

JEWISH FEMINISM and IDENTITY POLITICS

The siege of Bourj Barajneh
Israel in Guatemala
Racism and the *Sun*
UK: Brent · Broadwater Farm
Repression in Israel
Latin American film

**RACE &
CLASS**

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Homelands of the mind: Jewish feminism and Identity Politics

Identity Politics is all the rage. Exploitation is out (it is extrinsically determinist). Oppression is in (it is intrinsically personal). What is to be done has been replaced by who am I. Political culture has ceded to cultural politics. The material world has passed into the metaphysical. The Blacks, the Women, the Gays have all searched for themselves. And now, combining all their quests, has arrived the quest for Jewish feminist identity.

During the 1960s and 1970s Jews formed the backbone of the Women's Movement – certainly in the USA and UK. But we were not there as Jews. We were feminists who just happened to be Jews. Our Jewishness went unarticulated and unsung. Undoubtedly, what brought us to a consciousness of oppression, and a commitment to fighting it, had its roots in our particular history. After all, it cannot be coincidental that so many of the white civil rights campaigners in the USA were Jews or that in the forefront of those who opposed the Vietnam war were Jews. In Britain, when we began in an organised way to oppose racism and fascism from the mid-1970s, of the whites in women-against-racism-and-fascism groups, a large proportion were Jewish women. But our Jewishness was not discussed; we just sensed it when we learned one another's surnames or noticed how many of us were called Miriam or Ruth.

We came to anti-racist, anti-imperialist or anti-fascist work in the

Jenny Bourne works at the Institute of Race Relations and has been a member of the Campaign against Racism and Fascism since 1977.

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Women's Movement because so many of us were already committed to a radical form of politics. Our histories of oppression as Jews – even if indirectly or at one remove – had subliminally propelled us towards liberatory politics, had taught us to be vigilant, had put us on the side of all underdogs. We helped formulate and practise a liberatory socialist feminism which was outward-looking and connected our struggles as women with those of all oppressed and exploited peoples – a socialist feminism which, according to Lynne Segal, was united in its attempt 'to understand the connection between women's subordination and capitalism, and to create a movement of and for all women, but not only for women – also for all oppressed groups and peoples and for men'.¹

Today's feminism bears few hallmarks of such liberatory socialist principles. 'The struggle for social change and the transformation of society' articulated as a primary purpose at the first British Women's Liberation Conference (1970) has been obscured by a feminism which is separatist, individualistic and inward-looking. The organic relationship we tried to forge between the personal and the political has been so degraded that now the only area of politics deemed to be legitimate *is* the personal. Paradoxically, nowhere has the reversal of political priorities in feminism been more evident than amongst Jewish women. We are no longer politically active feminists who happen to be Jews, but Jewish feminists whose main purpose is to seek out our identity.

The venue for this change of direction in our politics already existed in a strain of radical feminism that began to emerge in the USA in the late 1970s among black feminists as a way of grappling with the issues (of race, class and power) which threatened the feminist view of a universal sisterhood. 'The most profound and potentially the most radical politics come', said the Combahee River Collective, 'directly out of our own identity as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression.'² It was a politics which Jewish feminists would soon be taking up. Elly Bulkin, for example, eagerly acknowledged her 'significant debt' to 'women of color, especially lesbians', who laid out for other feminists 'a range of ways in which ... oppression works'.³ Feminists such as Bulkin held that society was forcing them to choose between the different identities they might possess. Their task, therefore, was to refuse to be fragmented in their persona or compartmentalised in their politics. They refused, that is, to 'choose' which bit of themselves defined them. 'Coming out' as lesbians, for example, would help them to 'come out' as Jews.

Such a politics was, then, to be based on rejecting not just the internalised oppression of one's gender or sexuality (sexual politics), but all other oppressions including those of class or 'ethnicity' so as to find one's true identity.* Through consciousness-raising, group discussion

*Ironically, the search for 'true' identity by and large leaves out the full range of human

and role models, one would learn to cohere all those 'non-mainstream identities' which fragment one. In other words, structural, material issues of race, class and power would first be resolved in terms of personal consciousness. The aim was not to transform the material world but one's self. For us Jews, 'exploring our experience of oppression' would itself constitute 'a form of resistance'.⁴

And so, within a matter of a mere five years, a veritable feminist subculture grew up – through books, conferences, study groups, magazines, meetings – which required us to 'come out' as Jews, reclaim our history, wear our symbols proudly, revive our traditions, customs, language, rediscover our heroines.

This shift in Jewish feminist politics towards a preoccupation with cultural identity found justification in, and was reinforced by, the New Marxism⁵ which, in its 'flight from class', had chosen the new social forces (of Women, Blacks, Gays, Greens, etc.) as the builders of the new Jerusalem.* 'Classism', in the new scheme of things, was no more than another autonomous force like racism or anti-Semitism or homophobia. Oppression, therefore, and not exploitation became the focus of attention. And capitalism was not so much 'a mode of production which can be reduced to one central contradiction – between exploited workers and capitalists' – as 'a set of oppressions including those of race, sex and nationality'.⁷

Feminists took these 'findings' further and refracted the whole world and all aspects of human life through a prism of oppression. Oppression became the new political yardstick. Everyone was oppressed or oppressing – men of women, whites of blacks, heterosexuals of homosexuals, Christians of Jews. A friend could oppress with a joke, an advertisement could oppress by omission, a speech could oppress by its language, work could oppress, a bureaucrat could oppress. The distinction between idea and act, between individual and structure, between the real world and its representation was completely lost.

And the way to fight oppression was not so much to challenge power directly as to challenge discourse, the mode in which power relations are discussed and represented.

It was an avenue down which Jewish feminists, in their attempt to

experiences that, over time, goes to make an individual, and restricts itself instead to biological or inherited factors. Class, for example, is something one is born into. Feminists might call themselves working class because their parents were working class. Class, for them, is not what class does.

*Michael Safier, writing in the *Jewish Socialist*, welcomed the New Marxism because its vision 'of an actually achievable socialism . . . is one where equality is combined with . . . cultural diversity and gender aware individual autonomy'. Unlike earlier Marxist theory, 'it offers the Jewish community a quite different and positive perspective, in which alongside other ethnic minorities Jewish socialists take their proper place as an autonomous force within the socialist alliance'.⁶

come to terms with Israel, were bound to go – and throw up in the process the futility of discourse politics itself. What was to bring matters to a head, however, was the invasion of Lebanon.

In July 1981, Israeli jets bombed Beirut (killing 300 and wounding 800 more); on 9 May 1982 Israel strafed the Lebanese coastal villages; on 4 June Israel invaded Lebanon with over 100,000 troops; between 16-18 September 2,000 Palestinian men, women and children were systematically massacred in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. The Women's Movement unhesitatingly took the side of their Palestinian sisters. Where did we stand? Did we support Israel and Zionism – in which case we were running against the feminist tide – or would we come out against Israel ourselves in the name of a larger feminist politics? Were we Jews first or feminists first? How could we stay true to both our feminism and our knowledge of ourselves and our history?

Our answer was to seek out an identity which would distance us as far as possible from Israel's excesses whilst allowing us to remain within the portals of feminism as Jews. Indeed, by calling attention to ourselves as victims of a particular oppression – anti-Semitism – we further reinforced our claim to feminist sympathies and acceptance.

The question forced on us as feminists was what kind of Jew are you; we chose instead to answer what kind of feminists we were. And feminism required us to take conscience of our double oppression, as women and as Jews. We refused, that is, to take a stand on the crucial and painful contradictions posed by the material realities of the Middle East, and opted instead to internalise those contradictions into a crisis of Jewish feminism, to be resolved on the basis of our complex identities. Politics required us to take a stand on the issue, metaphysics allowed us to escape it – but feminism allowed us to conflate the political and the personal, the objective and the subjective, the material and the metaphysical, and escape into Identity Politics. And the New Marxism gave it refuge.

Side-stepping Israel or non-Zionist Zionism

In many ways the Women's Movement's consciousness about the Middle East followed that of the Left. The 1967 Israeli war and the consequent occupation of Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian territory were turning-points in that consciousness. The sympathy for Israeli Jews as, perhaps, the most oppressed people in history became transformed into a wariness about a potential new colonising power. But unlike, say, on South Africa or Vietnam, both the Left and the Women's Movement failed to take an immediate stand.* From the mid-1970s, however, a far

*According to feminist Zionists, the 1975 UN General Assembly's resolution, describing

greater internationalism entered the Movement and with it a greater regard for what Third World feminists, including Palestinians, had to say. It was reflected in the international women's conferences that followed. In 1975, at the conference held in Mexico, a resolution was passed condemning Zionism. In the late 1970s Palestinian Women's Work Committees, which had been organising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, began sending delegates to international events, alerting feminists in other countries to the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories. When, therefore, Leila Khaled, who had formerly been imprisoned in the UK for a spectacular hijack attempt, was sent by the PLO to head its delegation to the Copenhagen International Women's Conference in 1980, her passionate speech on the Palestinian cause, and the controversy surrounding her presence, made a deep impression on feminists worldwide.

But it was the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and especially the massacres of innocent Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila that finally threw Israel and everything it stood for into stark relief. How could a country set up as a refuge for the persecuted itself turn persecutor? How could a state whose leaders had faced extermination be a party to the extermination of another people? Where did securing one's borders end and aggressive colonisation begin? Everything about Israel was now put in question, from its permanent war-footing to the racism of its Law of Return,* from its support of South Africa to its dealings with the Chilean fascist junta. Conversely, Israel had thrown our own identity into question – and yet it was only in coming to terms with the challenges posed by Israel that we could refashion our identity anew.

By and large, we side-stepped the challenges, finding a variety of arguments to avoid facing up to what was happening.** Firstly, we argued that, though Israel had indeed behaved barbarically, it was not the particular concern of Jews but only of Israelis. We had not been a party to Israel's setting up, we had no vote there now, and we could not therefore be held responsible for it. We resented the implication that there was only one form of identity – the Zionist one – and proceeded

'Zionism as a form of racism', changed all that, and paved the way for Jewish persecution at all successive UN international women's conferences.⁸

*The Law of Return (1950) states that every Jew in the world has the right to migrate and settle in Israel and the Law of Citizenship (1950) holds that every Jew coming to Israel is automatically a citizen, whereas Palestinian Arabs, who may have been born in that country and whose families have lived there for generations, have no automatic right to citizenship.

**A minority of feminists actually defined themselves as Zionists. For example, Letty Cottin Pogrebin called Zionism 'simply an affirmative action plan on a national scale'.⁹ And Shelley Horwitz saw in Zionism a parallel with strong womanhood: 'Like the class of women, Jews are always expected to be self-sacrificing. Zionists refuse to do so.'¹⁰

to construct and articulate another based on diaspora anti-Semitism. We refused to deal with Israel at all; we put ourselves beyond its concern.

But we reckoned without the host: Israel regards all Jews, and therefore us, as its concern; it speaks in the name of all Jews, and therefore ours, and it justifies its actions in the name of our survival as a race. Israel, that is, takes a position for us and, in failing to disown it, we tacitly agree to its politics. Our non-position on Israel is effectively a position. And each time the Women's Movement has taken a stand against Israel, or for Palestinians, we have countered with a plea for solidarity with us – as became apparent in the debate that rocked the largest British feminist magazine, *Spare Rib*. An article on Lebanon by Arab and anti-Zionist Israeli women (August 1982) was countered with an article by Jewish feminists writing on anti-Semitism (October 1982); 'Women for Palestine say why they oppose Zionism' (November 1982) threw up 'Words from nice Jewish girls' (February 1983). Finally, when Jewish feminists failed to prevent the magazine from continuing to support and publicise the struggles of Palestinian and Lebanese women against Israeli domination, they left it altogether to form their own separate Jewish feminist magazine, *Shifra*.

A second reaction, allied to the 'non-position' position, was to pretend that Israel was really just like any other country to us but that, as so many Jews lived there, we, as Jews and feminists, would see how Israel treated its women.* We reduced the massive international problem of Israel to a simplistic expression of male power. Thus *Shifra* saw the root cause of all oppression in Israel (including that of Palestinians) to be the fact that it was a male-dominated society.¹¹ And the contributors to a section on Israel entitled 'Next year in Jerusalem' in the anthology *Nice Jewish girls* argued that Israel should be freed from its discrimination against lesbians.¹² Seeing the oppression suffered by lesbians at the hands of the Israeli state did not give them eyes to see the oppression suffered by other groups; the contributors concentrated on how lesbians alone might be freed of Israeli oppression. The lesbian experience, in other words, did not help them to see how Israel can be made free for everyone, but only for themselves – in the same way that the historical oppression of the Jews has succeeded in enclosing itself in oppressions of its own.

Moreover, by restricting their sights to the freedom of sexual expression for women, feminists like these fail to make other crucial connections. The reason that Israel is so homophobic and anti-abortion has, of

*A number of Jewish feminists argue that Arab women under Israeli occupation actually benefit (as women) from Israel's 'civilising' influence which, because Israel is an enlightened democracy, liberates them from backward male feudal customs.

course, to be related to its essential nature as a colonising power which relies on force of numbers to maintain *Jewish* control of Israel and of occupied Arab lands. This, in turn, necessitates an institutionalisation and legitimisation of racism – as to who can buy land in Israel, where people can buy homes and where workers may live – comparable to the South African apartheid system.¹³ By reducing the oppression faced by women in Israel to a matter of patriarchy, such feminists betray the wider feminist principle of opposing all forms of oppression. And the first feminist principle, of an all-embracing sisterhood, is put in jeopardy.

In ignoring the exclusionist basis of Zionism and the racist practices of Israel (by pretending that Israel is just any other nation state), we fail to speak out against the most obvious oppressions being visited on our sisters. Where is our solidarity with Palestinian *women*, what are we doing about the inferior status of Sephardic *women* within Israel as a whole, how can we intervene to stop the particular humiliations now being visited on Falasha families?¹⁴

Some of us did feel impelled to speak out against Israel and its dispossession of the Palestinians, but still tried to hang on to Zionism's coat-tails. That is, the criticisms were always of a particular policy or a particular leader (usually male anyway) and couched in language ever careful not to imply anything more. 'Israel is undoubtedly a patriarchy and theocracy hostile to women and lesbians; there are also serious problems with its foreign policy and its treatment of Palestinians', comments Evelyn Torton Beck. But, she goes on, 'No matter how critical Jews may be of Israel's internal and external politics, most will probably have some positive response to the idea of a Jewish state.'¹⁵ She agrees with the logic of Zionism, but wants to distance herself from its leadership and present practice.

Gill Seidel, a British Jewish feminist, holds a similar position. In the wake of the massacre at Sabra and Shatila, shocked by the event and anxious to expose its full horror, she made translations of the testimonies from the survivors and had them published.¹⁶ But there her critique ended. For her, the connection between what Israel does and what Israel is (in its origins and ideology) is so fragile that to question the former in terms of the latter is to question the very existence of the state of Israel, and, therefore, Jewish survival itself. She has recently denounced anti-Zionist historian Lenni Brenner for his 'virulently anti-semitic thesis'¹⁷ and implicitly defended the suppression of Jim Allen's play *Perdition* (which recounts the collaboration of some Hungarian Zionist leaders with Nazis) on the basis that an attack 'on the legitimacy of the Israeli state, as distinct from its policies', constitutes 'the mainstay of anti-Semitic discourse'.¹⁸

A variation on this neo-Zionist stance is the non-Zionist position – a kind of fence-sitting which just abstracts the issue, as evidenced in

Shifra. 'As Jewish feminists we have a particular relationship to Israel. We understand why Israel exists and we defend the right of Jews to a homeland. We do not believe that this should be at the expense of the Palestinian people'.¹⁹ But Israel is not a thing of the future and it has indeed been created at the expense of the Palestinian people. And a homeland means a Jewish homeland, a homeland for Jews and no one else.

Elly Bulkin's version of non-Zionism, on the other hand, is to support 'both the Palestinian and the Jewish national movements' (original emphasis).²⁰ She does not see the one as dependent on the other, nor that the historical specificity of these two national movements makes them violently contradictory: there would be no Palestinian national movement without a Jewish national movement, the one exists because of, and to oppose, the other. She refuses, that is, to see that the Jewish national movement was a colonial movement, expansionist in its nature and exclusivist in its aim (of setting up a wholly Jewish state) – from the burden of which, of course, the Palestinian movement seeks to liberate its people. Nor does she, in the way she supports both movements, allow of the claim of the Palestinian movement to a (secular) bi-national state

for that would be to argue against a Jewish state as such. At best, she is in favour of two separate states – one for the Jews and the other (the West Bank and Gaza) for the Palestinians – in a sort of bowdlerised version of Zionism (exclusivist still but non-expansionist). Essentially, she fails to see the dialectical relationship between the two movements. In consequence, her non-Zionist Zionism* threatens to lead her to an impossible impasse where, if she is not to cancel herself out, she needs to face both ways at once.

Anti-Zionism = anti-Semitism

But even our bravest attempts to find non-Zionist positions while staying true to some sort of feminist principles finally evaporate when we are confronted by anti-Zionists, and particularly feminist ones. It is then that so many of us come out in our true colours as defenders of Israel. We cannot, we find in the final analysis, let Israel go. Some are quite strident about it. Pogrebin declares:

I have no tolerance for anti-Zionists even if they are feminists ... I have come to consider anti-Zionism tantamount to anti-Semitism because the political reality is that its bottom line is the end to all Jews.²¹

And, states the Jewish feminist study group *Di Vilde Chayes*:

*This view is by no means unique to Bulkin.

Zionism is one strategy against anti-Semitism and for Jewish survival. Criticism of Israeli policy is not in and of itself anti-Semitic, nor is it anti-Zionism. But anti-Zionism demands the dissolution of the state of Israel . . . Ultimately, the dissolution of Israel would give licence to increased anti-Semitism throughout the world and would endanger all Jews wherever we might live. Any anti-Zionist position is, therefore, anti-Semitic.²²

Quite simply, such feminists are retreating to basic Zionist positions: Jews are entitled because of their history of oppression to a homeland, Zionism is a strategy for Jewish survival, Israel is the main defence against anti-Semitism. To question Israel, therefore, or the ideology that brought it into being is to endanger the very existence of Jews. These feminists do not try to defend Israel's domestic or foreign policy (that would, indeed, be a hard task for any feminist to do); instead, they shift the terms of debate, so that Israel ceases to be a material force and becomes a metaphor for survival. (They are probably even unaware that it has been part of the Zionist philosophy to propagate that metaphor and to inculcate the idea worldwide that there is no distinction between being an Israeli and being a Jew.²³) All detractors of Israel are cast in the role of moral degenerates who have no appreciation of the depth of our suffering. If we happen to be Jewish detractors, we suffer, of course, from 'self-hatred'.

Liberal 'non-Zionists' like Elly Bulkin end up here too, albeit after some prevarication. 'While anti-Zionism may be espoused by those deeply concerned with the survival of the Jewish people,' she writes, 'it is far more often expressed by those who exhibit, at best, indifference to Jewish oppression.'²⁴

Even those who can see that Israel, far from securing our survival, is actually, through its own expansionist and aggressive actions, increasing our insecurity, refuse to speak out against Israel. Instead, they have used the occasion of the invasion of Lebanon to justify the need to assert a pride in some mystical notion of Jewishness which would then protect us Jews against the anti-Semitism Israeli actions might unleash. Absurdly enough, Israeli aggression at times is made to look like a precondition for such Jewishness. Film-maker Dominique Green, for instance, confesses in an interview entitled 'Soul Search' that she came to consciousness of her Jewish identity during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.²⁵ She was running a cultural film festival on Jewry (in London) at the time and, despite the strafing and bombing of Lebanon by the Jewish state, decided to continue with the show precisely because of her horror that 'Israel's actions' might give the press – 'which had been waiting since 1945 to say what it always wanted to say about the Jews' – 'the excuse to start all over again'. Any idea she might have had of cancelling the festival as inopportune was overtaken by her determination to demonstrate to the world that 'now is the time to look at what

Jewishness is' (original emphasis).²⁶ How much more effective she might have been in instructing Jews and non-Jews alike if she had, as a Jew, appalled by what was being done in the name of Jews, cancelled her festival in protest.

Attempts such as these to save Jewishness from Israeli actions served, of course, to polarise the discussion within the Women's Movement which still retained a strong sympathy for the cause of its Palestinian sisters. In effect, there were now two debates, with no connection between them – one about the Middle East, the other about anti-Semitism and our identity. A few Jewish feminists tried valiantly to reconnect the debates. In Britain, Nira Yuval-Davis explained that anti-racism, anti-Zionism and the fight against anti-Semitism were all complementary struggles and should all be incorporated into a feminist politics. Going further than the 'non-Zionists' who criticised Israel merely for its racist dispossession of the Palestinians, she pointed out that its Zionist founders had actually shared with arch anti-Semites racist assumptions about the irreconcilability of Jew and gentile, and that Israel now played a role in the Third World which put it on the side of imperialist oppression. We had to fight anti-Semitism even as we were fighting racism, but we had also to evaluate Israel objectively and apprehend its reality. Her position went largely ignored.²⁷

What gained ascendancy, though, in the debates within the Women's Movement, both in the USA and the UK, from 1982 onwards was the charge that anti-Zionism equalled anti-Semitism. Letty Pogrebin, writing in the influential *Ms* magazine, called anti-Semitism 'the hidden disease of the Movement'.²⁸ Her position was echoed by many Jewish feminists, who cited over and over again the same anti-Semitic bits of conversations, who repeated the same overheard remarks from women's conferences and who retold the same tales. In Britain, *Spare Rib* Collective member Bev Gold, in the course of the battle that split the Collective, called anti-Zionism 'nothing more than a smokescreen for anti-Semitism'. She told the *Jewish Chronicle*: 'What's been going on at *Spare Rib* is a microcosm of what's happening in the feminist movement and that in turn is a microcosm of the world in general.'²⁹

The Jewish establishment (renowned neither for its progressive nor for its feminist principles) was not slow to encourage Jewish feminists to vent their anger on their sisters for their unsisterly behaviour over this issue. Jane Moonman, director of the British/Israel Public Affairs Committee, told a celebrated, albeit private, international symposium on anti-Semitism and Zionism about the way women's platforms were being used 'to attack the state of Israel and its right to exist'.³⁰ She berated anti-Zionist feminists for using the unsisterly device of censorship because they refused to publish critical letters. And Linda Bellos (a black Jewish member of the Collective) complained to the *Jewish Chronicle* that *Spare Rib*, in refusing to publish such letters from Jewish

feminists, was departing from the feminist maxim that 'we must recognise the experience of all women, wherever they are from and whoever they are'. They were, she claimed, making an exception of Jewish women.³¹

The debate had moved on now from the issue of Israel to the issue of what constituted true feminism! And Jewish radical feminists, finding support in Zionist ranks, set out the argument thus. Feminism had to do with only the personal experience of women. All women's experiences were equally valid (including the far right National Front's?). Suppressing experiences and opinions – in other words, refusing to accept that there were two points of view on Israel – had no place in sisterhood. In fact, sisterhood, in taking the side of Palestinian women, had actually betrayed other, and more immediate, sisters – Jewish feminists. If feminists had restricted themselves to feminist business and not strayed into male issues and male politics – that is, into internationalism – the problem would not have arisen. In the final analysis, the betrayal by feminists of feminist politics had led to oppressions being visited by women *on* women. Jewish women were now the objects of their sisters' racism.

Anti-Semitism = racism or the theory of equal oppressions

The accusation of anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement did not rest there. Some Jewish feminists regarded the issue of anti-Semitism as far broader than merely that manifested by anti-Zionists on the question of Israel. They felt marginalised and excluded by a dominant gentile culture which paid too little heed to the Jewish experience and practised its own anti-Semitism. The urgency to promote a positive Jewish identity was intimately linked to the equally urgent task of uncovering, exposing and combating anti-Semitism.

