggression against the Jewish community. Young Jews, including Jewish communists, participated in the *Wathba* against the state's pro-British policies and lack of social justice. Many communists were arrested and four, including one Jew, were executed. In 1948-9, Nuri al-Said, under the banner of the fight against Zionism and communism, moved to enact laws that discriminated against Jews, including the denationalisation laws, and sequestration of Jewish property. The hanging of prominent Jewish businessman Shafiq 'Adas on the trumped-up charge of selling military supplies to Israel, and the progressive dismissal of Jews from their jobs in all spheres, resulted in the mass departure of Jews to Israel between 1949 and 1951. The Zionist underground, before the arrest of its members by the state, helped accelerate this departure, which was opposed by many in the ICP and the Iraqi intelligentsia and Arab friends. Zionists are suspected of bombing Mas'uda Shemtov Synagogue and other Jewish centres where five people were killed.

Iraqi Jews suffered much discrimination in Israel and many remained in transit camps for decades, before being properly housed and integrated into Israeli society, afterwards making a valuable contribution to Israeli culture, music and academia.

Iraqi Jews are being used as pawns in the Zionist *hasbara* (propaganda) drive to equate their exodus and loss of property with the expulsion and lack of compensation to the Palestinian refugees, and to deny them the Right of Return. Yet, recently, Iraqi Jews in Ramat Gan have demanded the opening of secret archives, which they say would reveal the machinations that may have occurred between Ben Gurion and the Nuri al-Said government to put the Iraqi Jews' exodus into effect.

Over 3,000 Jews stayed in Iraq until the rise of the Ba'ath party in the 1960s made it impossible for them to remain. Their exile has enriched many communities around the world. Bashkin's remarkable book is an indispensable and penetrating analysis of this phenomenon, which could have a significant impact on any solutions to peace in the Middle East.

Abe Hayeem

LIVING LEGACY

The Bund has had three periods in its existence: up to 1918; from then until the Second World War and the Holocaust; and after 1945. In each of these it has been very different. In the first period, it was an underground revolutionary movement in Russia, in the second it was primarily a political organisation in Poland, and in the third it was a movement with branches in all continents. David Slucki examines the third, and the least studied, period.

The Bund after the Second World War and the Holocaust was very different to what it had been before. In 1938 it was the height of its power in Poland, having just convincingly won the local elections in the Jewish community. By 1945, that Polish Jewish community barely existed.

As soon as the war ended the Bund was active in displaced persons' camps in central Europe, demanding that the refugees be given the choice of settling where they wished, as opposed to the Zionists, who were pressing for Jews to settle in Palestine. The Bund tried to organise in Poland in the late 1940s, but this was ultimately defeated by emigration prompted by antisemitism (notably the 1946 Kielce pogrom) and by the developments that led to single party rule. In 1949 the Bund merged itself into the single political party allowed in Poland.

After that, Bundism was to develop in the places where large Polish Jewish communities settled – Buenos Aires, Melbourne, Paris, New York, Toronto and Montreal, as well as Israel. A World Congress held in Brussels in 1947 formally established the Bund as an international organisation, with a World Co-ordinating Committee based in New York. Slucki looks in detail at the Bund in the United States, in France, in Australia (specifically in Melbourne) and in Israel.

The key Bund ideas of *doikayt* (here-ness) and national cultural autonomy were developed in the Russian empire. The first meant that Jews should be active in the countries where they lived, as opposed to emigrating to Palestine or later Israel. The second became the basis for the Bund's grounding in secular Yiddish culture – in Poland this had underpinned the Bund's network of secular schools and its youth organisation (Tsukunft – future) and children's group SKIF (Sotsialistishe Kinder Farband – Socialist Children's Union). The Bund set up similar groups in other countries where they were active. Camp Hemshekh (continuity) in the United States and SKIF branches in Paris and Melbourne.

Some common themes can be seen in all countries. Firstly, the Bund's idea of *doikayt* was now developed into the notion of Jews as a "world people". This was counterposed to the Zionist notion of Israel as the centre of Jewish life. Some Bundists criticised this notion for subordinating class to peoplehood. Secondly, they promoted Yiddish secular culture but this was challenged by Israeli Hebrew culture within diaspora

communities to the exclusion of all else, and by assimilation into the culture of the country, whether that was the United States or Australia or France, which meant that second generation Bundists no longer spoke Yiddish.