For some ten years black feminists had been arguing that feminists could be racist and that even the very tenets of feminism – which stressed universalism amongst women – could, nonetheless, leave out certain categories of women. Now Jewish feminists were making the same argument and trying to argue that our cause was equally valid. There was some consciousness, however, that in appealing to other feminists to regard us as oppressed and in need of special consideration within sisterhood, we might be seen as competing with, rather than strengthening, the cause of our black sisters.* Thus, we stressed that our oppression

*One way of circumventing the notion that our oppressions competed was to imply that the Jewish diaspora experience was so culturally diverse as to include a 'black' dimension. Jewish feminist anthologies, conferences and workshops invariably contain a token Sephardic contribution – one that stresses the differential cultural experience of Oriental

was not identical to that of black women. It was a different but equally important oppression. We borrowed from the feminist litany to argue that it was wrong to rank oppressions or to believe that fighting one – say anti-black racism – precluded us from fighting another – say anti-Semitism. In Britain, feminists such as Naomi Dale called for two distinct types of racism to be considered: one that is connected to exploitation and affects black people, and one that selects minority groups ‘as scapegoats’. She criticised analysts who tied racism to class issues because they ignore ‘the specific vulnerability of mixed-class minority groups – vulnerable precisely *because* of being mixed class or mainly middle-class’ (original emphasis).³²

In the USA Jewish and black feminists proceeded to get on with ‘building bridges’, entering into ‘coalition politics’, ‘reaching out to each other’ via joint conferences, seminars, consciousness-raising exercises and publications which stressed the commonality of black and Jewish experiences of oppression – on the basis that black and Jewish women were equally the victims of racism and white/gentile cultural exclusion.

In Britain, too, a similar rapprochement was taking place – on the basis this time of the equality of ethnic oppression. Jews, like Jamaicans, Pakistanis, Sikhs, Cypriots, Chinese (a veritable pot-pourri of categories), were also an ethnic minority and shared a common oppression with such groups. And since the Left – which, having in the post-war years failed to accommodate the autonomy of black struggle within class struggle, had now capitulated to autonomy sans class and from class – was more prone to culturalism,* Jewish groups which were looking for a new and respectable left-wing identity seized the opportunity to be accepted into such a framework. Most left-oriented local authorities – the Greater London Council in particular – were anxious to establish an equality of ethnicity by treating and funding all ethnic groups equally under the rubric of anti-racism – and soon ethnicism itself came to mean anti-racism. David Rosenberg of the Jewish Socialist Group welcomed the fact that the anti-racist movement had ‘embraced the cultural assertion of minorities as a positive strength’.³⁴ The GLC-funded Jewish Cultural and Anti-Racist Project aimed ‘to make Jews more conscious of their position as members of an ethnic group with needs and aspirations on a par with other minority groups’. The Jewish Socialist Group ‘has not been content to march the long road against anti-Semitism and racism only to disappear at the end of

Jewry (but carefully eschews an analysis of the class exploitation in Israel of Sephardic Jews at the hands of the Ashkenazim).

*The way that ethnicity has been used as a strategy to fragment and depoliticise black struggle and render it culturalist, inward-looking and self-seeking has been analysed in an earlier issue of this journal.³³

it', Rosenberg explained.³⁵ Even feminists like Nira Yuval-Davis (who had tried to set feminism straight on the issues of Zionism, racism and anti-Semitism) now embraced ethnicity as a political vehicle for Jewish feminists in the diaspora. Writing as an Israeli Jew living in England, she complained that, 'An exclusive focus on "racism" fails to address the diversity of ethnic experiences ... The notion of "black women" ... leaves non-British non-Black women ... unaccounted for politically.'³⁶

In practice, to be accounted for politically has, for Jewish feminists, meant if not a clear competition with black feminists, an attempt at least to jump on to their bandwagon and mechanically equate the struggles against oppression. This comes across most clearly in *Yours in struggle*, a book which is regarded on both sides of the Atlantic as something of a pioneering work. A white gentile feminist, a white Jewish feminist and a black feminist posit their views on racism and anti-Semitism and reflect on their private struggles for overcoming them. Elly Bulkin, in claiming a parallelism between oppressions, claims the right to question 'women of color' on their practice of fighting anti-Semitism before she agrees to appear on a joint platform with them. Anti-Semitism and racism, for her, are both equally internalised oppressions. And Barbara Smith, the black contributor to the book, concurs with Bulkin's definition of the problem. 'I am anti-Semitic', she confesses. 'I have swallowed anti-Semitism simply by living here, whether I wanted to or not.'³⁷ Blacks, according to such feminist thinking, have internalised anti-Semitism; Jews have internalised racism; and gentile whites have internalised the lot. The task, therefore, is to cleanse all our minds and deeds of such bad attitudes and behaviour – reject, that is, those stereotypes we have imbibed via the dominant culture – and restore symmetry to the balance sheet of oppression by getting black people to face up to their anti-Semitism, us Jews to face up to our racism and white gentiles to face up to both.

To be fair, black feminist Barbara Smith, who lent her weight to the creation of this false equation, actually takes issue with the result.

I think Jewish women's desire for support and recognition has also resulted at times in attempts to portray our circumstances and the oppression of racism and anti-Semitism as parallel or even identical. The mentality is manifested at its extreme when white Jewish women of European origin claim Third World identity*

She goes on:

*Some Zionist feminists have even claimed at international venues that *they* are as much part of a national liberation movement as are their sisters in, say, SWAPO or the ANC. The PLO, which is usually regarded as the liberation movement in the region, is, they go on to argue, merely a terrorist organisation.

I've seen how easy it has been for some women to make the shift from examining their roles as racist oppressors, to focusing solely on their position as victims of oppression. I've also found the uncritical equating of the impact of anti-Semitism in the US with the impact of racism absolutely galling.³⁸

But because she operates within the strictures of a brand of feminism which severs racism from exploitation, she ends up not with an analysis of the issues but with the vapid observation that: 'Jewish oppression is not identical to Black oppression but it is oppression brought to bear by the same white-male ruling class which oppresses us.'³⁹

Racism and anti-Semitism are only 'equal' because feminism has diluted the meaning of racism itself by personalising it. Racism has ceased to be seen as the primarily structural and institutional issue that it was shown to be in the 1960s and 1970s and has become, under the impact of tendencies in the Women's Movement, an internalised matter of prejudice. Extrapolating from the experience of sexism, where individual men as fathers, lovers, husbands, brothers, bosses, do wield individual power over women and benefit directly from so doing, black feminists have come to believe that white people (including white women) wield power over all black people and benefit from it.* Power then becomes primarily a personal issue between individuals – men and women, white and black, gentile and Jew, heterosexual and gay – and not the way an exploitative system is hierarchically structured so as to get maximum benefit from maximum differentiation.

Nowhere in all the discussion of anti-Semitism amongst black feminists and anti-black racism amongst Jewish feminists (which are, of course, condemned equally) is there any appreciation of how ideas, however bigoted, are shaped by material experience: racism begins as an idea, is condemned as an idea, and is fought as an idea – and so, too, is anti-Semitism.

If feminists were to compare racism and anti-Semitism not to each other in an abstract way but in terms of their specific origins, histories and changing manifestations, it would become immediately obvious in what ways the two are not the same and how the grounds on which they need to be combated therefore differ. Western capitalist societies were founded on anti-black racism – through slavery and colonialism – and still depend on the exploitation of non-white peoples, both at home and abroad. In most western countries racism has become institutionalised into the structures of the state – into laws (such as immigration laws),

*This view that white individuals benefit directly from a racism built around skin colour is fundamental to the racism awareness training propagated in the USA and enthusiastically embraced in the UK. A full critique of it has already been published in this journal.⁴⁰

into the criminal justice system, into the administration of services such as health care and education. By and large, black people belong to the most poor, ill-educated, badly housed and under-employed sector in western societies. The impoverishment of non-white people is an ongoing worldwide phenomenon brought about by a world system which is based on, and advances, the symbiotic relationship between racial oppression and exploitation. On the other hand, although there has been massive persecution against us over many centuries and in many lands – culminating in ‘modern’ European anti-Semitism and attempted genocide – we do not now face in western societies the type of systemic exploitation which relegates black and Third World people to ‘the lower depths’ and threatens to keep them there.

We do, of course, face individual prejudice and we do still constitute the archetypal enemy for the fascists, but there is no comparable, systemic discrimination against us. There is no bar to our upward mobility by state institutions. And the majority of us are no longer working class; we are upwardly mobile and are deemed to be assimilable whether we choose to be or not. And because the connection between racism and imperialism is for most black people a lived experience which links them directly with the struggles of all Third World peoples, they cannot but view the state of Israel as an agent of western imperialism, a colonising state and an oppressor of non-white peoples.* For them, it is not enough for us merely to assert that we are individually anti-racist. In their eyes, to be a Jew and an anti-racist appears contradictory until anyone who identifies themselves as Jewish is able to include in his or her anti-racism a critique of Israeli intervention abroad and Israeli exclusivism at home. In other words, anti-racism cannot be circumscribed, as feminists are wont to do, within a particular domestic arena, when the issues of being ‘black’ and being ‘Jewish’ are being played out in an international arena.

The exchange of solidarity Elly Bulkin seeks is indeed laudable and possible. But it is not as simple as she tries to make out. In a true coalition the black feminist would tell the Jewish feminist that she would attend to her own anti-Semitism, but in return would expect the Jewish feminist to look at racism as it affected *all* black people – and in doing so, she would also have to look at the racism meted out to blacks in South Africa and Israel’s collusion with that regime. Equally, the sister from Nicaragua and El Salvador and Sri Lanka and Guatemala – with all of whose repressive governments Israel collaborates⁴¹ – is entitled to ask her Jewish sister where her justice to her begins and her loyalty to Israel ends.

*It was because of such identification that the black feminists on *Spare Rib* were at the forefront of the battle to maintain a pro-Palestinian stance.

The politics of equal oppressions, in sum, is ahistorical in that it equates oppressions across the board without relating each to its specific history, and so severs racial and sexual oppression from class exploitation, divorces the black experience from the Third World experience, dismembers racism from imperialism and attempts, by some magic alchemy of the soul, to transmute the political terrain of the material world into homelands of the mind.

Re-joining Zionism

But then the anti-Semitism we complained of and built our identity around was somewhat ethereal. Our arguments were centred around the fact that, as feminists, we had allowed our Jewishness to get buried, we had not identified ourselves publicly, we had not protested at our invisibility, we had not challenged others' assumptions about us. Anti-Semitism was no longer necessarily overt or physical. 'The anti-Semitism with which I am immediately concerned, and which I find most threatening,' explained feminist author Irena Klepfisz, 'does not take the form of overt, undeniably inexcusable, painted swastikas on a Jewish gravestone . . . Instead, it is elusive and difficult to pinpoint for it is the anti-Semitism either of omission or one which trivialises the Jewish experience and Jewish oppression.'⁴² For Evelyn Torton Beck, 'Jewish invisibility is a symptom of anti-Semitism' and 'any form of anti-Semitism is always a real danger'.⁴³ And the arguments for combating anti-Semitism stem not from an objective examination and understanding of history, but from turning history into superstition and fear. 'Jews can in the long run expect anything. That, after all, has been one of the prime lessons of Jewish history', wrote Bulkin of the holocaust. 'Along with the basic awareness that anti-Semitism is simply *wrong*,' she continued, 'that lesson should impel feminists, Jewish or not, to be vigilant in opposing Jewish oppression, to make sure that the flashpoint is not again reached.'⁴⁴ 'We must', emphasised Beck, 'acknowledge the precariousness of Jewish existence.'⁴⁵ The holocaust haunts the feminist Jewish psyche like a spectre that cannot be laid to rest. Jews are permanently under sentence of death and must, perforce, judge their actions in that light. Attempts at our genocide are inevitable. History repeats itself not as farce (as Marx would have it), but as prophecy. We live in an imagined world of our impending destruction and strike out lest we be struck.

It is a view, however, which, far from being peculiar to feminists, is no more than an echo of the dominant view in Jewry generally. In Israel, where the holocaust is commemorated by law, the papers never let a day go by without reminding their readers of it. The trial of Demyanuk, allegedly the 'Ivan the Terrible' of Treblinka Concentration Camp who ordered the extermination of many thousands of Jews, which is now

taking place in Jerusalem, is being broadcast continuously on state radio. Classes of schoolchildren and soldiers on training are being taken to the trial as part of their education. All around the world Jews harbour a grief with which we are never allowed to come to terms because we are never allowed to understand it fully in historical materialist terms*

Firstly, the holocaust is not in mainstream Jewish thinking differentiated from other forms of Judeophobia; second, the specific social forces which gave rise to 'modern' nineteenth-century European anti-Semitism, the rise of fascism in the twentieth century and attempts at our genocide, are rarely examined** In consequence, Jews come to be seen as always and only victims and, correspondingly, anti-Semitism as an almost innate facet of gentile human nature.

Nor does the orthodox presentation of the horrors of the holocaust allow it to illumine other horrors being visited on other peoples, in other (including our own) countries; rather, it burns for us with a light so intense that it blinds us to every other injustice. The holocaust belongs only to us. Even the millions of Russians, Poles, Communists, Gypsies, homosexuals and mentally ill who also perished in the camps at the hands of the Nazis are barely given a mention in our rendering of *our* holocaust.

'Holocaust blackmail' is what anti-Zionist Israelis call the tendency to justify all of Israeli actions on the basis of our unique history of suffering.⁴⁶ But 'holocaust blackmail' also works at another level when Zionists predict the holocaust to come. At first, when we were at risk to European anti-Semitism, the idea of a strong nation state to look after and safeguard its people would have looked logical to some Jews. But, in fact, as that nation state, Israel, developed into an exclusive settler state, expelling the original inhabitants, it created the conditions for its own insecurity. It created, as it were, the threat to its survival through its insistence on survival at any cost. Now it justifies its colonisation, its expansion, its military build-up, its nuclear weapons research as the necessary defence of Jewry against the possible holocaust to come – this time from its Arab neighbours.

Jewish survival has, as Akiva Orr shows, taken on a meaning other than the physical survival of individual Jews.⁴⁷ Just as the early Zionists saw in the creation of the state of Israel a means of binding non-religious Jews within a Jewish identity, so too today the preoccupation within Israel and diaspora Zionism is how to preserve as many of us as

*The suppression of Jim Allen's play *Perdition* is yet another attempt to bind us to the orthodox version of our history and render us yet more incapable of coming to terms with it.

**Jewish scholars like Abram Leon, Nathan Weinstock, Israel Shahak and Maxime Rodinson who have provided such a scientific analysis are either ignored by most Jews or are slickly branded self-hating Jews.

possible within Jewry. In other words, it is not a question of the 'survival of Jews' so much as 'survival as Jews' – as former Israeli prime minister and leader of the Zionist Labour Party Golda Meir made plain:

One heavy calamity hit us – when a free independent Jewish state arose in the fatherland six million Jews were no more. It is intolerable that precisely now, when a Jewish state exists, the number of mixed marriages increases, meaning the number of Jews in the world decreases.⁴⁸

Veteran Zionist leader Nahum Goldman concurred, declaring in a speech to the 29th Zionist Congress (Jerusalem, 1978):

The real motivation for creating the modern Zionist movement was fear for the survival and future of our people after the Emancipation in the nineteenth century and the practical end of anti-Jewish persecution. It may sound paradoxical and brutal ... but the survival of our people seems to be more threatened today than in the worst days of the Nazi regime.⁴⁹

Survival thus carries two meanings – it is used to describe both our physical survival and the maintenance of a specifically Jewish identity. The one becomes equivalent to the other. And, correspondingly, assimilation becomes, in effect, annihilation. When certain Jewish feminists imply, therefore, that the preservation of Jewish culture is something so sacrosanct that not to participate in it is tantamount to self-annihilation, they come dangerously close to such a Zionist position. 'Jewish women', complained Klepfisz bitterly, 'have not been visible in this movement as Jews ... They have not drawn attention to themselves. And I ... am as sick of it, as I am sick about it ... I think it is time ... to develop a sense that our survival *as Jews* is important' (original emphasis).⁵⁰ And for Beck, the editor of *Nice Jewish Girls*, the book was, not least, 'a celebration of our survival'.⁵¹

Identity or liberation?

There is, in the end, no stable diaspora-based identity for us as Jewish feminists; all roads seem one way or another to lead back to the question of Israel. Nor have we found, as the Combahee River Collective predicted we would, that working 'directly out of our own identity as opposed to working to end someone else's oppression' has brought us closer to 'the most ... radical politics'. On the contrary, the tendency in feminist practice to personalise and internalise political issues, combined with and finding common cause in the Jewish preoccupation with the uniqueness of our own suffering, has created a stunted, inward-looking and self-righteous 'politics' which sets its face against the

politics out there in the real world.

The New Marxism might provide us with a climate in which such Identity Politics can temporarily flourish but, grounded as it is in the shifting soil of personal malaise and hang-ups, the fruits of its endeavours do not even satisfy our original need to be protected, in the light of Israel's actions, against charges of being reactionary and retrograde.

We have reached an apparent dead-end, not because of anything intrinsically reactionary in being Jewish or feminist, but because we have side-stepped or dodged all the key issues thrown up by Israel – its massive ideological influence, its aggressive role in the Middle East and its imperialist function in the Third World. The question we have still to answer is how, out of our particular history and experience of oppression, we can, as progressive feminists, construct an identity and a politics which confronts all the material issues, including Israel itself. Finding again the best principles in our traditions will help us not merely to recapture the savour of a liberatory feminist politics, but also to point the way to others on the Left as to how a true socialist politics could now be constructed.

To begin that task we have to face up to a number of key questions (which, of course, have ramifications that go far beyond feminist or Jewish politics):

How do we read history? In the main, we do not look at our own history as a way of analysing and transforming the present; we tend instead to read the past *into* the present and even into the future. Lessons are not drawn from history to help change the present, rather we hide behind the notion that the present is really not worth bothering about since history can only repeat itself.

The experience of the holocaust is rarely analysed in terms of the forces that gave rise to National Socialism and what distinguished such forces from other anti-Semitic attacks in our history. Such an analysis would help us now to make sure that other groups are protected from other potential holocausts; would make us stand up against other genocides against other peoples; would require us at the least to see how we ourselves are a party to such pogroms and programmes. Instead, we hold on to the holocaust as our personal, privatised guarantee of salvation, a Jewish calvary only. And so we succumb to that most mortal of political sins wherein we have had the experience but lost its meaning.⁵²

Can we select from history? We – progressive 'socialist' feminist Jews – take the holocaust as part of all our histories (even though we may not ourselves have suffered personal bereavement) and yet we are reluctant to see that Israel is part and consequence of that history and equally our burden. We deny – in order to reject the imputation of 'collective guilt'

– the idea that we are all somehow implicated in Zionism and Israeli reaction.⁵³ Or we argue that Zionism was a movement originally supported by only a minority of Jews and does not represent Jewry as a whole – and so Israel itself is not representative of Jewish opinion. But that is to ignore the material fact that the Israeli view is today Jewry's world-view, and Israel, whether we like it or not, speaks in our name. It is also to ignore the fact that Israel has, by appropriating to itself the history of the holocaust, bound all Jews within its purview. If we do not ourselves, through our words and actions, point out the distinction between supporting Israel and being a Jew, how shall we expect the non-Jew to free himself or herself from such confusion? And where is our justice?

What does our knowledge of oppression teach us? Israel illustrates the classic case of an oppressed people turning oppressor. It invokes the oppression of the Jews in order to oppress others within its own boundaries and surrounding territories. Our experience – the experience of the Jewish people – should open up our sensibilities to all other oppressions, not least the ones perpetrated in our name. But not only have we betrayed the meaning of that experience, we have even failed the hope in our own prayer that 'till all are free, none can be free'.

For feminism, too, ending women's oppression is inseparable from ending all other oppressions. The one is coterminous with the other. But by asserting over and over again that we have first to recognise and understand our own personal piece of oppression, feminists and Jews alike have become petrified in the particularity of their experience. In the name of our own identity, we have closed our eyes to a wider experience and made identity itself a substitute for liberation.

What constitutes identity? Some progressive Jewish groups (including feminists who seek an alternative identity) genuinely wish to create a counter-identity which will in some way negate Israeli hegemony in Jewish thought and practice. They recognise some of the pitfalls in locating identity via biology (which would put them on the side of the Nuremberg laws), via religion (which would exclude many of us) or via Israel – and try instead to construct a new identity on new premises.

They hold, firstly, that it is important to assert a Jewish identity in the light of a resurgence of anti-Semitism and, second, that there is a progressive practice in Jewish history which they can refer back to in order to construct such an identity. But the anti-Semitism they refer to is more to do with the generalised cultural dominance of gentiles than with the specific physical attacks of racists and fascists on Jewish homes, synagogues, cemeteries, schools, in predominantly working-class areas. These are not what bother identity-bent middle-class Jews: they are seldom concerned to join the fight against such attacks or to protect

their victims.* Instead, they tend to use them as ammunition in the struggle against their particular brand of anti-Semitism – a struggle which has consciousness-raising, improved Jewish ‘visibility’ and better inter-personal relations as its prime objectives. Thus problems that have to be dealt with on the ground become ideas to be used in the pursuit of identity.

Besides, the resurgence of anti-Semitism argument leads us inevitably back to Israel (as we found as Jewish feminists), precisely because Israel has appropriated the history of Jewish suffering and nationalised it. Writes Halevi, ‘the state that was born three years after the gates of the death camps opened for survivors ... at once proclaimed itself the sole heir of the dead’.⁵⁴ If we are to get our history back from Israel, we have to deal first with the shape and colouring that Israel has given that history. But it is precisely from that task that such identity-seekers avert their faces.

As for their attempt to refer back to a progressive tradition in Jewish history from which to construct their identity, they tend to overlook in the words of Dena Attar, the ‘difference between asserting who we are and trying to recreate who we no longer are’.⁵⁵ Even groups like the British-based Jewish Socialist Group (which has a strong influence on British Jewish feminists) believe they can coin a progressive identity here and now by borrowing wholesale from past tendencies within Jewry which were revolutionary in their own time. Because Bundism, for example, provided an important anti-Zionist, socialist-Jewish position at the turn of the century in Eastern Europe, it is adopted as the political and ideological blueprint for Jews today – without consideration of the multitude of fundamental changes which have taken place within Jewry and western society, not to speak of the creation of the state of Israel! Similarly, Yiddish, which according to the Jewish Socialist Group ‘provides continuity and fulfils a very positive role in the construction of contemporary Jewish identity’,⁵⁶ is being revived and propagated in special classes. According to one proponent of Yiddish, it is only through these special classes that many of us ‘realise our longing to hear Yiddish spoken as a living language’.⁵⁷ Bundism and Yiddish have been fetishised. They are being taken out of their particular histories of struggle and inserted, as socialist surrogates, into the creation of a new contemporary identity.

But then, all such searches for identity will end up on the side of recreating ‘who we no longer are’ unless this identity has a purpose over and above its own definition and preservation. The question that needs to be asked is not what constitutes our identity, but what is identity for?

*There are, of course, exceptions like the Jewish Socialist Group, which not only gives priority to racial attacks on Jews but to all racial attacks *per se*.

Identity for what? Identity politics regards the discovery of identity as its supreme goal. Feminists even assert that discovering identity is in itself an act of resistance. The mistake is to view identity as an end rather than as a means. We do not need to seek out our identity for its own sake, but only to discover in the process 'the universality inherent in the human condition',⁵⁸ and, in that knowledge, commit ourselves to forming the correct alliances and fighting the right fights. 'We must work out how being Jewish affects our lives from our standpoint and that of other people', writes Attar, 'not in order to wrap ourselves ever more tightly in a new-found Jewish identity but so that we can struggle more effectively for our future as women, and for the future of all women.'⁵⁹ Identity is not merely a precursor to action, it is also created through action.

Taking cognisance of the excesses of cultural nationalism within the Black Power movement seventeen years ago, a black activist wrote in terms that are still apposite today:

Creating ourselves in terms of our culture and reshaping our society in terms of that creation are part and parcel of the same process. To abstract our culture from its social milieu in order to give it coherence is to lose out on its vitality. And once a culture loses its social dynamic, identity becomes an indulgence. It becomes, that is, an end in itself and not a guide to effective action ... identity may emanate from the consciousness of our culture, but its operational function can only be meaningful in political terms ... A culture that takes time off to refurbish itself produces a personality without a purpose. There is no point in finding out who I am if I do not know what to do with that knowledge.⁶⁰

We can only learn and confirm our identity, in other words, through our actions. *What we do is who we are.*

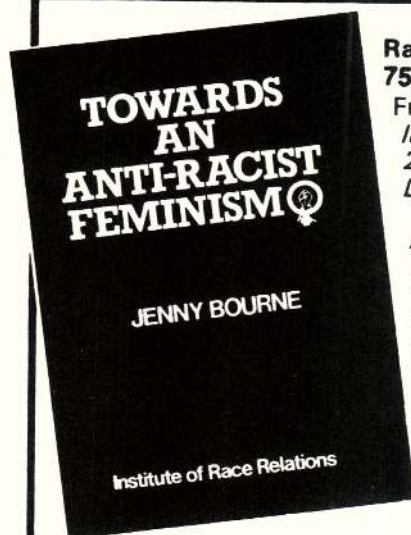
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- 47 Akiva Orr, *The un-Jewish state: the politics of Jewish identity in Israel* (London, 1983).
- 48 Quoted in *ibid.*
- 49 Quoted in *ibid.*
- 50 Irena Klepfisz, op. cit.
- 51 Evelyn Torton Beck, 'Why is this book ...', op. cit.
- 52 With apologies to T.S. Eliot (see *The Four Quartets*).
- 53 See Steve Cohen, *That's funny: you don't look anti-Semitic: a left-wing analysis of anti-Semitism* (Leeds, 1984).
- 54 Ilan Halevi, op. cit.
- 55 Dena Attar, 'Why I am not a Jewish feminist', *Shifra* (No. 2, Shavuot, 5745/May, 1985).
- 56 David Rosenberg, 'Yiddish today', op. cit.
- 57 Suzanne Lang, 'Living Yiddish', *Jewish Socialist* (No. 1, Spring 1985).
- 58 Frantz Fanon, *Black skin, white masks* (New York, 1967).
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Race & Class pamphlet No.9 **75p (+ 25p p&p)**

From:

Institute of Race Relations
2-6 Leeke Street
London WC1X 9HS

*"The extent to which the
Women's Movement has failed
its own principles, is the extent
to which it is racist."*

The third siege of Bourj Barajneh camp: a woman's testimony

The most recent round of the sieges of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon began with Rashidiyyeh on 30 September 1986. The siege of Bourj Barajneh began on 4 November 1986 and that of Shatila on 25 November 1986. Although the siege of the camps is, at the time of writing, officially lifted, nonetheless its reimposition remains an ever-present threat. The testimony that follows is from R— Z—, a social assistant with Najdeh Association, who lives and works in Bourj Barajneh. Married, with four children under nine years of age, she stayed through the siege until 22 February 1987, when she left to seek medical care for her children. She was interviewed and her account recorded on 5 March.*

In the morning of the first day of the battle [4 November 1986] I was on the street and saw Amal militia gathering. Two or three days before, they had begun throwing explosives on the camp, and it looked as if something was about to start. So I returned to the camp and asked a friend to keep an eye on my children while I did some case work. While I was filling out a questionnaire, a shot rang out. News came that a young man from the camp had been sniped at and killed. I ran home, and

Rosemary Sayigh is a writer and researcher and author of, among other things, *Palestinians: from peasants to revolutionaries* (London, 1979).

*Najdeh is a Lebanese cooperative, involving both Palestinians and Lebanese, which organises vocational training and social welfare, and aims to help people become self-sufficient.

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while I was running the shelling started. I found my children at home, and put them in the safest part of the house. Of course, the first thing I did was to go and buy provisions, on the basis that the battle would last a month at most. But the fighting became more violent each day and, with deaths mounting on both sides, there was no scope for a solution. Of course, it was planned to be like this.

We stayed in our home for a long time, but then it got hit by a rocket. The children were very frightened so we went down into the shelter. We stayed there a week. Then it rained heavily and the shelter flooded. The children were swimming in water. It was wet, dirty ... So we got ourselves together and returned home.

A sister whose home is on the khatt al-tamas, the 'hot line', came with her children to stay with R. A neighbour whose home has only one-storey, and is therefore less protected, also used to shelter during the shelling in R's two-storey home.

The first two months were bearable. There was food, there was water, people could take it. Of course, many were killed. But we had got used to the shelling, we had got used to death. My cousin (*ibn khal*) was killed, and was buried without his family even seeing him. It became something usual.

At the beginning people ate well, we used to eat three times a day, as usual. When the first month ended, we began to eat only twice a day. If we had known how long the siege would last we would have eaten only one meal a day from the beginning, so as not to be completely cut off later. The last* month of the siege was the period of hunger. Of course, some of the organisations helped people, but in the end they had fighters who had to eat. There were a few hundred kilos [of foodstuffs] with the Popular Committee – burraghul, lentils, hummus, beans, rice, tins, no flour ... But it wasn't enough. They distributed food once – it wasn't really a distribution, people paid with money – not the whole price, but something symbolic. There were no food supplies other than what people had stored in their houses.

The stocks of families with many children finished before those with few. The families of martyrs, on small fixed allowances, were also hard hit. R describes her own household's food situation, forms of redistribution, and dramas of the 'month of starvation'.

Food began to be very very scarce in the third month. There wasn't anything left. We ate *melloukhia* without anything, just water. Once I went to one of the [political] offices and asked for a tin of *foul*. I put it

*At the time of the interview the siege had not ended. R refers to the month from mid-January to 20 February, when she left the camp.

in a saucepan of water this big, and that was our meal for the day. We were hardly having one meal a day at that stage. Sometimes not even one meal.

Sugar finished, so we drank tea without sugar. We made tea and we joked with the children, 'Come and have supper.' My little daughter of ten months kept saying '*Bidi ibsi, bidi ibsi*' (*ibsi* = *khubz*, bread). I felt like crying. From where can I get her bread? Very few people still had bread.

Once when we had been two days without a meal, my children were crying, they wanted to eat. I had no food left; my father-in-law's house also had no food left. So I decided to go to my mother – she has only my father to cook for, and you know how old people store bags of food. Her home is far and I was afraid of the shelling, but I was obliged to go because my children were crying. So I went and brought a dish of *shishbarak* from her. How happy and pleased the children were! I opened the door and sat feeding them. Then a child came and stood there and said, 'Auntie, will you give me something to eat?' I told him that I'd got just enough to feed my own children. He stood there by the wall, crying. So I told him, 'Come, you are like my children', and I put some food on his plate. My children cried out that they hadn't had enough, but I told them, 'The important thing is that you've got something in your stomachs.'

At night, they would knock on our door, small children, even adults – for example, people who had someone wounded in hospital. The wounded need good food, vitamins, to help them recover. But, at the end, the hospital was giving only one small meal a day, without bread. People were obliged to knock on doors, 'My son is wounded. If you have *anything* ...'

There are families that don't have a father, they depend on monthly allowances that hardly cover the cost of bread. People all felt for each other, they wanted to help others, but when there was nothing left, no one could help anyone any more. Once a young man came to me and said, 'You, as a member of Najdeh, should help me.' He wanted sugar. I told him, 'By God, I haven't got sugar for my own children. But wait here' – his leg was amputated – 'and I'll bring you some sugar.' I went to my mother and told her that I wanted sugar for my children. Of course, she gave me some, half a kilo, a kilo. I brought it and gave it to him.

Once a woman came at night and knocked on the door. (I used to leave the door open at night so that if someone was passing, and there was shelling, they could take shelter.) She told me, 'My young brother is wounded and he's crying, he can't sleep, he is hungry. Have you something to give us?' I had saved a slice of bread to give my oldest son in the morning – he never kept quiet, he was hungry all the time. So I told her that I hadn't any bread. She turned to go away. I told her,

'Wait!' and I gave her the bread with some *za'ter* — *za'ter* stayed with me until the end, we used to eat it without bread. She was so happy to take it to her wounded brother, so that he would sleep that night.

It is true that people ate cats. My children killed a cat and ate it. We had been some days without cooked food when my son smelled roasting meat. I told him that it was cat meat, but he said, 'I don't care. I want to eat cat.' So I told him to go ahead and catch a cat. He caught one and I killed it and cooked it for him. Not everybody ate cats, but the majority did, especially the young men. People also ate dogs and mules. I didn't see people eat rats, but Dr Ben says he saw children getting a rat out of a sewage pipe and cutting off its head to eat it.

There's a martyr's family, very poor, they got hold of a tin of sardines four years past its expiry date. The whole family ate from it, without bread. All were poisoned and had to be taken to hospital. A short while after they were taken again to hospital suffering from hunger. They had nothing. There were many families like that.

In the last period, people were going out to the cemetery, there's grass and weeds growing there. They picked grass, boiled it, put salt on it and ate it. And many women were sniped at while picking grass. There is no shelter there at all.

Though food shortage was the more dramatic, the giving out of washing water and fuel also caused serious problems.

Water went on coming to us for about two and a half months; there was still diesel oil to work the pumps. When *mazout* gave out, they siphoned off a few hundred litres from a petrol station near the camp. They gave most of it to the hospital, and some for pumping water, but it only lasted two days. There was no water for washing. We used to wait for rain to be able to wash our clothes. We had to go on wearing the same clothes even if they were like tar. When it rained we would say, 'The water has come!'

If we wanted water badly, we had to get it from the bases at the front line. A person might go to fetch a gallon of water, perhaps you would return, perhaps you wouldn't. There was a woman with five children — they have no father — she went to get water and was sniped at and killed there. Her children were left homeless. Many people were killed at the water place.

As a result of the cutting off of water, skin diseases and parasites spread, especially in the shelters due to over-crowding, but also in homes. R said that her children could not sleep at nights for scratching themselves. She developed head boils.

After a while *ghaz* (liquid gas) and *kaz* (gasoline) also finished. We started to bring wood, we broke up the doors and windows of our houses for firewood. That's how my 2-year-old son burnt his neck,

falling on firewood. After a while wood became scarce and people had to go to the 'hot line', the no-man's-land between them and us. We had to creep out at night to be able to bring it.

At the end, the hospital only worked the generator if they had operations. You found the wounded using motor oil or *ghaz* – if there was any – for light, even though motor oil makes dirt and smoke.

R did not focus on the military aspects of the siege, but details she gave in passing have been gathered together in the following section.

As to the arms they used to hit the camp, they used every kind: tanks, rockets, mortars – often all at the same time – as well as guns mounted on military vehicles. They even used 160mm shells that make a big crater and can pierce two floors of a house. They used the Murr Tower to launch rockets from.

Amal had bases all round the camp, behind the Airport Road, at the Hill of Sand, Ghazzar, the Mosque of the Prophet, in the Amaliyeh, in Villa Meshnoug. They could snipe from there because it is high and overlooks the whole camp.

There was heavy concentration of fire on the hospital, and on the mosque at the time of prayer. They had fortified the hospital before the siege, made a cover of sandbags. But the work hadn't been finished, the side that faced towards Villa Meshnoug was open, so they concentrated their fire on that side. The hospital building has become shaky through so much bombardment.

Casualties have been high: about 130 deaths,* of whom a high proportion are women and children; and around 2,000 wounded. Some of these are still in hospital.** Everyone helped to carry the wounded to hospital because it is at one end of the camp. Anyone who was close when someone got wounded would rise and carry the wounded to hospital. Of course, at times there was no way to move the wounded. You move them, and it's possible that you will get hit. So you have to wait for a quiet spell. When I wanted to visit the hospital I had to cut it to half a second, running, before the next missile fell. We reckoned that between one shell and the next there would be ten minutes. But sometimes they came down like rain. Bombardment was often heavier at night so that people wouldn't have any rest.

With many houses uninhabitable because of their closeness to the 'hot line', and with damage to houses increasing, the pressure on shelter space intensified. But there are not enough shelters for all the population.

*Up to 5 March.

**300 to 400 people were reported to be seriously wounded in Bourj on 16 March.

There was a big pressure on the shelters. Probably this is what made sicknesses spread – pressure, no space, people on top of each other, no water ... Some quarters are deprived of shelters. For example, Tarshiha only has one shelter and it is constantly under sniper fire. There are nearly 20,000 people in Bourj, but there are only seventeen shelters, the largest of which can hold 300 people.

R gives detailed descriptions of two of the ugliest incidents of this siege, the 'missile massacres' carried out during cease-fires.

They would declare a cease-fire and then suddenly shell the camp, so as to cause the greatest possible number of losses. One missile fell on seventeen children, killing five immediately and wounding the rest. It was right at the beginning. There was a cease-fire and people were even leaving and entering the camp. It was the day of the funeral of the young man who was killed on the first day of the siege. So the women all left their children to go to the funeral, because this young man was his mother's only son and everyone wanted to condole with her. And they felt secure because there was a cease-fire and there was no shelling. The children were clustered together under a water-tank, and a woman was baking *mena'eesh* and feeding them. It came down, the first missile. Every young man carried two children, and brought them under the shelling to hospital. My house was in front of the hospital, all the wounded came past it.

Another missile cut off the legs of seven young men, both legs. And five or six were killed outright. This was in the last period. There was a cease-fire and the sun was out. People came out and sat in front of their homes, sunning themselves and taking their breath [relaxing]. Then, suddenly, a shell fell among them. They carried them on stretchers in front of our house, and someone was carrying their legs ... The hospital couldn't catch up with the operations. It was a massacre. People were carrying legs, a head ... Among them is a child of ten, his two legs have gone, one of his brothers and their father both lost two legs. The father died next day. As soon as he saw his children with their legs cut off, he had a heart attack and died.

On that day, people wanted to carry the legs and storm out of the camp. 'If they want to kill us, let them kill us. But we have to show what they are doing to us.'

Another incident that greatly affected the people of Bourj was an attempt by four young Palestinians to get a lorry load of food into the camp, one day in February.

They got through all the check-points and reached the entry of the camp, in front of the Amaliyeh. But Amal discovered them and hit the lorry with a shell, burning it and killing the young men. People all wept when they knew that four young men had died for their sakes. Amal

propaganda said that the lorry was full of whisky and hasheesh. How could anyone believe that? How could they kill people trying to bring in food?

In the last period, people began to get desperate, to despair. There was talk about what to do. 'We will not surrender. There would be another Tell al-Za'ter. We must carry out an operation beyond the front line to get food.' We were ready to sacrifice fighters but not to surrender. Because we knew what would happen: rape, killings, insults and looting. This was the decision of the majority. There were a few people who wanted to surrender, but they had no influence. The decision of the majority was that we would prefer to die under shelling in our own camp rather than leave it and die with them.

In spite of harsh siege conditions, social institutional work continued, and played a role in helping people to resist.

Soon after the beginning [of the siege], we in Najdeh invited the Social Committee to meet. We divided out the work – for example some with the wounded, some with people in the shelters. We had about 560 tins of milk powder, not enough for the whole camp, so we didn't distribute them. Instead, we stored them, and later they solved the crisis of nursing mothers and infants under six months. Without food or vitamins to make milk, mothers' breasts dried up and most could not suckle their babies, even those born during the siege. So our milk powder solved a very serious problem. And people were satisfied that there was an institution that would take care of mothers and infants.

We also distributed clothes – pyjamas, sandals, children's *dishdashas* – especially to families whose homes were on the front line. When the siege began, it was still almost summer. When the winter weather came, many people were without winter clothes. We bought clothes from shops [inside the camp] and distributed them to children and social cases. There were some refugee families from Rashidiyyeh – they had no [winter] clothes with them, nor money, so we distributed clothes to them as well. We also organised daily visits for the wounded, to take them gifts and raise their morale.

A shell fell on one family – the boy of 12 years old died straight away, and the little girl, one eye came out, and a piece of shrapnel entered the other. We went to the hospital to visit the girl and we found her mother there, crying. 'What is the matter?' 'I have no money to buy [food] from the Popular Committee.' We said, 'No problem. We are here. You have only got to contact us.' Straight away I went and bought her food supplies on the Najdeh account, and gave them to her. We search for such cases, all the time.

It was while on a social mission that R almost got killed.

They announced a cease-fire, so we said, 'We'll go to the hospital to

visit the wounded.' Just before we reached the hospital, they started to shell it. We ran, we got separated, we didn't know where we were going. Suddenly we found ourselves near the [Amal] Cooperative. A woman shouted at us, 'Where are you going?' We were on the point of leaving the camp — there was one house between them and us. So we turned around, but we couldn't move. Shelling, shelling! Every minute something was coming down, twenty missiles. The woman took us into her house and we stayed there from 2pm until 7.30pm. The shelling was so heavy there was no way to leave. When I got home I found my children all crying. My sister had sent to the hospital to ask about us, and had been told we hadn't arrived. They were sure I was lying dead on the street. I'll never forget coming home and finding them all in that state, my children crying, and my poor sister going round under the shelling to find out where I was.

On 17 February Amal leader Nabih Berri announced from Damascus the lifting of the 'food siege' around Bourj Barajneh. Transmitted by Damascus radio, the announcement clearly had Syrian backing, and began to be put into effect on 20 February. This date marked a new stage of the siege, with women allowed to leave and enter the camp, but at the mercy of harassment and sniping.

When they finally agreed to raise the siege on food and medicines, women and girls began to leave the camp. The first day, they sniped at and killed four women, but in spite of that people wanted to go out to bring supplies. Amal also tried to stop anyone who left the camp from coming back. It was like that the first two days. On the third day I left. I had absolutely nothing left, but I went out mainly because my children needed treatment. One of them had burns, my little girl was wounded in the foot, and my eldest son kept falling over from hunger. I had a boil on my head from which blood and pus were oozing. As we were leaving the camp, Amal fired at us. The children cried. The militiaman said to me, 'Will you make them shut up or shall I shoot them all?' I said, 'Brother, they are children, what can I do to them?' He said, 'That child in your arms, I'll split her in two.' I put my hand over her mouth to stop her crying, so we could just get out. He told me, 'If you leave, you won't return!' We went a few steps, and another militiaman blocked us saying, 'It's forbidden.' I told him, 'Brother, the one responsible told me to pass.' He said, 'I'm free. I don't want you to pass.' I'm carrying one child, and holding another by the hand, and two are clutching me from behind ... He said, 'We want to distribute milk powder now, and we want to photograph you.' I told him, 'I want to buy milk powder for my children, I don't want you to give it me.' They let us go, and they fired two rounds over our heads as we went.

There were two who went out to get food, and as they were returning they killed them. One of them was a young girl who used to work with

us, Sena' Ghadban, a lovely girl, quiet, nice. She was carrying food and had just entered the camp when they sniped at her. They continued to snipe at women up to two days ago.* And today they fired a missile into the camp. During this period, five women were killed and around fifteen wounded, either leaving or entering the camp.** All were sure they would get a bullet as they were leaving, but their children are hungry, they have to go out and bring food.

Food is getting into the camp now. Women are going out every day, three or four times a day, to bring in food. They are stocking up. We are expecting another siege.

The family who got poisoned with sardines, I saw them as I went into the camp today, they haven't money to stock up. I had just been paid my salary, so I gave this woman all I had with me, because I can get it back from Najdeh. I have people outside to help me, but she just goes out to get food, and returns. Let her stock up. Perhaps there will be another siege, and she has nine children.

In the first period, it was forbidden to bring in candles, matches, batteries, *kaz* and *ghaz*. They would crush them under their feet. People are still going to bed in the dark, and cooking on firewood. *Mar't* Ahmad, poor one, on the first day she went out and bought rice and burraghul and salt and sugar and cigarettes and cheese – around 50 kilos on her head. But could she pass? They stopped her at the Amaliyeh checkpoint, they searched her, and they found the batteries. They mixed up her rice with the salt and the sugar, and stamped on it with their feet. That I saw.

My father is an old man, 75. He went out and bought a small Pepsi bottle full of petrol. At the checkpoint he was asked, 'What's this?' He told them, 'I and my wife are old and we don't have anyone. We need to get up at night to wash and pray.' The militiaman took it and threw it against the wall.

Also, they are selling supplies to people of the camp at very high prices. At first, they took us to their cooperative and to shops in their area. Later, people went wherever they wanted to buy, but they raise the prices a lot.

There's an incident they have been telling me that happened three days ago. A woman who had been shut outside the camp during the siege came with her children to visit her husband. He met her at the entrance to the camp, and when he saw her he could not restrain himself from running out to greet her and embrace the children. They got him in the head, and he died instantly.

*This was on 5 March. But sniping recommenced soon after.

**By 15 March, the death-toll had risen to eleven women and four adolescent girls; by 22 March, it was 21, with 61 wounded.

On 26 March, for the second day running, women and children at Bourj Barajneh demonstrated against Amal sniping, demanding to be allowed to use the western exit from the camp instead of the eastern one, which leads directly into a Shi'ite area. Mortar-fire directed against the demonstrators killed six women according to Palestinian sources.

khamsin

WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST

**★ ARAB WOMEN AS 'CAPTIVES' ★ THE WOMEN'S
MOVEMENT IN EGYPT ★ PALESTINIAN WOMEN AND
THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT ★
PALESTINIAN WOMEN IN ISRAELI PRISONS ★ ISRAELI
JEWISH AND PALESTINIAN FEMINISTS ★ WOMEN AND
NATIONAL REPRODUCTION IN ISRAEL**

WRITTEN BY

MAGIDA SALMAN SELMA BOTMAN
HAMIDA KAZI LAILA AL-HAMDANI
DEBBIE LEHRMAN NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS

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Contact – B M KHAM SIN, London WC1N 3XX
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The Israeli role in Guatemala*

Israel's activities in Central America come clearly under the aegis of the US, the seigneurial power in the region, which sets up dictators in some nations and targets the governments of others for destruction – and then, under pressure by Congress and the US public, sometimes abandons its allies. Yet, even when Israel picks up the slack for Washington, its role in Central America is seldom if ever that of an out-and-out proxy or surrogate.

In the 1970s, Israel was attracted to the troubled region by the opportunity to sell weapons and military advice, and perhaps to pick up some diplomatic chits. At the present, however, aside from supplying arms and training to the contra mercenary forces the Reagan administration has flung against Nicaragua, the imposition of 'pacification' regimes – some of this work is financed with US funds – on the rural populations of El Salvador and Guatemala appears to be replacing arms sales as Israel's most significant function in the region.

Arms and armaments

Weaponry for the Guatemalan military is, indeed, the very least of what

Jane Hunter is the editor of the magazine *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, and author most recently of *Undercutting sanctions: Israel, the US and South Africa* (Washington, Middle East Associates, 1986).

*An excerpted version of the chapter on Guatemala in *Israeli Foreign Policy: South Africa and Central America*, forthcoming from South End Press, 116 St. Botolph Street, Boston, MA 02115, USA.

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Israel has delivered. Israel not only provided the technology necessary for a reign of terror, it helped in the organisation and commission of the horrors perpetrated by the Guatemalan military and police. And even beyond that: to ensure that the profitable relationship would continue, Israel and its agents worked actively to maintain Israeli influence in Guatemala.

Throughout the years of untrammelled slaughter that left at least 45,000 dead,¹ and, by early 1983, one million in internal exile² – mostly indigenous Mayan Indians, who comprise a majority of Guatemala's eight million people – and thousands more in exile abroad, Israel stood by the Guatemalan military. Three successive military governments and three brutal and sweeping campaigns against the Mayan population, described by a US diplomat as Guatemala's 'genocide against the Indians',³ had the benefit of Israeli techniques and experience, as well as hardware.