And the Bund's history of opposition to Leninism and Communism, based on its experience in Eastern Europe, meant that in the conditions of the 1950s and 1960s, its distinctive politics could be become overlaid with a Cold War tinge and support for positions which, in retrospect, appear to contradict its basic ideas, such as the French branch's support for the Suez invasion.

Slucki shows that the Bund reacted in different ways. He counterposes the experience in France, where the SKIF branch was renamed CLEJ (Club laïque de l'enfance juive – Secular Jewish Children's Club) and carries out its activities in French rather than Yiddish, to Melbourne, where SKIF is still active to this day with an emphasis on Yiddish.

The small Israeli branch of the Bund remains active, and its journal, *Lebnsfragn*, is now available online (at www.lebnsfragn.com in Yiddish). Its activities were outlined in the recent film, *Bunda'im*, by Israeli filmmaker Eran Torbiner. Slucki shows how the Bund's position on Israel evolved from a pre-state rejection of partition to a position where the Israeli Jewish community was seen as "part of the Jewish world people". The Bund's 1952 conference in Israel rejected the Zionist project of the "ingathering of the exiles", and saw the positive role of the state in building on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity for all its citizens and can work together with the Jews of the world...

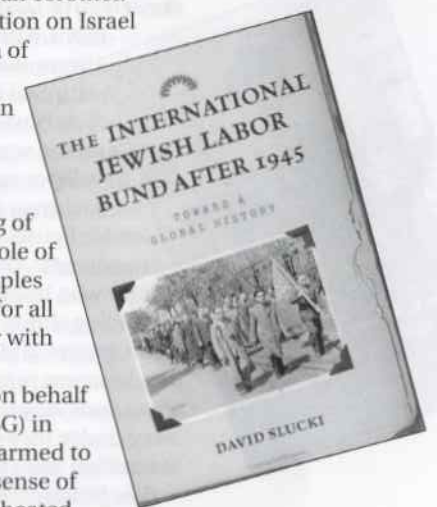
I attended Bund conferences on behalf of the Jewish Socialists' Group (JSG) in New York during the 1990s and warmed to the Bund's *mishpokhedikhkayt* (sense of being in a family), complete with heated political debates in Yiddish and a banquet where the Bundist anthem, the *Shvue* (oath), was sung. At the same time, it is clear that it was easier to refer to a common past. I remember one delegate saying that the Bund's *doikayt* (here-ness) could all too easily become *dortkayt* (there-ness).

Slucki does not mention the JSG. It might have been interesting to reflect on the experience of the group which did not start out as Bundist but whose position evolved to one where we are seen as part of the Bundist family. The JSG has a positive attitude to Yiddish but carries out its activities in English. The future for any movement that draws on the legacy of the Bund must be multilingual, and cannot be in Yiddish alone.

Mike Heiser

THE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH LABOR BUND AFTER 1945 – TOWARD A GLOBAL HISTORY

David Slucki
Rutgers University Press
£40.95
hardback,
£30.95 ebook



SEX, SPIES

AND SUICIDE

AN ENGLISH AFFAIR

Richard Davenport-Hines
Harper Press,
£20 hardback,
£12.99 ebook

It is 50 years since the Profumo affair, the sex scandal that culminated in the downfall of Tory war minister John Profumo and the resignation of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.

Richard Davenport-Hines's latest book, *An English Affair*, is a dazzling study of Britain during that sordid episode in British history, the shameful climax of which is the "show trial", as the author rightly describes it, of Stephen Ward.

Ward was a socialite osteopath, a libertine of "ambiguous sexuality". The young nightclub performer and model, Christine Keeler, was staying in the cottage that had been loaned to him, in Lord Astor's Cliveden grounds on that the weekend of her initial, fateful meeting with Profumo. Yevgeny Ivanov, a Russian embassy attaché, was also Ward's guest, and may have slept with Keeler that weekend. Keeler's encounter with Profumo led to a brief affair. He was married but prone to such dalliances.