Israel began selling Guatemala weapons in 1974 and since then is known to have delivered seventeen* Arava aircraft.⁵ Referring to the Aravas, Benedicto Lucas Garcia, chief of staff during the rule of his brother, Romeo Lucas Garcia (1978-82), said: 'Israel helped us in regard to planes and transportation – which we desperately needed because we had problems in transferring ground forces from one place to another.'⁶

Among the other weapons sold by Israel were ten RBV armoured personnel carriers, three Dabur class patrol boats armed with Gabriel missiles, light cannons, machine-guns and at least 15,000 Galil assault rifles.⁷ The Galil became Guatemala's standard rifle⁸ and Uzis were widely seen as well. According to Victor Perera: 'Uzis and the larger Galil assault rifles used by Guatemala's special counterinsurgency forces accounted for at least half of the estimated 45,000 Guatemalan Indians killed by the military since 1978.'⁹

From the beginning, both sides took the arms buying and selling seriously. In 1971 Guatemalan armed forces Chief-of-Staff Kjell Laugerud Garcia visited Israel. Soon after Laugerud was (fraudulently) elected president. In 1974 he paid another visit 'to widen cooperation with Israel'.¹⁰ Three years later, Israel's President Ephraim Katzir reciprocated with a visit to Guatemala. According to Laugerud, his purpose was mainly to discuss arms and military aid.¹¹

US military aid to Guatemala was finally cut off by President Carter in 1977. But after the cut-off, Israel continued to fill in the gaps. Chief-of-Staff Lucas Garcia said he maintained contact 'with Israelis who advised us on matters of military purchases'. Lucas said that while Israel did not provide 'large amounts' of weapons, 'it was the only country that gave us support in our battle against the guerrillas'.¹² It is

*By 1982, at least nine of the Aravas had been mounted with gun pods.⁴

particularly difficult to know exactly what was supplied and how much it cost. Young officers complaining of corruption on the part of their superiors charged that between 1975 and 1981 some Guatemalan generals had claimed \$425 million in weapons purchases from Israel, Italy, Belgium and Yugoslavia; however, according to the young officers, only \$175 million had really been spent on arms – the difference was deposited in the Cayman Islands bank accounts of the generals.¹³

Some of the payment for Israeli arms is thought to have been made in quetzals, Guatemala's currency, which Israel would then use in its other dealings with Guatemala.¹⁴ Although there were reports of a big sale of Israeli Kfir fighter planes to Guatemala,¹⁵ these were never seen and would have required a US re-export licence. It is possible that the reports of Kfirs were born out of earlier reports (during the flare-up of tensions over Belize) that Israel (or France) had provided Guatemala with twenty-four 'earlier type' Mirage combat aircraft.¹⁶ Likewise, there are reports of helicopter sales, although the number of aircraft involved have not been determined. The transaction is said to have been a barter arrangement, with Israel accepting Guatemalan currency to be used for buying Guatemalan goods or financing Israeli operations in Guatemala.¹⁷

In 1985, the army's chief-of-staff said that several of the air force's helicopters were in Israel undergoing repairs and reconditioning.¹⁸ Under an agreement with Guatemala's air force, Israel trained pilots.¹⁹ A 1983 report said that Israel had built an air base in Guatemala.²⁰ It also installed a radar array at Guatemala City's La Aurora International Airport; in 1983 the radar was reportedly run by Israeli technicians.²¹ And, over the years, Israel has delivered quantities of smaller items to Guatemala: flak jackets, helmets,²² until 'army outposts in the jungle have become near replicas of Israeli army field camps'.²³

When the Reagan administration took office, it was determined to do everything it could for Guatemala. It had promised as much during the election campaign. During his 1980 campaign, Reagan met with a representative of the right-wing business lobby *Los Amigos del Pais*, and, referring to the Carter administration's aid cut-off, told him: 'Don't give up. Stay there and fight. I'll help you as soon as I get in.' Congress, however, did not change its attitude about Guatemala, and as late as 1985 remained adamant about denying it military aid. In 1981 Reagan's Secretary of State Alexander Haig 'urged Israel to help Guatemala'.²⁴ In July 1985 Israel helped the administration move a shipment from Israel to Guatemala on a KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines) flight.²⁵

In late 1983 the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) issued a communique saying that the previous May a munitions factory producing bullets for [Israeli] Galil rifles and Uzi submachine guns had begun operation in Alta Verapaz.²⁶ Subsequently, the director of army public relations

confirmed that the military was producing Galil rifle parts, had begun armour-plating its vehicles at the factory, and that the facility would soon be capable of building grenade-launchers.²⁷ The following year the factory began manufacturing entire Galil rifles under licence from Israel.²⁸ Israeli advisers set up the factory and then trained the Guatemalans to run it, said General Benedicto Lucas Garcia, who had headed the army at the time. 'The factory is now being run by Guatemalans', he added.²⁹ There are hopes in Guatemala that 30 per cent of the plant's output can be sold to Honduras and El Salvador.³⁰

The EGP said in 1983 that there were 300 Israeli advisers in Guatemala, working 'in the security structures and in the army'.³¹ Other reports were less specific as to numbers, but suggested that these Israeli advisers, 'some official, others private', performed a variety of functions. Israelis 'helped Guatemalan internal security agents hunt underground rebel groups'.³² General Lucas said Israeli advisers had come to teach the use of Israeli equipment purchased by Guatemala.³³ Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Guatemalan police agencies had had extensive US training in 'riot control training and related phases of coping with civil disturbances in a humane and effective manner' – a euphemism for the terror campaigns in which these forces participated that in 1967-8 took 7,000 lives, while ostensibly fighting a guerrilla force that never numbered more than 450.³⁴ When Congress forbade US forces to train the internal police forces of other countries – passed in 1974, this law was supplanted in 1985 by legislation that put the US back in the police-guidance business³⁵ – the Israelis stepped in and 'set up their intelligence network, tried and tested on the West Bank and Gaza'.³⁶

Israeli non-commissioned officers were also said to have been hired by big landowners to train their private security details. (Under Marcos, Israel did the same in the Philippines.³⁷) These private squads, together with 'off-duty military officers formed the fearsome "death squads" which later spread to neighbouring El Salvador, where they have been responsible for an estimated 20,000-30,000 murders of left-wing dissidents'.³⁸

Not only did the Israelis share their experiences and their tactics, they bestowed upon Guatemala the technology needed by a modern police state. During the period Guatemala was under US tutelage, the insurgency spread from the urban bourgeoisie to the indigenous population in the rural highlands; with Israeli guidance, the military succeeded in suppressing (for now) the drive for land and political liberation. The Guatemalan military is very conscious of that achievement, even proud of it. Some officers argue that with the help of the US they could not have quelled the insurgency, as Congress would not have tolerated their ruthless tactics.³⁹

In 1979 the Guatemalan interior minister paid a 'secret and confiden-

tial' visit to Israel, where he met with the manufacturers of 'sophisticated police equipment'.⁴⁰ In March of the following year Interior Minister Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz was in Israel to conclude an agreement for police training. Following the overthrow of Lucas Garcia,* the home of Interior Minister Alvarez was raided, 'uncovering underground jail cells, fifty stolen vehicles ... [and] scores of gold graduation rings; wrenched from the fingers of police torture victims'.⁴³

Israeli advisers have worked with the feared G-2 police intelligence unit.⁴⁴ Overseen by the army general staff, the G-2 is the intelligence agency – sections charged with 'the elimination of individuals' are stationed at every army base – which has been largely responsible for the death squad killings over the last decade. The present civilian government has dissolved the DIT, a civilian organisation subordinate to G-2, but not G-2 itself.⁴⁵

In 1981 the army's school of transmissions and electronics, designed and financed by the Israeli company Tadiran to teach such subjects as encoding, radio jamming and monitoring, and the use of Israeli equipment, was opened in Guatemala City.⁴⁶ According to the colonel directing the school, everything in it came from Israel: the 'teaching methods, the teaching teams, the technical instruments, books, and even custom furniture ... designed and built by the Israeli company DEGEM systems'.⁴⁷

At the opening ceremony the Israeli ambassador was thanked by Chief-of-Staff General Benedicto Lucas Garcia for 'the advice and transfer of electronic technology' which, Lucas said, had brought Guatemala up to date.⁴⁸ The ambassador, calling Guatemala 'one of our best friends', promised that further technology transfers were in the works.⁴⁹

Perhaps the most sinister in its implications of all the equipment supplied by Israel to Guatemala were two computers. One was in an old military academy and became, as Benedicto Lucas called it, 'the nerve center of the armed forces, which deals with the movements of units in the field and so on'.⁵⁰ The other computer was located in an annex of the National Palace. The G-2 have a control centre there, and, since the days of Romeo Lucas Garcia, meetings have been held in that annex to select assassination victims. According to a senior Guatemalan army official, the complex contains 'an archive and computer file on journalists, students, leaders, people of the left, politicians, and so on'. This material is combined with current intelligence reports and mulled over

**Editors' note:* General Garcia was overthrown in a well-organised coup d'état by junior officers in March 1982. He was succeeded by General Rios Montt who attributed the success of the coup to the training of 'many of our soldiers' by the Israelis.⁴¹ In August 1983 Rios Montt himself was ousted, and spirited away to Miami by an Israeli adviser.⁴² He was succeeded by General Mejia Victores.

during weekly sessions that have included, in their respective times, both Romeo Lucas and Oscar Mejia.

The bureaucratic procedures for approving the killing of a dissident are well-established. 'A local military commander has someone they think is a problem', the officer explains. 'So they speak with G-2, and G-2 consults its own archives and information from its agents and the police and, if all coincide, it passes along a direct proposition to the minister of defense. They say, "We have analysed the case of such and such a person in depth and this person is responsible for the following acts and we recommend that we execute them."' ⁵¹

The computer, installed by Tadiran and operational in late 1979 or early 1980, ⁵² was used to sort through dossiers and to distribute lists of those marked for death. Said a US priest who fled the country after appearing on a death list, 'They had print-out lists at the border crossings and at the airport. Once you get on that – then it's like bounty hunters.' ⁵³ Along with the computer system came public registration. In May 1983 the government announced that Colonel Jaime Rabanales, a specialist in counter-insurgency propaganda, had been put in charge of a programme to register the entire population, ⁵⁴ a task that would be undertaken 'with the help of Israeli intelligence'. ⁵⁵ Soon after he wrested power from Rios Montt, General Oscar Mejia Victores called a halt to the census-taking, which he said was a burden to the military and a public relations disaster. ⁵⁶

Something resembling that plan cropped up again in August 1984, according to a report by the Mexico City *El Dia*, about a 'sectoral' (sectorisation) plan to contain urban political activity. The paper said the plan was modelled after 'Israel's experiences in Palestinian areas', and called for eight police for each four blocks, a census of residents and reinforcement of neighbourhood organisations – 'a form of the civil self-defence patrols'. The paper also said that this plan would contribute to accomplishing the computerisation of the population already under way, 'the work of Israeli experts'. ⁵⁷ By 1985 80 per cent of the adult population was said to have been entered in the computer. ⁵⁸

Control of the rural population

The aspect of Israeli cooperation with Guatemala with the most serious implications is the role played by Israeli personnel in the universally condemned rural 'pacification' programme. Extreme maldistribution of land – exacerbated by encroachment on indigenous land – was a major cause of the present rebellion. After trying several different approaches, the military, under Rios Montt, embarked on a resolution of the problem, substituting forced relocation and suppression for equitable land distribution.

In 1982 Israeli military advisers helped develop and carry out Plan Victoria, the devastating scorched earth campaign which Rios Montt unleashed on the highland population. In June 1983 the Guatemalan embassy in Washington confirmed that 'personnel sent by the Israeli government were participating in the repopulation and readjustment programmes for those displaced'. Rios Montt himself told the *Washington Times* that the Israeli government was giving his administration help with the counter-insurgency plan called '*Techo, tortilla y trabajo*' (shelter, food and work).⁵⁹ The 'three Ts' followed an earlier Rios programme called *Fusiles y frijoles*, or beans and bullets, where wholesale slaughter was combined with the provision of life's necessities to those willing to cooperate with the military.

The success of the government's initially savage but sophisticated campaign against the rebels has come without significant US military assistance, and top field commanders say that none is necessary now to finish the guerrillas.⁶⁰

'We declared a state of siege so we could kill legally', Rios Montt told a group of politicians. The Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops called what Rios was doing 'genocide'.⁶¹ (Following Rios' overthrow, his successor, Mejia Victores, continued the programme, proclaiming that model villages would be extended throughout the country.⁶²)

As the army bombed, strafed and burned village after village, an estimated 100,000 peasants escaped across the border to Mexico⁶³ or to the mountainous territory controlled by the guerrillas. Others were captured by the military. Many of those who went to the guerrillas were later forced by hunger to surrender themselves to the military. Their fate was confinement in model villages – what were called strategic hamlets during the US assault on Vietnam. In Guatemala there was a plan drawn up grouping these in four 'poles of development'. The scheme piggybacked on a series of older plans involving the corruption of cooperatives.

In the early 1970s there had been a short-lived cooperative movement in Guatemala, spearheaded by Roman Catholic priests. It was meant to provide credit and agricultural support that would obviate the need for indigenous people to migrate to coastal regions for ill-paid and unhealthy seasonal employment, picking coffee and other export crops. At one time it involved 750,000 Mayan peasants. US AID provided funds for credit unions and, briefly, the movement was sponsored by the Laugerud government [1974-8]. Although the cooperatives did not begin to address the basic tragedy of the Indian highlands – landlessness – the government's support of the programme was attacked by the Guatemalan right as 'communist'. The army took over at least one large cooperative and later, when the government moved to open up land for settlement by landless Indians, large tracts were immediately

grabbed up by the military and the wealthy.⁶⁴

In 1977 two Laugerud officials, Colonel Fernando Castillo Ramirez, director of the National Cooperative Institute, and Leonel Giron, head of colonisation programmes in the northern area (the Franja Transversal del Norte) that was to be opened for development, visited Israel. Following that visit, 'Israeli advisers arrived in Guatemala to plan civil action programmes in the conflictive Ixcán area, heartland of support for the ... EGP and scene of constant military repression of local cooperative members.'⁶⁵

In 1978 Israel began a two-year scholarship programme under which numerous Guatemalan officers and government officials studied 'cooperativisation and rural development', courses provided by the Israeli Foreign Ministry's International Cooperation Division. Lucas Garcia (successor to Laugerud) adopted some aspects of Israel's kibbutz and moshav (non-collective agricultural settlements) into his 1979 'Integral Plan of Rural Communities' aimed at zones of conflict. Israeli techniques were also the main guiding principles for the far more sweeping 'pacification' programme designed and implemented in 1982 under Ríos Montt.⁶⁶

The model villages turned the cooperative philosophy of user- or owner-control on its head. In the model villages of the Program of Assistance to Areas in Conflict (PAAC), food – often donated by international relief organisations – was doled out in exchange for compliance with the military's orders. 'In model villages the military or military-appointed commissioners control everything from latrine installation to food distribution and have created a structure parallel to civilian administration, which is left essentially powerless.'⁶⁷

Another twist to the model village scheme is the emphasis on the growth of non-traditional specialty crops for export. Air force Colonel Eduardo Wohlers, who in 1982 assumed charge of the civic action aspect of PAAC, visited Israel and studied 'the elements of agricultural production on the kibbutz'. Wohlers designed an agricultural collective based on the kibbutz⁶⁸ – a 'distorted replica of rural Israel' commented one observer⁶⁹ – and construction was begun on a prototype in July 1983 at Yalihu in Alta Verapaz.⁷⁰ Colonel Wohlers described how the cooperatives would be turned into profitable operations: 'We foresee huge plantations of fruit and vegetables, with storage and processing facilities and refrigeration plants. We aim to put in the entire infrastructure for exporting frozen broccoli, Chinese cabbage, watermelons – a total of fifteen new crops.'⁷¹

Members of the Guatemalan military – many have grown wealthy over the last two decades – have invested in warehouses and refrigeration facilities in order to realise the economic opportunities of these new specialty exports.⁷² One colonel said that the pacification plan called for the incorporation of one million people into the 'poles of

development' 'the entire hinterland'.⁷³

In addition to Colonel Wohlers and his colleagues, the Israelis have provided technical assistance for the model villages,⁷⁴ which turn to the world a face of peaceful existence and productivity – the perfect model of a backward people in the process of development. But daily existence in the model villages is a matter of complete subjugation. The military assigns inmates to various projects such as road building – the roads are to provide the military with access it did not have when early in the decade it attacked the highlands – and tells them what crops they will plant. Two representatives from each project sit on a central decision-making board which also includes representatives of the Guatemalan military and the civil patrols which they dominate.⁷⁵ This 'monolithic structure ... guards against the risk that the community will develop objectives contrary to government or military policy'.⁷⁶ The military has also encouraged the formation of producer associations, which give the impression of voluntary organisations.⁷⁷ The domination has its exploitative angle, too, as the military controls not only each individual's daily life, but is also the sole source of seeds, fertiliser and credit. Naturally, the military is also the sole marketing agent for the villages' produce.

The comprehensive manner in which villages are governed has disrupted traditional lines of authority. 'Previous systems of settling disputes and selecting leaders have no meaning in this context.'⁷⁸ The forced relocation has wrenched the indigenous people from their land, from which they drew much of their identity, where they buried their dead and the umbilical cords of their children.⁷⁹ Being forced to grow alien crops in the place of the corn which occupies a central place in Mayan culture is, as the military is no doubt aware, a 'deliberate act of cultural destruction'.⁸⁰ Confinement in a model village is sometimes preceded by a term in a political 're-education' camp, lasting from two to six months.⁸¹

One of the most oppressive features of Guatemala's pacification programme is the 'civilian self-defence patrols', whose ranks are filled by coercion, with most joining out of fear of being called subversive,⁸² and thus marked for torture or execution.⁸³ Those who do serve in the patrols must 'turn in their quota of "subversives"'. Otherwise, 'they will be forced to denounce their own neighbours and to execute them with clubs and fists in the village plaza'.⁸⁴

The patrols have had a profound effect on Mayan society, both psychologically – 'a permanent violation of our values or a new negative vision', as the country's Catholic bishops charged⁸⁵ – and practically – as long shifts on patrol prevent fulfilment of family and economic obligations. In 1983 the Guatemalan government estimated that 850 villages in the highlands had 'self-defence' units.⁸⁶ The following year the US embassy in Guatemala estimated that 700,000 men had

been enrolled in the units,⁸⁷ armed with Israeli assistance. Currently, 900,000 men are organised into the civil patrols.⁸⁸

In late 1983 US customs agents in Miami held up an Israeli freighter carrying 12,000 rifles – reports varied as to whether they were First World War bolt-action Remingtons or Mausers – headed for Guatemala, which the then chief of state Mejia Victores confirmed Guatemala had bought from Israel.⁸⁹ Mejia said they were for ‘troops in training’.⁹⁰ It appears as if these totally antiquated arms were purchased after the US turned down an appeal by Mejia’s predecessor for a donation of ‘old rifles for use by civil defence patrols’.⁹¹

In May 1984 SIAG (Servicio de Informacion y Analisis de Guatemala) released details of a meeting between US and Israeli representatives and members of the Guatemalan government in Guatemala on 10 and 12 December 1983. According to SIAG, plans were formulated at that meeting for industrial development in a number of regions, among them the Indian-dominated highlands and a stepped-up effort to quell the insurgency, which by that time had unified in an umbrella organisation, URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca). The report said that the cheap labour to run the planned industries would be drawn from the ‘development poles’. Whether or not this plan is ever fully implemented, the implications of the labour conditions already established in the model villages are enormous. In 1983 labour leaders charged that work was performed in the model villages ‘without remuneration’.⁹² In 1985 inmates of three model villages in Quiché said that they were often formed up into press gangs by the army to repair roads, work on fortifications, ‘clear fields of fire’, and build new model villages, all without pay. Moreover, the residents told a reporter that the work for the army did not leave time to work the insufficient plots of land they had been assigned and that they were not allowed to leave.⁹³

Food was obtainable, in at least some instances, only from military stores (a version of the company store in so many North American mining towns), giving the military yet another means of control over the village inmates.⁹⁴ In 1986, opposition sources within Guatemala also knew of instances in which work in the model villages was not performed for wages, but only in exchange for staple foods – the very corn and beans the inmates are no longer allowed to grow for themselves. In a word, slave labour.

The Guatemalan government, in facing a broad based popular movement, has come to resemble the Israelis on the West Bank and Gaza: they are an occupying army. They must use force to stop dissent, but also need to plan for the more long-range effort of social control. Thus the Israeli plans at home provide a prototype for solving Guatemalan problems.⁹⁵

It is no accident that the Guatemalans looked to the Israelis for assistance in organising their campaign against the Indians, and having followed their mentors' advice, wound up with something that looks quite a bit like the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza strip. As the Israelis wrecked the local economy and turned the occupied territories into a captive market and a cheap labour pool, the Guatemalan military has made economic activity in the occupied highlands all but impossible.⁹⁶ Just as it is openly acknowledged in the Israeli media that the Palestinian population must not be allowed to exceed the Jewish population, it is common knowledge that the Guatemalan military would like to reduce the Mayan population to a minority.

But, most of all, there is the unyielding violence of the suppression. The occupation regime Israel has maintained since 1967 over the Palestinians (and its occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, the Egyptian Sinai and Southern Lebanon) has trained 'an entire generation of Israelis ... to impose Israeli rule over subject peoples'.⁹⁷ The Israeli soldier is a model and an example to us', General Benedicto Lucas said in 1981.⁹⁸

The Christian connection

It was in the coercive resettlement programme that Israel's activities in Guatemala intersected most directly with those of the Christian right surrounding the Reagan administration. This was particularly true during the reign of Rios Montt. Montt was a so-called 'born-again Christian', a member ('elder') of the Arcata, California-based Church of the Word, a branch of the Evangelical Gospel Outreach.

In Guatemala, the Christian right was interested in converts – by the end of 1982 reactionary Protestants had succeeded in recruiting 22 per cent of the population to their theology of blind obedience and anti-communism.⁹⁹ They were particularly hostile to Catholicism, especially 'Liberation Theology', which many of the Guatemalan military deemed responsible for the insurgency.

Right-wing Christian organisations seemed to be especially drawn to the harsh social control being exerted on the highland Mayans. During the Rios Montt period, foreign fundamentalists were permitted access to military operation zones, while Catholics were turned away – or attacked. During this period 'many Catholic rectories and churches in Quiche [a highland province] [were] turned into army barracks'.¹⁰⁰ In late 1983 the Vatican itself protested the murder of a Franciscan priest in Guatemala and the (exiled) Guatemalan Human Rights Commission (CDHG) charged that in the space of several months 500 catechists had been 'disappeared'. In October the police caught and tortured some religious workers.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, Rios Montt surrounded himself with advisers, both North American and Guatemalan, from his Verbo church, and what appeared to be a loose coalition of right-wing fundamentalist organisations, most notably Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, began an extensive fund-raising drive and also started sending volunteers to Ixil Triangle villages under military control. Rios Montt chose Love Lift International, the 'relief arm' of Gospel Outreach, Verbo's parent church, to carry the food and supplies purchased with the money raised. Verbo representatives, along with an older evangelical outfit, the Wycliffe Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics, arranged with the government 'to take charge of all medical work in the Ixil Triangle, and for all education in Indian areas up to the third grade to be taught in Indian languages with SIL/WBT assistance', through the Behrhorst Clinic. SIL/WBT and the Clinic's parent, the Behrhorst Foundation, incorporated with Verbo Church into the Foundation for Aid to the Indian People (FUNDAPI), whose stated purpose was to channel international Christian donations to refugees and which coordinated volunteers from US right-wing religious organisations.¹⁰²

Since the late 1970s the government of Israel has devoted considerable energy to befriending such political luminaries of rightist evangelism as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, having turned to these groups after the National Council of Churches passed some mildly reproving resolutions about the Middle East. The Christian extremists tell Israel what it wants to hear. Jerry Falwell found justification in the Bible for an Israel encompassing parts of 'Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan and all of Lebanon, Jordan, and Kuwait'.¹⁰³ Pat Robertson praised the Reagan administration's veto of a UN Security Council resolution condemning Israel's invasion of Lebanon with some gobbledygook tying the invasion to the fundamentalist superstition that Israel will be the site of the last battle, Armageddon: 'Israel has lit the fuse, and it is a fast burning fuse, and I don't think that the fuse is going to be quenched until that region explodes in flames. That is my personal feeling from the Bible.'¹⁰⁴ Robertson urged his viewers to call the White House and voice their support for the Israeli invasion.

Untroubled by the scene in Armageddon when all the Jews will be converted (or damned), Israel welcomed the 'Christian Voice of Hope' radio station and its companion 'Star of Hope' television to Southern Lebanon, and, even though proseletysing is illegal in Israel, provided stations with Israeli government newscasts. Supported by donations from US right-wing evangelicals, and in particular by Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, the stations were 'used as a military tool' by the Israeli proxy South Lebanon Army.¹⁰⁵

Aside from the religious right and their secular allies, the Guatemalan model villages have been universally condemned. Until 1985 a bipartisan majority opposed the granting of any US aid that

would strengthen the 'development poles'. This, of course, stopped short of undercutting support for the 'pacification' programme, as funds received from US AID and other foreign sources freed other government funds for use on the model villages. In 1984 US AID granted Guatemala \$1 million which was used for constructing infrastructure for the model villages.¹⁰⁶ Americas Watch Vice-Chairman Aryeh Neier pointed out that humanitarian assistance from the US has 'played an essential role in the Guatemalan Army's counter-insurgency programmes', enabling the army to distribute (or withhold) food to exact compliance with its resettlement programme.¹⁰⁷

Even with the transition to an elected government in 1986, the model villages continued under military control. The military made sure of that: before it turned power over to its civilian successors, the Mejia Victores regime promulgated a series of decrees defining the programmes relating to the poles of development as part of the 'counter-insurgency', and thus its purview.

Inroads into economic and political life

Israel's military relations with Guatemala have led to a number of economic and political bonds. The Guatemalan ambassador to Israel summed up the present state of bilateral relations:

From Israel, we buy electronics, radar and communications equipment and we send it civilian machinery for repairs. Likewise, dozens of young Guatemalan professionals attend international cooperation centres to acquire Israeli know-how, especially in agronomic industry. Israel imports from Guatemala coffee, cardamom, precious wood, Guatemalan crafts, sesame and nickel amongst others, and provides technical assistance for the exploitation of Guatemala's many natural resources. This forms the basis for the excellent relations that fortunately exist between the peoples and governments of Guatemala and Israel.¹⁰⁸

For Guatemala, it was easy: 'We're isolated internationally', said a prominent Guatemalan. 'The only friend we have left in the world is Israel.'¹⁰⁹

The bonds have been building for several years. On 15 June 1982, just nine days after Israel invaded Lebanon, Guatemala's Minister of Economy Julio Matheu Duchez visited Israel to sign a trade agreement under which each nation granted the other 'most-favoured nation' status and pledged to cooperate in the fields of industry, agriculture, development, and tourism. Signing for Israel was Trade and Industry Minister Gideon Pat, who disclosed that a joint commission of representatives from each country would meet 'from time to time' to monitor the agreement's implementation.¹¹⁰

According to George Black, the tourism component of the agreement involved a special pitch to Jewish communities in New York, Miami and Los Angeles about the wonders of Guatemala.¹¹¹ American Jews might be targeted because apparently it is not safe for Israelis to tour Guatemala. The Israeli consul in Guatemala said he could not guarantee one of his countrymen's safety.¹¹² The threat might not come only from the insurgents: by 1985 there were complaints among Guatemalan non-combatants about Israel's extensive involvement in Guatemala's internal affairs.¹¹³

On 17 November 1983, according to the Guatemala-based *Central America Report*, the two signed another trade and economic cooperation agreement, its purpose 'to strengthen friendly and commercial relations and to facilitate as far as possible economic cooperation on a basis of equality and mutual advantages'. Israeli firms are now said to have extensive agribusiness investments, held through intermediaries, in Guatemala.¹¹⁴

Israeli 'security' firms have also found employment in Guatemala, sending rent-a-Rambo commandos to implement security for wealthy planters. These portable goon squads, which have proliferated in Israel as the large officer corps reaches retirement age in a soured economy, are by no means strictly private operations. All must pass a government test and all the techniques and equipment they take abroad must be approved by the defence ministry.¹¹⁵ And Israel's Tadiran and South Africa's Consolidated Power have established a joint undertaking in Guatemala to assemble and sell electronic equipment.¹¹⁶

Israel also began dealing in arms out of Guatemala. Eagle Military Gear Overseas set up shop on a secure floor of the *Cortijo Reforma* Hotel in Guatemala City, opposite army headquarters. In 1982 Ignacio Klich wrote that Eagle's Tel Aviv headquarters was referring Central American buyers to its regional sales office in Guatemala.¹¹⁷ Also known as Eagle Israeli Armaments and Desert Eagle, the company is owned by Pesakh Ben-Or, a former Israeli paratrooper. Under the military regime, Ben-Or's links to the Guatemalans were said to be so good that 'almost all the representatives of the Israeli arms factories, security apparatus and electronics firms who want to establish connections in Guatemala arrive at the conclusion that it is better to do it through him'.¹¹⁸

Israel has got close enough to Guatemala to exercise more than a bit of leverage in internal Guatemalan affairs. There was the overthrow of Chief of State Romeo Lucas Garcia and his replacement with Rios Montt. There was also Israel's active interest in the 1985 Guatemalan presidential elections. Although it was very evident to journalists that Israel did not enjoy wide popularity among the population as a whole,¹¹⁹ Israel had clout where it mattered, as was demonstrated early on in the campaign, when all the major candidates met with Latin

American B'nai B'rith representatives and pledged to work on the continued improvement of relations with Israel. The candidate of the ultra-right MLN party, Mario Sandoval Alarcon, pledged to move Guatemala's embassy to Jerusalem.¹²⁰

Conclusion

Israeli advisers continue to work in Guatemala. During his 1986 visit, Israeli Foreign Minister Shamir said he had offered to increase the technical and scientific links that bring many Guatemalans on scholarship to Israel each year.¹²¹ Exactly how many are involved in the development poles is not known. An Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson admitted to three Israelis, teaching 'irrigation and techniques for organising youth movements and community centers'.¹²² The numbers are also probably euphemistic.

Certainly the advisers are not a democratising force. Mercedes Sotz Cate, the financial secretary of the Guatemalan Municipal Workers Union, was seized and tortured for five hours on 12 February 1986. His abduction came at the beginning of a violent union-busting campaign by the mayor of Guatemala City, Alvaro Arzu Irigoyen. Sotz said that his torturers were Israeli agents in the employ of the mayor. When questioned, Arzu 'admit[ted] only to people of different nationality who work for the city without a salary'. At least one Israeli was identified as part of a group 'advising' the municipality and Arzu confirmed this.¹²³

It is a mistake to conclude that US complicity in the genocidal war of the Guatemalan generals ended when the Carter administration pulled the plug on military aid in 1977. When the US intervened in Guatemala and overthrew its liberal, democratically elected government in 1954, it effectively transferred rule to the country's military, which has held power ever since. Even the civilian president of Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro was (with US acquiescence) immediately subjugated by the military. To cite only one example of the continuity that makes the last three tragic decades of Guatemala a US responsibility: the dossiers that formed the basis of the intelligence unit G-2's death squad selection process also date back to 1954. After the fall of the government of Jacobo Arbenz, the army confiscated the membership lists of the many organisations which had blossomed during the all-too-short hiatus between repressive regimes – Guatemala was ruled by the oppressive dictator Jorge Ubico until 1945, when he was bloodlessly replaced by a popular government under Dr Juan Jose Arevalo – and from these lists culled 70,000 'communists'. These files were updated during the 1960s and used for assassinations during a US-supported counter-insurgency.¹²⁴ In the 1970s Israel stepped in and helped with the computerisation of the whole bloody system.

It does not take convoluted reasoning to conclude that 'both the US

and Israel bear rather serious moral responsibility' for Guatemala.¹²⁵ Since 1978, however, the US Congress has done little more than beat down the most outrageous of President Reagan's requests for aid for the military regime. And nor have large numbers of peace and solidarity activists mounted an active campaign against US or Israeli complicity even when the slaughter of Indians and other insurgents was at its peak.

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Traditions of Intolerance: Fascism and Political Racism in British Society in the Twentieth Century

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Your daily dose: racism and the *Sun*

Dedicated to Mike Hicks

In the letters column of the *Caribbean Times* of 10 April 1987 there is a letter from a group of young people from the North London borough of Brent involved in organising an exchange visit to Cuba. They write replying to an article in the *Sun* newspaper of 26 February, headlined 'Freebie trip for blacks, but white kids must pay', and systematically refute the series of lies and distortions contained within it. They reveal, point by point, a list of grotesque inaccuracies, showing how, in fact, the youth themselves are raising their own funds for the trip; that they are merely a group of unwaged or low-paid young people who are certainly not, as the *Sun* suggests, 'rehabilitating after being convicted' of unnamed crimes; that it is a multi-racial group; that there are no 'free tickets' and that the newspaper's quoted informant, 'youth worker Shirley Williams', who is reported to have said that 'blacks are getting the subsidised places because we only really want to take them', does not exist.

Their letter is a courageous attempt to beat back a form of racist journalism that is growing more and more intense in Britain as black people continue to make challenges across all areas of its social, political and economic life. For the Murdoch curriculum is there every morning to give British working people (in the words of printworker Mike Hicks, who was imprisoned while organising pickets against the

Chris Searle is a teacher and author of various books on education, language and literature, including *Words unchained: language and revolution in Grenada* (1984) and *The world in a classroom* (1977).

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Sun's new union-breaking premises) their 'daily dose' of anti-black, anti-woman and anti-working class propaganda.

'Nothing can stop your Wapping great *Sun*, folks!', proclaimed its page two on 30 January 1987 as the pickets continued their vigil outside the paper's barbed-wire fence compound in Wapping, East London, frequently attacked by truncheon-bearing, mounted police and by Tory politicians like Norman Tebbit who likened the printworkers (not, of course, the police) to 'nazi-style thugs'. The article continued by claiming that over twelve million readers saw the paper on a daily basis and that it had sold an average of over four million copies every day between July and September 1986, nearly a million more than the 'Daily Muckswell' (*Daily Mirror*), its closest competitor, proving to its own satisfaction that it is 'Britain's best paper with the best staff and *without* the traditional print unions'. For it is clear that, since Rupert Murdoch moved the *Sun*, *The Times*, the *News of the World* and the *Sunday Times* to the new Wapping plant with its concentration camp surroundings (sacking 5,500 printworkers in the process and manning the new works with non-print-union and docile, strike-breaking labour), the *Sun's* racism has become more and more concentrated and thematic.

Murdoch's new empire

Murdoch has been expanding his media empire over the last decade to huge effect. He owns an estimated seventy-five companies, ninety newspapers and TV stations, an Australian airline, the giant sheep and cattle farming concern F.S. Falkiner, a computer software company, the Hong Kong-based Regent International hotel chain, a recording company and the infamous TNT international transport concern that was used to break through the Wapping picket (running down a pedestrian as it did so*) and distribute his scab newspapers throughout Britain (it has recently announced a 40% increase in profits worldwide). His empire is the world's largest consumer of newsprint. Murdoch's latest sortie is into the US television industry, launching Fox TV, a £1.4 billion competitor to the established moguls CBS, ABC and NBC. It is his substantial profits accruing from the *Sun*, and thus from the pockets of British working people, that are paying for this mammoth media enterprise, which will make Murdoch into one of the most powerful peddlars of the US imperial message across the world.

This is something of the backcloth to the increasingly strident racism exercised every day in the *Sun* (while its bedmate *The Times* is also taking a more sophisticatedly aggressive line against anti-racism, through

*On 21 April 1987, an inquest jury decided that 19-year-old Michael Delancy had been 'unlawfully killed' by a TNT lorry as it sped away past pickets from Murdoch's Wapping plant on 10 January 1987.

the backward and pseudo-academic arguments of such darlings of the New Right as Roger Scruton and Ronald Butt). The *Sun*'s racism is also accompanied by a sharpened form of national jingoism which, brought into populist fullness during the war in the Malvinas, has developed almost to the level – even to the *Sun*'s most persuaded readers – of self-parody. There was the anti-French campaign (including free badges to its readers declaring 'Hop off, you Frogs') following the strike of French lorry drivers in 1984. This intensified during the students' campaign (of December 1986) against the threatened restricted entry to universities, when resident Professor John Vincent cried 'no French tears' for this 'old fashioned people' with a 'reactionary' revolutionary tradition. His sentiments were underlined by an editorial in the same issue (10 December 1986) which boldly affirmed that 'The *Sun*, as regular readers will know, has never liked the French'. This violent and unabashed chauvinism was also stoked up against the Argentinians during the soccer World Cup in Mexico in June 1986. Banner headlines claiming 'It's War Señor!' appeared above subtitles like 'Troops on alert for Argie battle: Gunships and tanks stand by', while a cartoon (26 June) depicted a British tank firing a football into the stomach of a stunned (and unshaven) Argentinian goalkeeper, with the British tank commander radioing out: 'First goal to us, chaps!' As I write (in April 1987) a campaign against German tourists in Majorca, who have allegedly made prior morning claims on beach chairs before the British arrive, is being waged through the columns of the *Sun*. References to the 'Hun' and Hitleresque comparisons with ordinary German holiday-makers abound, galvanising anti-German and anti-European prejudice deep (and often very close to the surface) in the psyche of the *Sun*'s British readers: 'Vot makes Krauts holiday louts?', asks an article in the issue of 6 April 1987.

The 'Sun' on Africa

A useful place to begin to consider the *Sun*'s position towards black people, both nationally and internationally, and its untrammelled promotion of racism is to analyse its attitude towards Africa and Africans. This is overtly brandished in its cartoons. The archetypal colonial image of African with spear, bone-through-nose and loincloth standing outside his mud-hut, confronting cork-hatted British explorers holding out a casket of beads, forms the theme of two cartoons (22 September 1984) which the readers are asked to examine in order to spot the slight differences between them. They are then invited to send their answers to the *Sun* and the first ten to arrive will receive Sharp video-recorders. Under the cartoons the captions quote the white man's words: 'Never mind about the beads, they want a video.' Thus media multinational supports electronics multinational – well known for its contribution to the US nuclear arms industry – and uses racism as its vehicle to reach

the younger readers and consumers of the *Sun*, eager to acquire a video-recorder, and, while acquiring this, acquiring more racist reinforcement too.

Similarly grotesque cartoon caricatures of the African people show two pitch-black, identical figures with grass skirts and rolling eyes being instructed by Bob Geldof to carry Jonathan King (a television presenter who criticised Geldof's knighthood) on a pole towards a lake of crocodiles (12 June 1986), and a group of African and Commonwealth prime ministers, all whites-of-eyes gleaming, receiving the two-finger salute from Margaret Thatcher over the issue of trade sanctions against South Africa (4 August 1986). What gives greater significance to the cartoons in both cases, however, are the articles carefully placed directly below them. Under the Geldof cartoon is a story asserting that the Live Aid contributions are being used by African 'killers' of the government of Ethiopia, and under Thatcher's two fingers her gesture is reinforced by an insultingly racist attack upon Shridath Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary-General. Thus the journalistic device of juxtaposition feeds the racist message of both word and image backwards and forwards from one to the other for the greater deception of the duped reader.

The coverage given to the South African sanctions issue in the *Sun* predictably gave full support to the Reagan-Thatcher position, but added some characteristic vitriol of its own. An editorial (13 June 1986) praised Thatcher, saying that all there would be left of South Africa after sanctions 'would be a clapped-out economy with millions on the edge of starvation'. A day later the newspaper had found a South African black Pentecostal bishop called Isaac Mokoena to back up this argument. Beneath the headline, 'Is Moscow behind the South African bloodbath?', the bishop is quoted as saying: 'We are in London to give a word of encouragement to Mrs Thatcher in her stand against sanctions. Sanctions will give the radicals exactly what they want.'

An open support for the South African regime has been gathering articulacy in the *Sun* and has been underpinned by Vincent's assertions that the only people in Africa who can organise an economy are white people, or African governments pulled on strings by western governments. The 'few star performers' on the continent, he declares in *Vincent's View* (9 July 1986), 'have strong Western links. Kenya has white settlers, Zimbabwe has white farmers. Malawi has close ties with South Africa, the Ivory Coast is run by thriving businessmen'. He had, previously, condemned those who 'continue to advocate black supremacy in South Africa as though it would bring human rights and democracy' (4 September 1985). Of course, the African National Congress and mainline liberation organisations of South Africa do not struggle for 'black supremacy', but a society built upon equal rights for all South Africans. But 'black supremacy' is more frightening for a

predominantly white working-class readership, so the *Sun* and Dr Vincent will use it as the preferred term whether it constitutes the truth or not. Vincent's 'respectable' musings constantly gain editorial support to such an extent that there seems to be a single voice speaking, with the professorial note being used to add a bogus legitimacy to the bald prejudice of the editorials, and with Vincent's column and the editorials neatly juxtaposed on the same page. In a typical passage (25 October 1986), following the Barclay's Bank withdrawal from South Africa (or, more accurately, the internal shifting of its assets), the leader writer complained bitterly about 'picking on' South Africa while countries like Zimbabwe (with its 'Marxist dictatorship') and Ghana ('a ramshackle state where human life is held as cheap as a handful of maize') do not appear to tickle the 'delicate conscience of do-gooders'.

But from March 1987 the *Sun* has taken to a blatant advocacy of the present South African regime. In a whole-page article, called 'Why we must give South Africa the chance to get it right', by visiting *Sun* journalist Ronald Spark, we read about the successes of black millionaires like Richard Maponya (who is shown leading his successful race horse immediately juxtaposed below a picture of rebellious Soweto youth), of a multiracial, harmonious society where 'step by step the machinery of discrimination is being dismantled' and where, 'apart from the odd incident, the whole country seems peaceful'. As a visitor, Spark comments, 'I found every reason for hope.' Responding to the *Sun*'s invitation for readers to comment upon the article, the issue of 13 March claimed that 'nine to one' approved of his conclusions that 'the country is trying to bring about change and should be given every chance to achieve it'. The lead letter from a so-called 'Cape coloured' agreed that conditions were fine, and an Englishman from Gateshead who had recently worked in the country added that the Africans were 'quite content', even though 'the blacks are not yet ready to handle their land'. The blacks want 'everything given to them on a plate', writes Rajendra Kotaria from Leicester. Thus the batch of published letters constructs the impression of a divided black position with regard to South Africa and only two of them add anything like a note of criticism of the Botha government and the apartheid system.

On Arabs and Asians

It is the *Sun*'s attitude towards the Arab peoples, stretching towards Asian people generally, that bridges its international racist message with its domestic views towards Britain's black people. To say that the paper treats the culture of Asian and Islamic peoples with contempt would be putting the truth mildly. 'Arab pig sneaks back in' appeared in huge banner headlines on the front page of the issue of 23 January 1986, following up a story of a Libyan diplomat who had been inside the Libyan People's Bureau at the time of the death of WPC Yvonne

Fletcher in April 1984, but who had been given clearance by the Home Office to re-enter Britain. The repeated obscene associations made by the *Sun* in comparing Islamic people to pigs found expression again on the front page of the issue of 25 October 1986, with a similarly outrageous headline, declaring 'Get out you Syrian swine', after the Syrian Ambassador was expelled from Britain for allegedly being implicated in the plot to blow up an Israeli aeroplane. Such insults, designed to insult the entire Muslim community of Britain, were given further rein when the *Sun* discovered that a 12-year-old Iranian girl had married and was living with her Iranian student husband in Manchester. With characteristic lewdness, the newspaper's journalists spied and pried into this relationship in the most offensive way, giving it a front page prominence with a photograph of the shy young woman and such prurient passages as: 'She goes home to do the housework and make supper. Then she snuggles under the blankets and has sex with her 27-year-old husband.'

On 8 December 1986 the *Sun* proudly proclaimed in its headlines that one of its cartoons had been judged 'an ugly piece of racism' by the Press Council – an organisation hardly celebrated for taking up strong positions against journalistic racism in the past. The cartoon had shown a group of pigs advancing on the *Sun*'s Wapping works, with the caption saying (through the mouth of a security man at the gates who is radioing for reinforcements): 'Trouble! Now the pigs object to being called Arabs'. The allusion is to the strong protests which came from the British Islamic communities about the paper's previous associations between Muslims and pigs. For the Press Council to decide that this cartoon was 'a tasteless and studiously offensive attack on Arabs in general' ('studiously' being a particularly apt description), demonstrated how the *Sun* was plummeting to yet further depths of racist contempt, even by its own base standards. Of course, the editor pleaded that such cartoons 'were not to be studied, debated or dissected' – indicating a real fear of a 'studious' approach towards the newspaper and its ways of operating, and of its readership exercising such virtues as criticism or intelligence. When that happened, he added, the *Sun*'s cartoons and articles 'took on meanings never intended'. This classic response of feigned journalistic innocence was exposed just a month later in the paper's editorial columns when, in describing the situation of a young AIDS victim from Qatar who was not being allowed to return to his home country from Britain, the entire Arab peoples were seen to shoulder the blame. In a profoundly racist passage the leader writer declared with ham-fisted sarcasm: 'The Arabs are very sensitive people, continually proclaiming their virtues before the rest of the world. In reality, they show themselves again and again to be the modern Barbarians, with as much humanity and warmth as a piece of rock.' Again, the reluctant conscience of the Press Council momentarily

surfaced, deciding that this was ‘too sweeping and inevitably appeared as racist’.

‘The Liars’ was a huge headline on the front page of the *Sun* on 16 October 1986, on the occasion of the arrival of prospective immigrants from Bangladesh seeking to gain entry to join their families before the introduction by the Thatcher government of even more racist immigration restrictions. The so-called ‘1001 lies’ and ‘whoppers’ allegedly told to *Sun* journalists by the new arrivals were spread across the same page, along with the use of words like ‘flood’, ‘hordes’ and ‘swamped’, recalling the past xenophobic rhetoric of Enoch Powell and Thatcher herself. Franklin’s cartoon in the same issue portrayed an Asian family on a giant tiger, riding through immigration controls at Heathrow Airport with officials scattering and the turbaned man turning to his wife and saying, ‘I said we’d have no trouble getting through’. The insults continued the next day with a page-two story headlined ‘“Squalid” Asian mob slammed’, after the passengers had been held as virtual prisoners in the airport’s arrival lounges for nearly two days. Turning on its excremental vision, the *Sun*’s story concentrated upon dirty airport toilets, quoting the assistant-secretary of the Immigration Services Union (who spoke like a good *Sun* reader) as saying: ‘We’re talking about people who are used to living in mud huts.’

Immigration: the double view

The tone of this last story was the logical extension of the extraordinary hypocrisy and double-talk paraded so openly on immigration policies, which appeared in two editorials within the same week the previous June (1986). On 10 June the paper condemned the Labour Party’s proposals to scrap ‘discriminatory immigration laws’, quoting Shadow Home Secretary Gerald Kaufman’s prediction that such a step would only lead to an increase of ‘maybe a thousand a year’. The *Sun* leader writer came in strongly: ‘Alas, that’s one thousand a year too many ... we can’t afford ANY increase in immigration’ (the emphasis belongs to the *Sun*). Six days later the editorial was contemplating the possibility of a mass exodus of whites from South Africa. Should the 800,000 whites in South Africa with ‘the right to re-settle here’ wish to come following a ‘bloodbath’, it declared, then that is a responsibility that ‘we must not shirk ... we owe them nothing less’. Rarely could there have been, in the history of journalism, such a blatantly racist example of newspaper hypocrisy. One week with regard to prospective black immigrants, there is the strongly prohibitive ‘with more than three million jobless and pressure in housing and schools still acute, we can’t afford ANY increase in immigration’. But the next week, when considering ‘our people’ – white to a man and woman – ‘who emigrated to South Africa or the children and grandchildren of British settlers’, the editor concedes: ‘of course this would mean an extra strain on housing and

education and – depending on how much money they bring out – an increase in unemployment’. But for white immigrants who for generations held up the structure of racism and oppression over the lives of millions of black people, then there *must* be room: ‘We must be true to our tradition of giving a safe haven to refugees ... it’s a *fine* tradition.’ Of course it is, as long as it is not exercised for the refugees of Sri Lanka, or Turkey, or for asylum-seeking Iraqi Kurds, in the finest tradition of British racism and the disfigured journalism that serves it loyally.

On the Labour councils

The most recent butts of the *Sun* have undoubtedly been the local Labour councils which have moved towards the implementation of what they see as radical anti-racist policies. Such policies and the details of their practice have been seized upon by Murdoch’s journalists, ripped out of their contexts and been made to appear absurd, or, in one of the most popular adjectives of the *Sun*, ‘barmy’. (The paper ran a ‘Golden Two Finger Award’ for the ‘Barmiest Council’ in 1986.) This is a favourite device and almost every issue of the paper presents an example, large or small, and a hook to hang a racist message on – usually employing crude and populist humour as well as distortion and inaccuracy. A report from the University of London, Goldsmiths College, published in May 1987, clearly attested to this. On such stories as Hackney banning sexist manholes, Haringey proscribing black bin liners, Brent and Islington banning the children’s rhyme ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’ and Haringey spending £500,000 on ‘superloos’ for Travellers, the report commented that ‘not one of these stories is accurate’. Some were ‘conjured out of thin air’, with the rest having ‘important details wrong’ and being ‘misleading’ – the ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’ story having been started as a ‘rumour in a pub’.