Interconnections between Ward, Profumo, Keeler, Astor, the son of pre-war appeasers, and Ivanov, who was suspected of being a Soviet spy, all got twisted, once the press, and especially the establishment bashing, Labour supporting *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Pictorial*, and the sniffily conservative *Daily Express*, got their fangs into them. Among other parties in the imbroglio

were such figures as Keeler's black criminal lovers, model and showgirl Mandy Rice-Davies, "slum landlord" Peter Rachman and the aggressively expansionist property developer and retailer Charles Clore.

Rachman and Clore are among several Jewish figures covered in the chapter headed "Landlords". One of these is Lewis Silkin, an East Ender who became a Labour MP, intent on rebuilding slums, with the aim of removing the profit motive and bestowing the ownership of development rights on local committees. The 1947 Town and Country Act, his brainchild, was swept away under Tory administration in 1954, when Macmillan was Housing Minister.

"The lifting of restrictions triggered a London property boom that brought the likes of Clore to the prominence, with consequences that the patrician Macmillan surely failed to envisage. The developers 'were not public school boys ... They scorned, and in turn were despised, by the old guard.' Whether or not they scorned the old guard – as Davenport-Hines asserts – they were certainly perceived, as he records, as an assault on the status quo.

"Property developers like Charles Clore ... transformed the centre of the capital with a brutal phallic modernity that provided both the aesthetic and the ecology of the Profumo affair."

Davenport-Hines notes: "Clore was the 'Charles' who featured in Stephen Ward's trial. Though Keeler later denied that she had sex with him, a different tale was told to convict Ward. Rice-Davies, too, claimed

Clore as a sexual partner. Walter Flack, Clore's co-director ... also numbered among her protectors ... Rachman, who kept both Keeler and Rice-Davies, is the third property dealer who featured in the Profumo Affair, most infamously of all."

Rachman flourished in the seedy crevices of the London property market. Rachmanism became popular coinage for the exploitation of poor tenants in high rent, multi-occupancy properties, subdivided into flats, subject to minimal statutory control, a system enforced by heavies. While he became reviled in the popular imagination, by Davenport-Hines' reckoning "his villainy" came with redeeming traits and extenuating circumstances".

The author writes: "Rachman was exceptional in letting rooms to black people who could not otherwise find accommodation ... Sometimes he was patient with black tenants who fell into rent arrears; perhaps he felt an affinity with them. Like Rachman, they belonged to a minority which was apprehended as anti-social by the majority." His henchmen included jazz promoter and criminal Johnny Edgecombe, a West Indian-born former merchant seaman, whose entanglement with Keeler alerted the authorities to the Profumo affair.

The Profumo scandal blazed at a time when a fusty UK establishment felt challenged by the modernising impulses prevalent in the country's society, culture and economy. And Ward was a convenient scapegoat.

On the basis of rickety police evidence, prosecution lawyer Mervyn Griffith-Jones and judge Sir Archie Marshall leaned on the jury to convict Ward of a wide range of sexual offences. "Every witness who does not give the answer the police want is tampered with ... Every motive I had is twisted," pleaded Ward in court. On the final day of his trial, Ward overdosed on barbiturates and days later died. Acquitted of pimping, he was convicted of other offences. Davenport-Hines believes Ward's conviction "would have been quashed" had "justice been permissible" in the Court of Criminal Appeal. His book will engage and enrage in equal measure.

Mike Gerber



Christine Keeler



STONE UNTURNED

Among the stories revealed by Dr Richard Stone, author of *Hidden Stories of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Personal Reflections* (Policy Press), is the way the Inquiry's secretary, a senior civil servant, explained the cancellation of a visit to Birmingham. The secretary wrote to Muhammad Idrish that "many Jewish festivals" were coming up and it was necessary "to be sensitive to Dr Richard Stone's position as a senior member of the Jewish faith", who would be unable to attend. Stone had said no such thing. Indeed he had never been asked. Years later, he still feels uncomfortable about this use of his name.