In September 1985, when Hackney council proposed to rename Britannia Walk after the Indian nationalist Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagot Singh, there was the characteristic pun in the *Sun*’s headline: ‘Lefties start a singh and dance in the street’, and another attempt to panic white readers into thoughts of being ‘swamped’ by blacks. ‘Local cockneys’, goes the story, ‘who are likely to be OUTNUMBERED [the capitals are the *Sun*’s] by immigrants within ten years – are furious’, and one Rose Delgarno, whom we are told has lived in the area all her life, is quoted as saying, ‘they’re making us foreigners in our own country’. The editorial in the same issue, appealing to ‘cockney pride’ and ‘ordinary East Enders living in Britannia Walk’ who are urged to stand up against the ‘left-wing crackpots of the council’, tries to detach itself from its own attempts at humour by warning: ‘If it wasn’t so serious we’d all die laughing.’

It is this tone of carping, punning and contemptuous humour, often employing the inherent racism in the English language and its negative

associations with blackness, that the *Sun* likes so much. 'Black mark for Lambeth', stated an editorial subtitle of 19 October 1986, in its comments about Lambeth council advertising for a leader of a local police complaints unit. 'There's not a shred of a case for having a police unit in the first place', says the *Sun*, which then obligingly offers to tell the council 'why blacks figure so strongly in the unit's records'. So why? Of course, it is because 'blacks are responsible for a vast number of muggings and other violent crimes'. Then the case is closed and the *Sun* waits until it can grasp the next opportunity to headline 'black crime' and the lily-white role of the police – the shooting of Mrs Cherry Groce and the death of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett notwithstanding.

The unprincipled way in which the *Sun*'s journalists and graphics department seize upon photographs of black people involved in acts of resistance and blow them up to almost full-page size, juxtaposing them with violently racist headlines and captions, is a clear comment upon its fear of black struggle. On the front page of the issue of 11 September 1985 and in its report of the incidents in Handsworth, Birmingham, are these words accompanying a large photograph of a black youth with a petrol bomb, printed under the caption 'Hate of a black bomber': 'This is one of the crazed West Indian thugs who have brought race hate and terror to Birmingham. His face contorted with hate, he struts down the street in the city's Handsworth district clutching his chilling weapon ...' The editorial glee of the *Sun* was also quite obvious when it obtained, by devious means, a photograph of Winston Silcott after he was charged with the murder of PC Keith Blakelock during the uprising at Broadwater Farm, North London, in October 1985. The photograph of a smiling Silcott (the publication of which in the *Sun* was condemned by the trial judge) was printed as a large blow-up on the front page on 22 January 1987, and the same photograph was used again in exactly the same way on 20 March after his conviction. It was placed directly under the caption 'Face of monster', directly above another, 'the savage's secret', and beside the banner headline, '30 years and he smiled' (even though the smiling photograph has nothing to do with the context of Broadwater Farm and predated Silcott's conviction by at least two years).

A photograph of the Rastafarian poet, Benjamin Zephaniah, appeared illustrating a leader article in the *Sun* on 27 April 1987 alongside the headline: 'Would you let this man near your daughter?', recalling the ultimate question common in British racist folklore, 'Would you let a black man marry your daughter?'. The editorial concerned the invitation to Zephaniah by Trinity College Cambridge for him to take up a fellowship there, and indignantly quotes some lines of his poetry unflattering to the Royal family. 'Is this really the kind of man parents would wish to have teaching their sons and daughters?', asks the *Sun*, and continues, insulting his dreadlocks: 'from his picture Mr. Zephaniah

could do with a good shampoo and set'.* Of course, during the week before this (17 and 18 April) the paper had taken a different approach, seeking to humiliate through degrading praise the black Tory candidate for Bristol's Ashley Ward, Barry Anderson, a 'Bongo drum player' in a local music and dance group. There is a large photograph of Anderson, posing as if for an exotic tourist poster with his 'colourful kaftan and crown and carrying machetes', under the headline 'Meet the Tory candidate for Ashley Ward', while the editorial in the next day's issue 'bets' that 'Barry will be great at banging the drum for Maggie [Thatcher]'.

Haringey Council and its black leader, Bernie Grant, are particular targets of the *Sun*. This is evident, for example, in the paper's perversion of the game Monopoly ('Loonyopoly') which was published in the issue of 17 November 1986. Moving around the imitation Monopoly board (Bernie Grant's face smiles out from the centre), and coming to the space allotted to Haringey Council, one reads: 'Appoint 20 Zulu tribesmen to supervise the comedians at the borough's working men's clubs. Take a Chance card'. Another space reads: 'Supply Syrian terrorists with contraceptives as part of the Third World anti-AIDS drive. Advance one space'. Under Brent we read: 'Introduce anti-racist phone taps for all council tenants. Take a free throw' and 'Disband local police and replace them with comrades from the Caribbean Defence League. Advance two places'. Under Hackney there is: 'Introduce compulsory Moslem prayers at all state schools'. In the 'Stupidity Chest' there is the task to 'Ban British nursery rhymes from playgroups and introduce Zimbabwe tribal chants to encourage racial harmony amongst children', and the 'Chance' box instructs the players to 'Replace all council Christmas parties with Ramadan discussion groups' as well as 'Sack all council workers who are white, able-bodied heterosexuals'. It is a pathetic but elaborately worked-out exercise in identifying all the panic issues that rile racist and chauvinist opinion, suggesting retrenchment and cultural 'invasion' are just around the corner, and sowing hatred and ignorance towards Britain's black population.

The same spirit of fear and threat is invoked, this time using an anti-Soviet approach, when dealing with Brent Council's strategy to tackle racism in its schools. We read the following in the editorial column of the *Sun* of 20 October 1986 under the title 'Nightmare', and neatly juxtaposed to a photograph of the child murderer, Ian Brady: 'In Russia, political commissars in offices, factories and the armed forces ensure that the people keep to the Communist line. In Brent, England, the left-wing council are plotting to catch the citizens earlier – in the schools.

*In the issue of 4 May under a headline which sought brutally to lampoon Zephaniah's Caribbean dialect, '... am de crook, who stole de cash to print de book', the *Sun* published a story that had the effect of appearing to criminalise the poet, interviewing old acquaintances and delving into alleged incidents going back to 1979.

Some 180 race advisors are being installed to snoop on teachers for any hint of deviation ... ' Then, in a twisted version of the truth the '*Sun Says*' (23 December 1986) that 'Crazy Camden council have banned staff from calling each other "me ol" Sunshine' because they claim it is racist. Next to a cartoon of some Christmas carollers up before the judge on a charge of 'racism' (as if there has ever been such a criminal charge in Britain) for singing 'White Christmas', the editorial continues: 'Here are some more greetings for Camden's Blacklist (Oops!).' Stupid it may seem, but its purpose is brutal and its effect pernicious, both to humanity and the truth – with the latter frequently being a particular victim. In Ealing, for example, the 'loony lefties' are condemned for 'flying the flag of the South African guerrillas SWAPO over the town hall' (16 February 1987). One would think that a newspaper that sells over four million copies every day, even one as bankrupt of the truth as the *Sun*, would at least get its geography and the country in question (Namibia) correct – but that hardly matters when there is so much grist to the racist mill and its working-class readers are receiving 'their daily dose' with such ruthless regularity.

On schools and teachers

This hostile way with the truth that the *Sun* exhibits when it considers the anti-racist activities of local councils becomes much more friendly when it deals with those who spread a very different message. Ray Honeyford, for example, a Bradford middle school headteacher who consistently wrote articles offensive to black parents and their culture in various journals including Murdoch's *Times Educational Supplement* and a favoured organ of the New Right, the *Salisbury Review*, was lionised for several weeks in the pages of the *Sun*. On 6 September 1985 his 'victory' in the courts over Bradford council was proudly announced in a *Sun* editorial as 'a victory for free speech and a defeat for the blinkered tyrants who believe that the best way round race problems is to pretend they do not exist'. Stepping in to defend Honeyford, the *Sun's* Englishman, the paper even ran a full page article (15 October 1985) headlined 'What race storm head really said'. This refuted charges of racism made against Honeyford by parents and published a beaming portrait next to them: 'The *Sun* brings you all the facts ... we present the charges made against him and for the first time publish what he ACTUALLY wrote' (a strange enough way of putting it as everything quoted from Honeyford had been previously published in a number of journals). But the *Sun's* sudden appetite for the truth was confirmed a month later in an editorial headed 'True Racists' when they turned it on its head. The leader is full of indignation at Honeyford's farewell to the school (he was later to receive a massive golden handshake), due to 'nearly two years of persecution from a nasty bunch of parents, councillors and race agitators.' These parents are shown in a cartoon (17

October 1985), waiting on the roof of Honeyford's school as he innocently walks across the playground carrying his briefcase, intent on pouring a giant steaming pot of curry (surprise, surprise) over him as he enters the school. They are shown with all the stereotypical clothing, in turbans, dhotis, saris and fur hats, with long pointed or hooked noses, eyeballs gleaming eagerly as they wait to spill their 'Madras curry', which, as the caption reads, 'will finish him off'. Something as irritating as cultural truth clearly does not worry the *Sun*. For, while they must be scrupulous in allowing Honeyford to put his case, the predominantly Pakistani and Islamic parents of Drummond Middle School are caricatured as Sikhs, Hindus, 'Patels' and all the apparatus of Asian stereotype that can be garnered in one single illustration and stand as a direct falsification of those who struggled against Honeyford's message.

But, Honeyford aside, it is ironically education and teachers themselves who are the *Sun*'s favourite targets and very often have to take the brunt of the paper's vicious gibes against anti-racism. While condemning any move by teachers to improve their own or their schools' conditions, their salaries, their class-sizes, and while standing full-square behind Secretary of State for Education Kenneth Baker's annulment of teachers' bargaining rights, giving more power to headteachers and the re-introduction of selective schools, the *Sun* consistently lampoons any attempts made by teachers or local education authorities to get to serious grips with the issue of racism in schools. It is the teachers who cause 'chaos in the classrooms' through their 'insane fight', and provoke nothing but 'disruption and misery for schoolchildren'. These editorial reflections, under the title of 'Learned Nowt' in the *Sun* of 20 December 1986, were juxtaposed directly and conveniently over another editorial story called 'Golly Wallies', which condemned Merseyside Council for Voluntary Services' rejection of golliwogs as acceptable toys for the children under their care. Of course, for the *Sun* there is no problem of racism among children in British schools (except when it is stirred up by anti-racist teachers and local councils), and the editorial line of the paper can complacently reject such a possibility by declaring that 'kids throughout the country don't know the difference between black and white, and, thank heaven, don't care'. Such a statement, however, is more than slightly undermined by one of the *Sun*'s own stories, tucked away in the margins of an inside page of the issue of 23 December 1985. Headed '"Sambo" taunts anguish of girl, 4', it tells of how a girl of mixed race from Barnsley, Yorkshire, 'is living in terror — because of a gang of teenage racists', aged between 12 and 18, who were making her life 'hell'. The story describes how 'the foul-mouth yobs taunt 4-year-old Joanne Griffin with cries of "sambo" whenever she walks through a council estate with her unmarried white mum, Carol'. So it seems, even in spite of the *Sun*'s

leader writer, racism does exist among children, and even a *Sun* reporter will sometimes write about it, and demonstrate that some of the ugly name-calling might be a carry-over from children's stories and their characters, images and stereotypes which have penetrated directly into the real lives of children in the towns and council estates of Britain. But this is not to be admitted and considered in the *Sun*, even when it rises from its own printer's ink.

Certainly, the 'poor kids' who have to suffer (but not like Joanne) the anti-racist commitment of some of their teachers, and must endure attacks on their heroes, like Roy of the Rovers (who has been 'put in the dock for racism' (5 August 1986)), get full sympathy from the *Sun*, for having every day to sit through 'a nightmare ... with such a pompous, humourless twit' of a teacher who dares to raise a question around a comic strip where our schoolboy hero encounters some 'Arab terrorists'. Likewise, the Fulham parents 'in song fury' (such are the words of the headline), who protested at 'loony teachers' who had added some Caribbean-inspired verses to *The twelve days of Christmas* (18 December 1986) and expressed outrage at a school assembly where photographs of struggling South African, Irish and Indian children were projected behind the singing of *Silent night*, are given full support by the *Sun*. 'They are trying to indoctrinate our children', an irate parent is quoted as saying, 'Christmas is supposed to be about caring and sharing' (not presumably with the children of the rest of the world outside Fulham) 'and not stirring up racial hatred.'

Such challenges to the accepted British school curriculum are not welcomed by the *Sun*. In a editorial of 14 June 1986 they are labelled 'sinister', and, striking a traditionalist pose as if it even cared about state education, the paper declares about mathematics teaching: 'In the old days Maths exam questions used to be reckoned in apples and pears.' Now they find that a CSE examination question asks children to compare government defence spending with welfare spending. Such innovations, comments the *Sun*, are not about real life, like apples and pears, but constitute 'political propaganda', which 'has no place in the classroom'.

However, should the teachers decide that other manifestations of 'political propaganda', such as expressions of racism, class superiority, imperial arrogance and twisted images of black people or women, should also have no part of a school curriculum that aims towards equality for all its students, then this is, in the words of a page-size article on children's books called 'Book at Redtime', no more than 'how the left are dictating what your children can read'. This particular article describes the 'super books' that various local authorities have rejected or questioned as unsuitable or damaging to their students, as a result of seeking to implement their equal opportunities policies. They include *Charlie and the chocolate factory* and *The Witches* by Roald Dahl, *Dr*

Doolittle by Hugh Lofting, the Biggles books by W.E. Johns and the 'Famous five' series by Enid Blyton. The *Sun* offers its young readers 600 free copies of these books if they will send in twenty-word appreciations of the books they like to read. The article is prefaced by a mock fairy story featuring a 'big bad ogre' called 'Loony Left' who 'hated to see these happy little children ... loving learning to read through these books' and who 'spoiled the fun' by calling them 'sexist, racist and nasty'. Even black sheep 'were suddenly not allowed. They had to become green sheep.' The page is clearly intended as a serious intervention to turn the working-class *Sun* readership away from the ways in which some of their children's teachers might be reconsidering their school literature and its impact upon their pupils. It is also designed to provoke a breach between progressive school practice, teachers and parents – particularly in the midst of a teachers' struggle when they are striving to win support from parents to improve their salaries and raise the level of the education service generally.

Scandalising the names of teachers and schools who seek to move towards genuine anti-racist practice in their classrooms is a thematic pursuit of the *Sun*. This happened with a vengeance to a new Liverpool school, struggling to achieve a complex amalgamation of two schools whose student bodies were of very different racial composition. 'School of race hate!', pounded the *Sun* in bold letters across its front page of 13 February 1986 (juxtaposed to a 'sweet' picture of little white Prince William walking in the snow, and under an offer to 'snuggle up to Sam every night' in the form of a pillow-case with nude model Samantha Fox printed right across it). In the sub-headline we are told that 'seven white kids quit over bullying, the blackboard is called a chalkboard' and that 'two minutes for a hanged African' have been observed. Readers are left to make their own conclusions as to the nature of the relationship between these selected 'facts'. The latter referred to the school's demonstrations of respect for a martyred fighter of the African National Congress of South Africa, but being aware of the *Sun's* attitude towards that country, the reader would not be surprised to find that no such information is proffered in the article, which represents another open attempt to stir up inter-racial division in schools, and interfere with one school's honest effort to establish conditions of equity for all of its students.

Perhaps an all-time low of racist journalism in Britain with regard to schools was reached by the *Sun* on 25 July 1985. To understand this fully, it is necessary to view the entire page (page three) in which the particular story was placed. Sandwiched between the usual large picture of a semi-naked and degraded woman model that appears on this page, an article on the pop star Madonna and a 'Sun Spot' snippet about 'swarms of black-winged insects from the continent' driving Bournemouth holidaymakers off the beach, is an article headlined

'Good Golliwogs! Head Blacks the Dollies'. The paper's clustering of these stories and images, plus the use of the racist double-entendres in the language of the headline, becomes even more significant when the 'golliwogs' story is read. It concerns the efforts of a black headteacher, Moira Foster-Brown of Wattville Infants School, Handsworth, Birmingham, seriously to address some of the issues of racism in her school. As the humiliated white women's image positioned in the adjacent column takes the eye of the reader, particularly the male reader, away from this deformed narration of a black woman's struggle, trivialising it even more, the degree of sexist and racist inter-relation in the *Sun* becomes more and more evident. Moira Foster-Brown's story is told from the standpoint of a group of predominantly white teachers who opposed her. She is seen as being entirely unreasonable, sparking 'mass revolt' as she objects to existing early childhood curriculum in the school like the play *Ten little Indians*, golliwog toys and images and the book from the *Mr Men* series, which states quite baldly that 'Mr Black is dirty'. The questioning reader might well want to relate such educational content to the education system's systematic failure of black youth in such places as Handsworth and their present conditions and reactions, but no such obvious links are made in the *Sun* – particularly if they appear to point towards the infrastructures of racism in Britain and the oppression of its black citizens and their children.

The image presented of Moira Foster-Brown – ranting, violent, irrational, iconoclastic, 'ripping' down material on the walls or 'tearing teachers off a strip' – is contrasted with the heroic view of another woman (who is white, South African and who has never detached herself from the racist views and structures of its government) on page 30 of the same issue of the *Sun*. This is one of the sports pages and the story is entitled: 'Big guard on brave Zola'. The young woman is Zola Budd, the South African runner who was offered British nationality in record time to catch the Olympic Games, and the story features her experiences when she ran in the women's Amateur Athletic Association 3,000 metres race in Edinburgh in July 1986. The race was disrupted by an Anti-Apartheid demonstrator who ran on to the track. Colin Hart's article, illustrated with a photograph of a smiling Zola cuddling a large alsatian dog, praises the 'courage' of the athlete and the writer declares how much she has earned his 'admiration'. As he rhapsodises down the page: 'The girl who often reminds me of a frightened fawn was downright defiant in Edinburgh.' In contrast, those who wished to remind the stadium crowd and the media about the plight and struggle of the black citizens of South Africa, about whom Zola Budd has shown neither interest nor concern, are called 'nutcases' and 'skinheads', involved in the 'intimidation' of a frail but intrepid young woman. The contrast in the *Sun* that morning could not have been more clear. The black woman struggling against racism in a hostile institution is con-

demned and humiliated, her courage expressed as violent pique; the white woman of South Africa symbolising racist arrogance and privilege is upheld, sanctified and praised for her 'bravery'. It is another example of the way in which the issue of racism internationally cannot ultimately be separated from its national expression, particularly in the pages of the *Sun*.

The Murdoch curriculum

What Murdoch presents to his readers in the *Sun* are not uncoordinated stories, casually presented, which happen occasionally to have a racist edge or a prejudiced content. They are part of a curriculum designed for British working-class adults and young people, to retain and further institutionalise the degradation of black people both in Britain and the rest of the world, and to divide white readers from them in an atmosphere of fear, ignorance and caricature. Murdoch connects this brain-rotting curriculum with the guidelines of the educational future of Britain being laid down by the New Right columnists and Tory strategists in his other piece of British press property, *The Times*, and its offshoot, the *Times Educational Supplement*. We are seeing in newspaper form the kind of curricula division that Thatcher, Baker and their ilk would like to see applied within our schools. That is what truly lies behind education minister Baker's obsession to instal a 'national curriculum' across the British education system. Those who will graduate to read *The Times*, etc., and share and extend its conceptualisations and view of the world will be those intended to hold their power in Thatcher's realm of 'popular capitalism'. For the rest, for the working class, the unemployed, the women 'at home' and the unemployable, who will be guided to aspire, to think and read no further than the *Sun*, their curriculum is set and circumscribed.

Within this growing divide, the response of black people, the vibrancy of their press and the strong affirmation of their culture in the spirit of self-reliance and collective endeavour has been considerable and impressive. As in so many other areas it must inspire the rest of us to do likewise, breaking free of the brain shackles that threaten our children and ourselves and clamp our wills to the word-tycoons of the world – who, like Rupert Murdoch are integrally linked to US interests and the sickness of a new imperial ignorance. As the *Sun*'s response to its condemnation by the Press Council showed, what such journalism fears most is that anyone should take it so seriously and critically as to study and expose it, to analyse its brutal use of language, its images, its style, its standpoints, its juxtaposition of articles which allow filth to feed off deformity and racism to take strength from sexism and vice versa. For as those who do this multiply, then increasingly the game of the *Sun* would be up, its intentions would be clear and the manner of expressing them understood. This is a central responsibility of all of us, but particularly

our school teachers whom the *Sun* fears and hates so much – and correctly so, because the dread of the *Sun* is of an educated working people who will scorn its racism and degradation of women and tear up its pages, armed with the tools of criticism that will know it for what it is.

The use of such tools becomes even more crucial as the *Sun*'s cosmetic clothing wears more and more threadbare and the reality of its ugly ideology makes for new revelation in the run-up to the 1987 British general election. Headlines referring to a 'Rasta monster' (7 April) or featuring the words of 'telly funny girl Marti Caine', proclaiming 'send blacks back to the jungle' (12 May), lose any semblance of journalistic disguise. Indeed, the outright approval of Botha's rule of racist terror is clearly expressed in the *Sun*'s leader of 8 May, welcoming the result of South Africa's 'whites only' elections: 'The massive vote of confidence given to South African President Botha is nothing to weep over. With their country in a virtual state of siege it made sense to stick to a tough guy like Botha.' If elderly readers are reminded of the *Daily Mail*'s excursions towards Hitler and Mosley in the 1930s, it would not be surprising. While such an editorial line is being vigorously pursued and 'Education' becomes a major election issue, we read feature stories appearing to place the direct blame for white children's problems at school on their scapegoated black classmates. Thus there are prominent headlines like 'Boy who can only count in Punjabi' (9 May) or the huge front page 'scoop' of 7 May which preceded it by two days: 'The Out-cast: Mum takes out the only white boy in class of 30 because he can't do his ABC'.

The stage of ideas is being set by such organs as the *Sun* for a violent rightward swerve, should Thatcher be returned to power – unless we begin now to fashion their total eclipse.

**Apartheid in India:
an international problem**

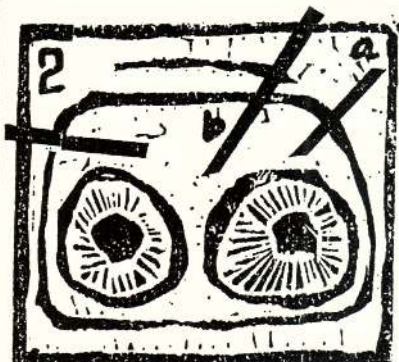
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Notes and documents

UK commentary

Race, class and Brent

Increasingly, over the past year, the Tory government (supported by its satraps in the gutter press) has given up even the pretence of attacking the crucial issues of racial discrimination, police racism and inner-city decay and has gone over to attacking instead the 'anti-racism' of local Labour parties and their radical black councillors. Unfortunately, this shift from tackling racism to tackling the discourse on racism (via anti-anti-racism) was a red herring that the Labour Party was bound to follow, given its inability, refusal even, to recognise and develop the inherent compatibility of socialism and black struggle. And it was precisely in the London Borough of Brent that the possibility of such a rapprochement was being held out. But the national Labour Party, in disowning the struggles there, and in implicitly accepting the dominant propaganda that the Left in Brent was indeed 'loony', was able neither to ameliorate the stylistic excesses of 'anti-racism' nor to validate its vaunted socialist thrust and principles.

Two incidents in Brent focused national attention. First, there was the disciplining of the white headteacher, Maureen McGoldrick, for allegedly telling a Council employee not to send her any more black teachers to fill vacant posts. Second, there was the decision to appoint black teachers to 180 specialist posts as race advisers, which were funded under a government scheme aimed at areas of special deprivation and high 'ethnic' concentration. But, in the hands of the media, Brent has come to symbolise left-wing totalitarianism – a place where 'thought police' and 'race spies' are used to hound and persecute decent, English teachers who just cannot get on with the job they are paid

to do because of unwarranted political interference.

It is a view which has met with little, and largely ineffective, opposition. Even those left analysts who tried to disentangle the threads of the Brent debate have, by and large, confined themselves to 'anti-racism' and missed, therefore, many of the wider ramifications of the struggles in Brent over education. For, though the issue came to the fore in Brent over increasing the appointment of black teachers, the issue itself was not black teachers per se, but entrenched class disparities in the provision of education. In other words, *an issue of class was being fought out on the terrain of race*.

Every 'fact', therefore, needs to be analysed twice, once on the touchstone of race and once on the touchstone of class. To do that, however, it is first necessary to look at the social geography of Brent. The most startling thing about Brent is that it displays within one borough a microcosm of Thatcher's 'two nations'. Though, statistically, Brent as a whole has some of the worst housing, highest overcrowding, and highest unemployment in all London, the deprivation is not equally distributed. On the contrary, the north and west of the borough (north of London's North Circular Road), formerly the Borough of Wembley, is predominantly middle-class with a high degree of owner occupation. It is an area which tends to return Tory or Alliance councillors and still campaigns, even now, to return to its former 1960s boundaries, so as to maintain the area's sub-urban essence, free from the contamination of the adjacent inner-city wards. All this is not to say that there are no black residents in this part of the borough. There are northern wards which have as many black residents as do the more deprived wards of the south and east. But in the north and west, the majority of the blacks are Asian professionals or business people – many of whom came relatively recently from East Africa.

The south and east of Brent (formerly the London Borough of Willesden) is, socially, completely different. It has some of the worst indices of deprivation in the whole country. Here, the housing stock is very old and often overcrowded; its residents are skilled or unskilled workers – many of whom are now unemployed. In the southern and eastern wards are concentrated the poorer blacks, most of whom are working-class and the majority Afro-Caribbean.

The councillors who now hold power in Brent have had the experience of living in the more deprived areas of the borough. In May 1986, Labour won forty-three seats; eighteen black councillors were elected – eight of whom were black women. These are not machine politicians, borrowing a line from time-worn institutionalised politics. They are, in the main, committed local people who have themselves been at the butt-end of local government ineptitude, indifference and racism. Their political impetus comes from the simple wish to change things for their own children.

Hence the local education authority's genuine concern about the underachievement of black children in its schools. The dissatisfaction amongst parents (especially Afro-Caribbeans) about education is no secret. The independent investigation into Brent's secondary schools' (commissioned by a Tory-controlled council) bears this out, as does the recent report by HM Inspectors.² Though over half the schools' children are black, until very recently only 10 per cent of teachers were. One way of helping black children to gain confidence in themselves and in their schooling is by employing more black teachers. And so Brent embarked on an ambitious recruitment drive for black teachers who were to be deployed throughout the whole borough.

In Sudbury, the ward in which Ms McGoldrick is headteacher (and which is solidly Tory), it was the belief amongst the middle-class parents – *black and white* – that white teachers would, ipso facto, mean higher standards and better education for their children. The 'Wembley mentality' and the 'colonial mentality' were in agreement. Having a black skin – as a governor, as a parent or as a teacher – did not necessarily mean siding with the borough's most oppressed, or caring about the underachievement of the majority. That many black parents, teachers and governors went over to Ms McGoldrick's 'cause' reflected, instead, their preoccupation with maintaining 'standards'. Or, to put it differently, blacks and whites were united in their attempt to uphold a common class interest.

Even if the idea of a borough-wide campaign to raise standards and find teachers with whom children could relate did not appeal to certain 'better-off' schools, it should have appealed to the union which represented Brent teachers. Schools were chronically short of staff. But it was in fact the union, represented locally by the Brent Teachers' Association, which intensified all the contradictions between the teachers and the education authority. Not only did it refuse to cooperate with the independent investigation, it also withdrew its earlier support for the provision of the specialist advisory posts, once the commitment was made to appoint black teachers (on the grounds that it had not been consulted). A black teacher who questioned the union's commitment to anti-racism has, allegedly, been threatened with disciplinary proceedings. Effectively, the union rubbished the council's policies and, in the course of a series of legal actions, tended to portray its members as victims of black, racist, loony-left councillors. The union's only concern, it appeared, was to maintain the power and conditions of its professional members – and they, of course, happened to be mainly white, middle-class and conservative in outlook. The union, in protecting the professional interests of its members was, in fact, perpetuating educational privilege.

Brent has been variously accused by its critical supporters of bad

public relations, of trying to do things too fast, or of choosing the wrong cases over which to fight. But such notions do not help us to learn – perhaps for another time and another fight – the real and serious mistakes Brent's Labour Council made, not in combating racism, but in the way it chose to do it. For, though it intended to fight racism and thereby enlarge socialism by using perspectives derived from the racial deprivation and discrimination experienced by the new working class – perspectives consistently ignored by the Labour Party – the way the policy was carried out was confused.

The fundamental error was to take up an 'anti-racism' package for want of properly thought-out policies tailored to local needs. Such a package had originally been cobbled together by Labour authorities (and especially the Greater London Council) as an institutional response to the 'riots' of 1981 and to Lord Scarman's discovery of 'racial disadvantage' and 'ethnic need'. Such 'anti-racism' made no distinction between individual racism and institutional racism, between personal power and institutional power, and opened the door to all kinds of 'skin politics' and white 'guilt-tripping'. It was the adoption of such a slick package and the implementation of its ideas by officers that allowed the Council's fight over policies to appear as a personalised vendetta against a few teachers. It was also why its fight ended up as a fight about the right to employ black teachers rather than as a fight for improving the education of all children, in which black teachers were to be the means to an end.

And it was inevitable that a minister in a Tory government so devoted to extending privatisation, to maintaining elitism and to destroying local government power would intervene in Brent to preserve 'individual freedom'. But the fact that the Labour Party leadership was also prepared, in the run-up to a general election, to nail its colours to the same mast (and demand that its Brent members play down the fight for their educational policies) needs to be examined.

Brent's education authority was, despite some error in tactics, fighting for very basic socialist principles. The fight between central and local government was not about racism versus anti-racism but about elitism versus democracy. Brent was trying to extend equality of opportunity to *all* its children and wished most of all to meet the needs of the borough's most deprived. The idea was to raise up the lowest parts of the borough to meet the standards of the highest. The already-advantaged areas and schools, which sensed that their privilege was somehow at stake, declared war on such policies. The same battle had been fought twenty years ago by the 'privileged' grammar school sector against Labour's comprehensive plans. But the Labour Party of today could not see Brent's struggle as part of that same policy to democratise education.

Or, to put it another way, the struggle for a socialist education system

in Brent was mediated through the struggle against racism – and therefore stood for greater justice. It was a struggle which should have opened out the Labour Party and the rest of the Left to the fact that this was a *socialist* battle. It should have shown in everyday practice how black struggle – for human dignity and true freedom – far from being divisive of, or in competition with, socialism, actually lies within and advances its best traditions. But the Labour Party, having drifted so far from its own tenets and having failed, because of its own racism, to be informed by the socialist perspectives that the black working class had brought to it, was prepared to look no further than the Tory version of what was happening in Brent. Unable to fight as a party to clarify the politics of Brent and drive home to the nation the common denominators in the fight against racism and the fight for socialism, Labour sold out on itself.

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Broadwater Farm: a 'criminal estate'? An interview with Dolly Kiffin

In October 1985 'the worst rioting ever seen in mainland Britain' occurred on the Broadwater Farm estate in north London, resulting in the death of one policeman, PC Keith Blakelock. Since then, the Broadwater Farm estate has been subjected not only to draconian police operations, leading to the arrests of hundreds of residents and criminal charges against 167 persons, but also to intensive and frequently hostile media interest. This media hostility reached fever pitch earlier this year during the trial of six defendants for the murder of PC Blakelock. While the trial was under way, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Kenneth Newman, in a speech to the Society of Conservative Lawyers, openly criticised the lack of support for the police on Broadwater Farm*

*During the course of the trial, charges against three of the defendants, all juveniles, were thrown out by the judge following evidence of improper police conduct in obtaining alleged confessions from them. Despite this, and the fact that no evidence was presented throughout the 9-week trial that the three remaining defendants were linked to the attack on PC Blakelock, the jury returned guilty verdicts against them. These verdicts are now subject to an appeal, while the trials of others on riot-related charges are still continuing.

and questioned whether, given its high unemployment and large black population, there is 'any form of social consensus in such places'.

We publish here an interview, by Les Levidow, in which Dolly Kiffin, Jamaican-born dressmaker and one of the founders of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, which has been a particular target for police and media hostility over recent years, gives the view from within the community. In the interview (carried out in 1986) Dolly Kiffin discusses relations between the estate and the local Haringey Borough Council and its black leader, Labour councillor Bernie Grant; the now defunct Greater London Council (GLC) and its Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB), which helped set up and fund local enterprises; central government agencies such as the Department of the Environment with its Urban Aid programme and the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) with its Youth Opportunities (YOPS) job training scheme for young unemployed; the local Tenants' Association and social club; and the local police and their efforts to set up 'community policing' and neighbourhood watch schemes on the estate.

Les Levidow: People on the Broadwater Farm estate say that conditions there began improving around the time that young people were developing co-ops on the estate and in nearby Tottenham. How did these co-ops get started?

Dolly Kiffin: In 1983 we had meetings in my flat, with the idea of getting jobs for the youths. Then, in 1984, we had some meetings with youths on the YOPS schemes and demanded a meeting with the Council, because we believed that YOPS schemes didn't work. Youths would train on the scheme for a year and then be back on the streets again. When we met with the Council and the Co-operative Development Unit, we said it would be better to train fewer youths to set up their own businesses. After several meetings, the Council agreed. Now we have seven co-ops: the laundry, the painting and decorating shop (both on the estate), the restaurant . . . We had a bit of money left over, so we gave £300 to two youths to set up a fruit and veg shop on the estate, until they get help from the Council. Then we opened up a hairdresser's shop.

LL: Did the MSC give you any help in setting up the co-ops?

DK: No, the money came from GLEB to pay for training courses where tutors from business could teach the youths how to run their own businesses. We don't deal with the MSC because they can't help the youths to get jobs. We want to train youths to start up businesses and then go on to help others to do it. The youths on the MSC programmes just ended up on the streets or even in court. When the youths finish the YOPS scheme, there are no jobs for them. But when they see their friends starting up businesses, doing well and helping each other, they

have more hope for the future, that they, too, could do that.

LL: Does the co-operative form of business have a special appeal for the youths?

DK: Yes, because that way they can get help from one another and from the Board of Directors if they have problems. And if the ones who start a co-op decide to leave, then the co-op is still there for others to get the experience.

LL: What kind of obstacles did the co-ops have to overcome?

DK: We still have obstacles. For example, we still don't get the government money that we need, because we don't have the expertise to know what funding to apply for. We found out that £270,000 of GLEB grants went to 'ethnic minorities', but £250,000 of that went to other groups, while the blacks got only £2,000 of it. In loans, the other ethnic minorities got only £9,000, while the blacks got £134,000. Black businesses usually don't have as much experience as the others, and by the time they have to pay back the loan, they find their business is going down. Meanwhile, the other ethnic minorities, which are better-off and more experienced, get more of the grants, so they are able to survive more easily. When we exposed that difference, it didn't go down very well! If we hadn't found out, we'd never have understood why the black businesses have more problems surviving.

LL: How do you see the future of the co-ops?

DK: We intend to set up more of them. The Broadwater Farm Youth Association is now doing a survey on the estate, to see what skills people have, to see what businesses to set up. We already have plans to set up a car repair shop, a mini-cab office and computer shop on the estate.

LL: At one time the Broadwater Farm Tenants' Association was led by someone who turned out to be a National Front member and the local social club hosted the police while excluding black youth. How did that situation start to change for the better?

DK: We thought we were working quite well with the Tenants' Association and its president. But one day, some time in 1974, we saw him speaking for the National Front on television! That hurt a lot of people here. He left the Tenants' Association and another group of people took over, but black people weren't let in, unless they knew you. There was a lot of friction there, because the leaders excluded black youths and even any white youths who mixed with the black youths. Those white youths were also treated as a problem. There used to be terrible things going on at the social club: hen nights, men's nights, naked men dancing. Nothing was done about it. Then the Tenants' Association called for a mini-police station to be built on the estate. That's when we stepped in

and said that things had to change.

We knew we had many problems on the estate. Kids playing music till four in the morning, kids sniffing glue, white and black kids, because they had nothing else to do. They were bored. The youths were getting harassment from the police. The police prosecuted my own son after punching him in the kidneys. There was no use putting a mini-police station on the estate unless you could give the youths something.

LL: Did the Tenants' Association argue that the police station would be the solution?

DK: Yes, they thought it would solve the problem. But we needed a youth centre where they could have their own activities. When the white tenants called for a police station, they knew that would mean more harassment of the black youths. So we had some meetings in my flat, which was packed, and we demanded that the Council give us the old chip shop. We didn't know that it was supposed to be for the mini-police station! There were other empty shops, but they needed more fixing up than the chip shop. Eventually, the Council let us have the chip shop.

The Council only gave us £300 to get started, because they thought we wouldn't last, that we would just give up. But the spirit was very high. I couldn't understand why youths would go around taking people's handbags, when they knew the people were so poor. Many youths would spend their time in caffs, playing the pool tables. So I called a meeting to tell them we'll put in a pool table, serve tea, and split the money fifty-fifty, or let them have it free if they hadn't any money that day. The pensioners used to be frightened of the youths, but we used the money from the pool tables to provide meals for them. No one ever cared for them before, and sometimes they would just die in their flats with no one knowing. So we found a way to help them, and give hope to the youths, raise their spirits, and combat crime. Many of us loved the estate and had nowhere else to go, so we had to do this. That's how it happened.

But a lot of Council officers came to the estate to tell us how to do things. We resented that. Looking back now, we realise that the officers didn't want people to see that their system was wrong. They should have let ordinary people get involved, to say what they wanted. As ordinary people, we didn't realise that we were stepping on other people's toes, that we were showing up these Council officers who didn't want their system changed. For years the Council spent lots of money on youth centres which didn't do the youths any good at all, because they weren't run by youths. The people employed to run them ran them like schools, and nothing came out of them. Eventually, the Council realised we were making ground on our own, that lack of money from them didn't stop us.

LL: Initially the Council tried to prevent you from being the ones to

renovate the Youth Association premises. How did you get your way?

DK: When we got the Urban Aid application approved for the Youth Association premises, the Council said that they would have to do the work because of the unions. We said no, because for years the Council had been funding youth projects that the youths didn't consider their own. At the end of the day we got our own builder who was sympathetic to training the youths on the job. They got experience painting, plastering and so on. And if you look around the centre, you won't find any graffiti in here, even though it's painted white.

LL: So you got both a centre and an apprenticeship programme?

DK: Yes. And since then we've had to raise a lot of money, because about half the money needed to run this place we have to find our own selves. That's why we can't stop our fund-raising. We made up our minds from Day 1 that no way will this project go back to the Council. We learned to survive without outside money at the beginning, and that's our only hope to survive. We raise the money by catering, by holding dances, making dresses, and so on. These are organised by the Youth Association, as the umbrella organisation of the co-ops. We raise the money and put some of it into the co-ops to help them survive.

I'm waiting to see what the Fraud Squad* will say about the money that we raise ourselves, because they don't want people to know that we have to do that. They could not take the chance of coming here first before they went around Jamaica trying to dig up mud on us. They know they can't find anything wrong with us here. They know that the government money can't pay for everything we do here – the pensioners' meals and so on – and they can't do anything about the money that we raise ourselves. We gave them our accounts to look at because we're proud of raising so much money ourselves. With the GLC gone, we'll see many projects go down, but this project will not go down. It's here for the community and is funded by the community.

LL: With the growth of the co-ops, was there a change in crime?

DK: Yes, crime went down. You'll see that change in the police reports. But they don't have to tell us – we know ourselves from living here.

LL: Now, more recently, the police have said they need to crack down on drug-dealing here.

*Dolly Kiffin and the Broadwater Farm Youth Association are currently under investigation concerning the alleged use of Youth Association Funds to support a youth club in Jamaica – the implication being that this constituted a misuse of monies provided under various government grants. The investigation was started following the October 1985 'riot' and various sensational press reports on Dolly Kiffin and her role on the estate.

DK: Yes, before, there used to be a lot of kids taking drugs or sniffing glue, and now you don't see that much anymore. Then, while our group was away on a trip to Jamaica (summer 1985) the police blocked off Willan Road. When I came back, the youths said that I must take a look over at Willan Road. When Chief Superintendent Stacey [the local police commander] told me that drug-dealers were coming in here, I asked him what he was going to do about it, because when people saw black faces in those cars, they would say that it was the Youth Association. I asked him, 'Why can't you stop the cars from coming in with drugs?' He said that the police can't stop the cars, that he wouldn't do anything until I asked him to bring in the police. So I asked why I should have to call him in – so that Stacey can say that Dolly Kiffin called him in, and then let these strange people do something to me? So I went and complained to the Council. I realised then that the police wanted to put my back up against the wall.

LL: Some people here suspect the police of organising covert crimes on the estate. Why is that?

DK: I wouldn't go as far as to say that it was the police. But when the crime rate was going down, someone broke into the food shop. Some people said it was done by the youths. The youths said they saw two white men, but nobody was going to believe them. So one night the youths watched out for the two white men, who tried to break into the Youth Association premises, then broke into the launderette. The youths chased them away and pressurised the police to check out these two men. The police found the stolen food in the men's flat, so they got convicted, but that happened only because the youths were watching out for them. Then there was the man who burned nine cars with petrol the week before the uprising. These things were happening all the time, to discredit the Youth Association.

LL: Since the October 1985 uprising, the state and mass media have singled you out for special persecution, as a leading figure of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association. Why would they treat you as such a threat?

DK: People like myself are just out there for the community. And when we started out to see how we could make this estate a better place, we didn't realise that a lot of people who don't want political change would feel hatred for the Youth Association. Remember that people from all over the place were coming to see our project, which started without any government money, created jobs, brought old people and young people together. This offended a lot of people in power, because they would have to change the way they run their centres. Not only the media, but also officers of Haringey Council weren't happy about what we were doing. For years they had been running projects, then we as ordinary

people came in to try and experiment. We hadn't any qualifications at all, just our love for people. We put our whole selves into it. People like myself didn't realise that speaking out would cause problems. It's a good job that I'm not a person who has a vast education, who can polish up my words when I go out speaking. I speak as any ordinary person would speak. I insist that the government and Council have a duty to let the community be involved in the decision-making, in saying how they want to live. We are the best people for the Council to ask how our community should be developed, how we see the way forward. You see, they're supposed to listen to the people. But they didn't, and they were getting away with it for too long. And whenever we saw those people doing wrong – Conservative, Labour, or whoever – then we openly said so and exposed it. And that includes the police.

LL: You're saying that Council officers felt threatened by seeing you people defining your own needs, in your own terms, and that the police felt threatened by seeing you reduce crime on the estate by yourselves.

DK: Yes. They've approached us for Neighbourhood Watch. But what sense would it make now, after the people have been working on this for years? The police want to come in with Neighbourhood Watch now that they see that our own organisation is working. Then, at the end of the day, they could say that Neighbourhood Watch reduced the crime. Just like the Youth Association centre. If the Council puts a youth worker in here, paid by the Council, then we might not remember that the youths used their own commonsense for years, to do things the best way for the community. The Council would say that it was because of their trained worker instead. You see, people may be trained, but they don't give a damn for a place like this. We on Broadwater Farm have to work together. That's why we don't talk about 'ethnic minorities'; we don't talk about black and white. We talk about people, about the community...

People on Broadwater Farm have come so far to develop what we have here. No way did we want to have a riot for a riot's sake, after so much achievement. The riot must have been triggered off by something: the police stopped the youths from marching to the police station,* even though they had enough police to divide the youths and let some of them into the station. In the end, it was the night that saved those youths. Earlier in the day, the police could have invaded the estate.

They call me all sorts of names. But, honestly, I don't get mixed up in politics. I don't even know what these names mean. If you only knew how many fights we've had with Bernie Grant because he couldn't

*To protest over the death of a local black woman, Cynthia Jarrett, during a police raid on her home.

understand what the community wanted, that we wanted to play a part. It took us a long time to prove to him that we wanted to do it, that we could do it.

LL: So you've had to convince him as much as anyone else.

DK: Yes, we have to keep hammering him as well. When the Tenants' Association held the meeting to call for a mini-police station on the estate, the papers said that the meeting was chaired by Bernie Grant. So we asked him why he had chaired the meeting. He told us that he'd walked out when he realised that the meeting was all whites and police. He didn't realise that they were using him: if he agreed to chair the meeting, then black people would think that other black people had been there, so it must have been all right. Bernie learned as he went along, but he learned from us! When we showed him how he was being used, he began to realise that we ordinary people knew what we were talking about . . .

When he came down here after the uprising that was the first time he really spoke for the youths. He had tried to understand before then. We'd had meetings to try to show him. But finally, that day, he understood what the youths wanted him to say. They said they wouldn't settle for less – otherwise he mustn't bother to speak at all. Just before the uprising, at the meeting here, the youths had put him out of here, because all he did was talk, talk, and we weren't getting anywhere. And afterwards, when he spoke up for the youths, that was the first time anyone had spoken up for them, in their own language, without polishing it up.

LL: How have people here reacted to the state of siege by the police on the estate?

DK: When people here see the news from South Africa, they see that ordinary people there are kept out of their own homes. So we begin to link what's happening in South Africa with here. And we begin to think that something like that is happening here on Broadwater Farm. The police want an experiment here, with their guns and plastic bullets. People are afraid to go out, people can't sleep, people are afraid the police will come for them, like in South Africa.

LL: The police have now even arrested Council workers on the estate. Why is that?

DK: Nobody is safe here. And Council workers who work on the estate also live on the estate. That was something we demanded: that the Council must employ people who live here, because they are the ones who care. And all that time, we didn't realise how much we were stepping on other people's toes. It was after the uprising that we realised that what we were doing wasn't going down well with some people. Before, we didn't realise that the truth hurts certain people. If we had realised

that they felt threatened, we would have stepped it up even more!

The Council people understand about politics more than I did, and I had to learn about it by my own self. And when you learn by your own self, then nobody can take that from you. When I met with Superintendent Stacey, he was briefed on what to say. Nobody told me what to say, but I was glad about that. Sometimes I get angry that someone didn't tell me something to say, but it's better to learn it my own self. When I go to speak at a meeting, I can't write down what I'm going to say. It would confuse me. I don't write it down, but I can remember it years later. You would have to kill me to destroy that.

Repression in Israel: Warschawsky and the AIC

1987 is the twentieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip. An important aspect of this occupation throughout the last twenty years, but increasingly in the 1980s, has been the targeting of the Palestinian media, which is subjected to wide-ranging censorship in the name of 'security'. Every night, editors must submit their galleys to the military censor for scrutiny. When daily censorship does not seem adequate for the task of media control, distribution bans on newspapers are imposed and newspaper licences are revoked (or licences to set up new papers and press agencies refused). Frequently the Emergency Defence Regulations (1945) are used to close down offices – for example, Sam'an Khoury's Jerusalem Press Office was closed in September 1982, after only four months in operation.

Since 1981, the following Palestinian newspapers and press agencies have been closed: *Al Shira*, *Al Wahdeh*, *Al Darb*, Al Manar press office, *Al Mithaq* and *Al Ahd*. In addition, many other papers have been closed down for limited periods, including *Al Fajr*, *Al Quds* and *Al Sha'ab*. Imprisonment and deportations of journalists and editors are now a common feature of occupation life. Akram Hanniye (Editor-in-chief of *Al Sha'ab*) was deported from his homeland in December 1986, and in April 1987, Feisal Hussein (Director of the Arab Studies Society) and Sam'an Khoury were arrested.