But it might have reminded him of when, as a West London GP, Dr Stone did much to expose Dame Shirley Porter's regime in Westminster Council, asking why, when he kept passing empty boarded up council properties, the local authority could not rehouse his patients. Before the Homes for Votes scandal, Dame Shirley's stroke of genius had been to sell three cemeteries for 5p each. Westminster had to buy them back for over £4 million. Councillors had been told the Liberal Jewish synagogue was interested in acquiring the cemeteries, though the synagogue knew nothing about it.

BULLDOZERS AND BALANCE

Rachel Corrie was killed 10 years ago as she tried to stop an Israeli army bulldozer destroying Palestinian homes near Rafah in southern Gaza. Last August an Israeli court ruled that the young American peace activist had been responsible for her own death.

Before asking Israeli government spokesperson Mark Regev about bulldozing Palestinian homes, BBC Radio 4 World at One presenter Martha Kearney, said: "Clearly, Rachel Corrie was one of the casualties of what happened that day, and I know Israeli soldiers died too." That was not true. No Israelis were killed that day. Corrie made her peaceful protest watched by horrified, helpless civilians, as their homes were destroyed.

In answer to complaints, the BBC admitted the facts but claimed its report was fair. I am not surprised. In 2005, Philip Munger's cantata, *The Skies Are Weeping*, dedicated to Rachel Corrie, had its world premiere at the Hackney Empire as part of a concert dedicated "to all the lives lost during the Occupation". The event was supported by a host of celebrities, Jews for Justice for Palestinians and the Jewish Socialists' Group.

The next evening, BBC London broadcast a news item focusing on "Jewish protest" against the concert. Jonathan Hoffman of the Zionist Federation, who stood outside with half a dozen

protesters, was given the last word. Soprano Debbie Fink, who sang the cantata and largely organised the concert, was interviewed and explained why many Jews supported the event, but she was edited out of the piece. Responding to protests, a BBC spokesman insisted that its coverage had been "even-handed", though admitted that "inadvertently" its "oversimplification may have misled viewers". As a friend of mine commented: "Never mind 'one state' or 'two states', they can't get it right about East 8."

KREMLIN TO GREMLINS

Reading about Algeria in the last issue of Jewish Socialist brought to mind a little known might-have-been sequel. In the late 1950s, as Israel moved deeper into an alliance with France, which was fighting a colonial war, the Egyptian Jewish communist Henri Curiel approached Uri Avnery with a daring suggestion. Israeli support for the Algerian freedom struggle would not only improve the outlook for Jews in Algeria, but would give Israel a friend, and a path to acceptance in the Arab world.

Israeli politicians were not interested. Shimon Peres wanted French help to acquire nuclear weapons. Some of Avnery's old Irgun Zva'i Leumi colleagues were in Algeria, using Jewish defence groups as cover to assist right wing and notoriously antisemitic settlers. But Avnery set up the Israeli Committee for a Free Algeria anyway.

Learning that some of its supporters had been in the underground Lehi (the Stern Gang), the Algerians, less fastidious than practical, came up with another suggestion. They asked for Israeli instructors to visit training camps in Yugoslavia or Tunis to teach Algerian militants the use of explosive devices and sabotage. It did not happen. Even if Avnery had recruited enough volunteers, the French and Israeli security services would have blocked it.

But contacts with the Algerians continued. In Egypt, a team of Israeli agents – all young Egyptian Jews – had been rounded up after a bombing campaign in 1954. Two were hanged and another committed suicide in jail. The woman in the group, Marcelle Ninjo, was sentenced to 15 years, the longest prison sentence given to any woman in Egypt. Israel denied having anything to do with the affair, though Israeli leaders were squabbling about responsibility (the Lavon Affair). Following Algeria's independence, Henri Curiel asked its new president, Ahmed Ben Bella, to intercede with Nasser on Ninjo's behalf. Ben Bella tried, but it was only after the 1967 war that she and her fellow spies were released in a prisoner exchange, and not until 2005 that they were recognised and honoured by Israel.

This article is an augmented version of a review that was published earlier this year in *Public Service Magazine*, the journal of the FDA civil service trade union.