A new development this year, however, is that attacks on freedom of expression and the press have been extended to include an Israeli-run news agency in West Jerusalem – the Alternative Information Centre (AIC). The AIC has been operating for two and a half years, producing independent information and analysis on political and social developments in Israel and the occupied territories and on violations of

human rights. These were published in its bi-weekly bulletin, *News from Within*, and in its daily and weekly news reports (in Arabic, Hebrew and English). It was registered with the Ministry of the Interior and its publications submitted to the censor. The centre provided up-to-date information to Palestinian, Israeli and foreign journalists and had been gaining more credibility in recent months as a source of 'independent' news; hence, many foreign journalists were using its offices and attending its press conferences in Beit Agron. The centre also provided typesetting and translating facilities to a wide range of organisations, including Palestinian trade unions and women's groups.

Then, during a well-orchestrated and televised police raid on its premises on 16 February 1987, the AIC was forcibly closed for six months. Equipment, files and documents were seized, the office locked and its workers (Palestinian and Jewish Israeli) arrested and interrogated. All were released within forty-eight hours, except AIC director, Michel Warschawsky, who was interrogated and imprisoned for one month, and, after a successful appeal to the Supreme Court, released on an outrageous \$50,000 bail. Michel Warschawsky is still awaiting trial and could face up to twenty years imprisonment. Meanwhile, he is forbidden to do any work for the AIC (even if the office is reopened) or to provide any printing, typesetting, editorial or layout facilities (paid or unpaid) and he must report to the Russian Compound police station three times a week until his trial is over.¹

The AIC has been closed under the 1948 Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (PTO) for providing typesetting services to persons allegedly linked to illegal organisations. (The Association of Civil Rights in Israel is working on behalf of the AIC to have the administrative closure rescinded.* The charges against Michel Warschawsky are complicated and the AIC believes that the state will try to secure a conviction to give it an excuse to keep the AIC closed.² He has been charged under both the PTO and the Emergency Defence Regulations (EDR) – legacies of British colonial rule in Palestine. In the case of charges under the EDR, it is up to the accused to prove their innocence as the prosecution is not obliged to prove its case. Michel Warschawsky has been charged with rendering typing services to students' and women's organisations which the Shin Bet (General Security Services (GSS)) claim are front organisations for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); rendering typing facilities for the publications of *Al Taqadum* (a student newspaper from Bir Zeit University) and *Al 'Mara* (a women's

*At the court hearing on 11 May 1987, the AIC won in principle the argument that the Centre should be reopened after the six-month administrative closure order expired. At the time of writing, however, it seems likely that the authorities will apply for an extension on their holding of AIC files and archives to use them as material evidence against Michel Warschawsky when his trial comes up.

paper circulated in the West Bank); and with the possession of leaflets from illegal organisations. It should be noted that the publications referred to in the charges, and the organisations who produce them, have not been outlawed. The charges that Michel Warschawsky and the AIC were acting on behalf of, and being financed by, the PFLP have since been dropped. The accusation of publishing material for organisations fronting for the PFLP or for the PFLP itself is nothing new, and is often used to close down Palestinian papers. (As one Israeli journalist commented: 'George Habash begins to sound like some sort of Palestinian Rupert Murdoch'.³) What is implicit in all the charges, though, is that the activities of the AIC and its director were becoming a threat to the security of the state.* The AIC and Michel Warschawsky have denied all the charges and claim that it is impossible to censor and scrutinise all customers who use the AIC's commercial facilities, as the charges hint. An international solidarity campaign was launched immediately to campaign for all charges to be dropped against the AIC and Michel Warschawsky, and support has been coming in from all over the world.⁴

Within Israel, the actions against the AIC and Michel Warschawsky have created a furore. Organisations such as the Association of Civil Rights in Israel, the Jerusalem Journalists' Association and leading academics, journalists, jurists and political activists – Zionist, non-Zionist and anti-Zionist – have all protested against this attack on freedom of expression. Indeed, what the closure of the AIC has done is to throw up sharp debates in Israel, centring on censorship, democracy and the Israeli left.

Many in Israel justify censorship of the press (which is mainly, though not exclusively, related to security matters) on the grounds of safeguarding the 'security of the state'. The peculiar deal between the Israeli Editors' Committee and the censor (whereby editors collude with the state by operating self-censorship as a quid pro quo in return for 'inside information' which, under a 'gentlemen's agreement', they do not publish) is widely accepted as a good arrangement. But others are now worried that the existence of the Editors' Committee is no longer a guarantee that the draconian PTO and EDR laws will not be unleashed on the Israeli press in the future.

On the question of democracy, perhaps the most pertinent comment comes from the 'Committee Confronting the Iron Fist' in its protest letter against the AIC's closure: 'Yesterday they closed Palestinian papers and arrested Palestinian journalists. Today they're doing it to "leftist"

*During one of the hearings to extend Michel Warschawsky's detention, the prosecution stated that he had helped prepare a booklet which advised people on how to withstand Shin Bet torture during interrogation and that this information was harmful to the activities of the security services.

Jews. Tomorrow ... who is next? We have a choice – democracy for all or occupation for all. There is no third alternative.’⁵

In order to mobilise public opinion in support of a conviction against Michel Warschawsky, the state may well resort to slanders against him personally, using his well-known anti-Zionism. He was, during the invasion of Lebanon, imprisoned for his refusal to participate in that war. Jewish Israelis – such as Rami Livnat and Udi Adiv – have in the past been imprisoned for their activities in support of the Palestinian struggle. And, more recently, four Israelis – Yael Lotin, Reuven Kaminer, Latif Dori and Rolf Feiler – were charged under the PTO (1986 amendment) with meeting representatives of the PLO in Rumania. It is usual in such situations for the state to orchestrate hysteria against left Israelis by denouncing them as ‘self-hating Jews’, people with ‘psychiatric problems’, or as ‘terrorists’. This has already started in the case of the AIC (though the Israeli media have responded with fairly reasonable articles on the history and nature of the Israeli anti-Zionist and non-Zionist left).

The closure of the AIC should be a warning signal to the Israeli media and to the public in general. As the government bounces from one crisis to another (the ‘Vanunu Affair’, the Pollard spy case and the illegal activities of the Shin Bet among them), while trying to sustain an occupation now into its twentieth year and making continued attacks against Lebanon, it is not surprising that it should increase attempts to silence Jewish Israelis who try to report what is really going on in the, supposedly, only democracy in the Middle East. In recent months, *News from Within* has reported on the military and economic links between Israel and South Africa, the secret trial of Mordechai Vanunu and always on the ever increasing attacks on the Palestinian population. And, as if that were not bad enough, Jewish Israelis and Palestinians are working together in the AIC – as in other organisations – something the Israeli establishment is very anxious to discourage.

If the AIC remains permanently closed and its director imprisoned, this is, apart from anything else, bound to have an adverse effect on the availability of independent information to both the Israeli public and international community on what is happening in the occupied territories. And it may well open the floodgate to severe repression against the Israeli press in the future. Today, the Israeli media are supporting the AIC, but having been mainly silent for so long while their Palestinian colleagues were being imprisoned and deported, it is perhaps their number that’s coming up next.

ROS YOUNG

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Film, culture and politics: the festival of New Latin American Cinema*

The VIII Festival of New Latin American Cinema, held in Havana in December 1986, marked the beginning of a new era in cinema not only for Cuba, but for the continent of Latin America. From its small beginnings in 1979, the festival has grown enormously and today assumes a central position in defining a regional identity for the New Latin American Cinema. The festival attracted some 400 films, mainly from Latin America, and over 1,400 delegates from all over the world. In spite of the truck blockade and travel restrictions, the presence of a large delegation from the United States, including Hollywood stars like Gregory Peck, Sydney Pollock, Harry Belafonte, confirmed the festival's growing status.

Not only has the festival grown in size, it no longer deals just with the New Latin American Cinema. The presentation of a major retrospective and the organisation of a three-day symposium on African cinema illustrates its range. Led by Gaston Kabore, director of the Ougadougou Film Festival, with the participation of other notable African directors, the debate at the symposium focused on finding concrete ways of assisting with the production, funding, distribution and exhibition of African Cinema in Latin America. For many, this was the first time they had seen African films. It is clear that links with Latin America and access to its markets afford real possibilities of developing an independent infrastructure for the growth of African Cinema as it struggles to break with the shackles of European – in particular French – cultural domination.

Also organised as part of the festival programme was a four-day conference on 'Women in the audio-visuals', which was significant in recognising the role women have played and continue to play in the building of the New Latin American Cinema. Leading women filmmakers from Russia and other Eastern bloc countries, as well as the

*The author would like to thank Carlos Carrasco for his help with the interviews with Miguel Littin and Julio Garcia Espinosa.

United States, were invited to participate. This was the first time in the history of the festival that women had been afforded the opportunity to discuss common issues and concerns. Furthermore, the first prize for the best fiction film was won jointly by Susan Amaral from Brazil for her film 'The Hour of the Star'. A mother of nine children, and numerous grandchildren, Susan Amaral became the first woman director to win such a major prize at the festival. This also marked the beginning of a new cultural relationship between Brazil and Cuba.

The festival's main highlight, however, was the opening of both the Latin American Film Foundation and the International Cinema and Television School in Cuba. The International Cinema and Television School, nicknamed Three Worlds School (Latin America-Caribbean, Asia and Africa), is a testimony to the central importance of cinema to the politics and culture not only of Cuba, but of Latin America as a whole. The idea came from a discussion in December 1985, at the previous film festival, when Fidel Castro declared his intention of building a school where students from all over Latin America could be trained not only in the technology of filmmaking, but also in the ideology of liberation through revolution. The New Latin American Film Foundation, an autonomous organisation with Gabriel Garcia Marquez as its president, was given the task of building such a school. A year after that initial discussion the International Cinema and Television School, with its first intake of 150 students from Latin America, Caribbean, Africa and Asia, under the directorship of Fernando Birri, was opened by Fidel Castro to an ecstatic audience of thousands.

For Miguel Littin, Chile's most renowned filmmaker who now lives in exile and is one of the key figures in the development of New Latin American Cinema, the school is the 'highest achievement in the history of Latin American Cinema. It is the germ of a new spring ... a real possibility that this continent might achieve the realisation of all its dreams, of having a true personality in Cinema and the audio-visuals, with its own unique language, a revolutionary language. All the young people studying at this school have come from distinct and different historical backgrounds but all are aiming for the same objectives: to create – within a larger framework of freedom, democracy, creativity and unrestricted freedom of expression – a renewed cinema, a cinema that is both new and revolutionary.'

Clearly, it is the political and cultural determination of Cuba which has made this school a concrete reality. Cuba's commitment to establishing a new film culture began with the revolution and the creation of the Cuban Institute of Film Art and Industry (ICAIC), which over the last thirty years has been responsible for the production and distribution of Cuban films. With the support of ICAIC films such as 'Memories of Underdevelopment', 'The Last Supper', 'Lucia and Cantata de Chile' – today regarded as classics of Cuban cinema – were

produced. It was these films which helped to establish Cuban cinema as the most creative and radical of the 1960s.

ICAIC has not only been a leading force in laying the foundations for the emergence of a distinctly Cuban cinema, it has also helped to create an identity for the cinema of the region. This has been achieved by creating production facilities which have been made available for use by filmmakers from all over Latin America. And further to establish its regional importance, Cuba has provided a haven for the numerous exiled filmmakers escaping the continent's dictatorships. For Miguel Littin, who was forced into exile after the brutality of the Chilean coup in September 1973, Cuba was a welcome haven. Miguel Littin has since moved to live in Madrid, but his feelings for Cuba, the people and its revolutionary vision are clearly ones he holds dearly.

Cuba is not exile, to be in Cuba is to be in my other motherland, my motherland of maturity. The human warmth that is given to you in this country helps you to love more what is yours, to wish more that your country can also be a free country. A country where children go to school and where there is a cinema which exists and is developing, people having vitality, cheerfulness and a vision of the future which is full of hope and humanity.

Cinema in Cuba has been inextricably linked with the political struggle for liberation and self-determination. It has been the means through which Cuba has also maintained a constant relationship between the people of Latin America during the many years of the blockade. Despite these restrictions, Cuba has played and continues to play a central role in the development of the New Latin American Cinema. Some thirty years ago, it was born in Cuba with el 'Megaro' by Julio Garcia Espinosa, Gutierrez Alea, Alfredo Guevara and Jose Massip; in Brazil with Nelson Pereira dos Santos, the founder of Cinema Nova movement, and in Argentina with the Documentary Film School of Santa Fe set up by Fernando Birri. Since those small beginnings, the New Latin American Cinema has become a diverse movement reflecting the political, cultural and historical struggles of the continent against imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. Nowhere has cinema been used more effectively as a tool in the revolutionary struggle for liberation than in the various countries of Latin America. Today, there is cinema of an entire continent bound by history, language and culture which speaks with its own unique cinematic language and vision and which is 'one in diversity and diverse in unity'.

A major characteristic of the New Latin American Cinema has been the parallel development of a theoretical framework for the critical understanding of the new cinema. The political, cultural and economic conditions under which this cinema has emerged have not supported the division of labour which has occurred in the developed world

between action and reflection. As Fernando Birri, pioneer of the new movement expresses it: 'Theory and practice must go hand in hand, but practice must be the key, with theory as its guide and interpreter.' It is the filmmakers themselves who have written some of the major theoretical essays locating the emerging New Latin American Cinema in a historical context. The first of these essays, 'The aesthetics of hunger' (1965), was written by Glauber Rocha, a director from Brazil and one of the founders of the Cinema Nova movement. Cinema Nova teaches, he wrote, that

the aesthetics of violence are revolutionary rather than primitive. The moment of violence is the moment when the coloniser becomes aware of the existence of the colonised. Only when he is confronted with violence can the coloniser understand, through horror, the strength of the culture he exploits. As long as he does not take up arms, the colonised man remains a slave. The first policeman had to die before the French became aware of the Algerians.

'Aesthetics of hunger' defined the militant role of cinema in fighting against oppression through violence.

This was followed by the second manifesto, 'Towards a third cinema' (1969), written by Argentinian directors Fernando Solanos and Octavio Getino, who called for an alternative to both Hollywood and the bourgeois cinema of Europe. Their manifesto came directly out of the practice of making the now classic three-part, four-hour experimental film, 'The hour of the furnaces'. They described the film, made in the mid-1960s, as an 'act of liberation', a film in which the political and cultural struggles were inseparable. 'Third cinema, is, in our opinion, the cultural, scientific and artistic manifestation of our time, the greatest possibility for constructing a liberated personality ... in a word, the decolonisation of culture.'

'For an imperfect cinema' (1970), written by Cuban director Julio Garcia Espinosa, is today regarded as the foremost manifesto of the New Latin American Cinema. Written as a reaction against the danger of creating technically 'perfect' cinema, Julio Espinosa argued for making 'imperfect' cinema in which the revolutionary ideals are upheld above the creation of technically and artistically perfect cinema. Films like 'One way or another' (1974), by the now deceased Sara Gomez, and 'Up to a point', by Tomas Alea, are examples of how to create an imperfect cinema. Some seventeen years later, Julio Espinosa reflected on the effect of his concept of an imperfect cinema on the development of Cuban cinema today:

It has developed more slowly than I would like, because it is a process which in my opinion cannot be imposed, but has to be something organic. It has had more profound effects on the nature and style of documentary filmmaking than in fiction films.

However, for Julio Espinosa, the need to implement this concept of an imperfect cinema is more valid today than ever before.

For countries with poor economies starting to make films, it is important that they do not put much faith in high technicolour or vast resources when it is quite possible to make the project in relation to imagination, thoughts and sensitivity of the spectator and not to the resources alone.

I believe we are applauding more the technology than art, when in fact technology should be in the service of artistic expression. It seems to me that in recent years there have been great technological innovations, but there has been no innovation in the language of cinema.

Despite the upsurge of creative energy clearly expressed in the diversity of the New Latin American Cinema, it remains of marginal interest in Europe and the United States. With the exception of the occasional Latin American season on television or the theatre and the programming of one or two Latin American films in the numerous festivals held both in Europe and the United States, this cinema continues to be largely ignored. As Miguel Littin stated:

Undoubtedly, there is one part of the world which refuses to understand that another world exists which has another vision, another poetry, another philosophy. The problem is even more serious, not only because of the central powers, but also because they deny themselves the knowledge of other cultures which enriches the vision of humanity.

From that point of view, Europe is very backward, it is culturally in the middle ages. Not only does Europe exercise the power of money and control as the means of communication, it also denies itself, as it denied before with the discovery of America, the possibility of knowing a whole culture, one which contributed to the development of humanity.

However, we wait, neither hoping nor asking, as we used to some years ago. We have our own space and we are learning to use it. If Europe and their cinematographic leaders do not want to understand, they are denying their public the possibility of knowing us.

London

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Book reviews

Losing the Fight Against Crime

By R. KINSEY, J. LEA and J. YOUNG (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), 221 pp. £7.95

The Islington Crime Survey

By T. JONES, B. MACLEAN and J. YOUNG (Aldershot, Gower, 1986), 265 pp. £25

Protecting Our People

(London, Labour Party National Executive Committee, 1986), 34 pp.

In the summer of 1986 the Labour Party presented a television political broadcast showing, in one sequence, a white, blond-haired school girl hurrying at night through a badly lit pedestrian underpass pursued by a shadowy figure, with a voiceover promising more effective action against crime. (Consider how the ideological – if not electoral – impact of this broadcast would have been transformed had the child been black.) This was followed later the same year by the publication, under the title *Protecting Our People*, of a full-fledged Labour policy statement on crime and policing. It is a document firmly rooted in the new 'realism' about crime that has come to dominate Labour Party thinking on law and order at a national and, increasingly, a local level as well. Indeed, over the past few years a whole new social science industry has developed in the production of criminal victimisation surveys (such as *The Islington Crime Survey*) as a sort of market research for Labour Party policies in this field.

Losing the Fight Against Crime represents the latest statement of the 'realist' position. In this book the authors argue against both the increasingly militarised policing tactics adopted towards inner-city 'high crime' areas and police-led schemes of 'community' or 'multi-agency' policing. To the 'realists' these policies represent a contradictory and

essentially misguided response by the police to the 'crisis in crime control', which is indicated by sharply rising crime and by decreased police effectiveness in controlling it. It is a conceptualisation of policing that does not allow that policing policies and priorities may have been guided by considerations other than 'crime control'. Their solution, therefore, is for 'minimal policing', in which police resources and activities would be solely concentrated on reacting to public demands for crime control and where the police would always act within strict, legally prescribed limits. The means by which this transformation of the police and redirection of their efforts towards dealing with the 'real' problems of crime in working-class communities is to be achieved is the creation of new structures at local level of police accountability. Notably, though, the 'realists' propose that the police should be 'co-opted members' of the new police authorities that would, nominally, control them.

The trouble with this whole scenario is that it does not accord with the historical facts about the development of inner-city policing in Britain. Arguably, the police have always adopted a policy in respect of the most deprived areas not of controlling, but of containing crime. The aim has been to ensure that crime was confined within the 'lower classes' and did not spill over to affect neighbouring areas or 'respectable people', while at the same time enabling the police to make incursions into working-class areas primarily for public order purposes. Certainly, policing in the black community was greatly influenced from the late 1960s onwards by official anxiety at various levels of government over the threat represented by 'disruptive' second generation black youth. This concern, which had more to do, originally, with political agitation and general social 'problems' in the black community than with crime as such, led to the adoption on public order grounds of confrontational policing tactics towards black youth and to their increased criminalisation. Through this process, a general political interest in containing protest and maintaining public order on an everyday level in the black community was joined up, in the minds of police planners (and subsequently by politicians and the media), with the problem of controlling 'black' crime.

It is interesting to note how the authors of *The Islington Crime Survey*, despite their proclaimed objectivity and devotion to empirical detail, are willing to slant the interpretation of their data to sustain the 'realist' view on policing. For example, in support of their call for publicly reactive policing they argue that 'the enactment of successful policing is dependent on the public to a degree which is not conventionally realised', and cite data purporting to show that '95% of crime known to the police in Islington is made known to them by the public; direct police apprehension of offenders involves only 3.8% of cases'. In fact, these figures apply only to those crimes included in *The Islington*

Crime Survey, which was limited to offences with which members of the public had personal experience as victims. But this range of offences constitutes only a proportion of overall crime in a community, and probably a minority of those which are the focus of police action.*

It is certainly the case that far more than 3.8 per cent of arrests are the result not of crimes reported to the police by the public but of direct police initiatives, particularly in relation to public order, such as stop-and-search operations. And although the 'realists' may not regard such police initiated arrests as a mark of 'successful policing', there would appear to be a considerable reservoir of public support for such routine public order policing, at least in so far as it impinges on certain sections of the community. No less than 87 per cent of respondents in *The Islington Crime Survey* considered the maintenance of a deterrent police presence on the streets as a very important policing task, while only one-fifth wished to see less use of police stop-and-search powers in the area (even though two-fifths accepted that stop-and-searches did occur without sufficient justification).

Unfortunately, in this respect, one probable result of the Labour Party's promised increase of police on the beat would be to extend, rather than diminish, practices such as stop and search. Even more alarming is the legalistic approach adopted in *Protecting Our People* to the notion of local police accountability. Under the Labour Party scheme, new statutory police authorities made up exclusively of elected members would be established in all parts of the country. But no mention is made of the additional legal powers these authorities may need to control the police or change their practices in line with the wishes of the local populace. Instead, it is proposed that these authorities are themselves to be confined within a strict set of statutory duties, such as 'to enforce the law and uphold the Queen's peace' and 'to maintain "minimum standards" of policing'. Equally, police authorities will have a duty 'to ensure that their force is properly trained' and 'to protect the health and safety of their force'. And for good measure, the police authority will itself be legally accountable to the Inspector of Police and have to show that 'it had maintained a force capable of dealing with all kinds of crime' and members of the public would be empowered to seek a 'declaration in the courts that the police authority or the police were in breach of statutory duty'.

Under this scheme, police authorities, rather than being instruments of democratic control of the police on behalf of the community, could easily be transformed into agencies of local police administration on

*It can be estimated, for example, that only about one-third of all arrests by the police in London are for 'notifiable offences', this category including most of the crimes covered in *The Islington Crime Survey*.

behalf of a central bureaucratic authority, with the courts and not the electorate as the final arbiters of the nature and scope of police operations in a locality. Certainly, it is not difficult to envisage, especially in the light of recent police and media campaigning over 'no-go' areas, the reaction if a police authority were to move to shut down a police riot-training centre or to end the deployment of police in the inner cities in support unit vans full of riot-trained officers. There would be an immediate move in the courts from one of the police representative bodies or an individual citizen (possibly funded by sections of the populist press) to have such reforms declared illegal, on grounds that they would constitute a failure 'to uphold the Queen's peace' or a threat to the 'health and safety of the force'. And, given the experience over recent years of the ways in which the courts have restricted local authorities in their limited attempts at social reform in other areas, there can be little doubt how the courts would respond.

But if such legalistic reforms are more likely to entrench existing policing policies, then it is equally true that advocates of more radical measures of police accountability need to confront the political contradictions thrown up by inner-city crime. What is needed is to lift the whole issue of crime and crime prevention out of the context of debates over policing and rethink it in terms of radical initiatives for economic and social reconstruction of the inner-city communities. This is the lesson to be drawn, for example, from the experience at Broadwater Farm in North London, where initiatives towards the physical and social renewal of the estate based around the local Youth Association have led to a dramatic reduction in crime, even in the context of a continuing community struggle against confrontational policing of the area. In this respect, Labour Party policy does contain some useful suggestions for new programmes of crime prevention, although it suffers from an over-reliance on local authorities as the mechanism for carrying out these schemes, whereas radical initiatives will demand that resources are placed directly in the hands of the community.

London

LEE BRIDGES

Honduras: state for sale

By RICHARD LAPPER and JAMES PAINTER (London, Latin America Bureau, 1986). 132 pp. £3.50 paper

The term 'banana republics' is deeply offensive to Central Americans, implying, as it is usually meant to, a series of Mickey Mouse states with tin-pot governments and country-bumpkin populations. But shorn of these connotations the label does, as *Honduras: state for sale* points out, accurately pinpoint the central role of US fruit companies in

Honduran history, and the country's own lack of national identity.

It also indicates a long saga of North American domination, first through the banana companies, then through manipulation of political parties, diversification of foreign investment, military and economic aid, and, finally, through the present virtual occupation by US forces at the 'invitation' of a dependent government. The ideological tentacles of this control mean that we seldom hear about Honduras in its own right, as we do in this book. It is only when national events affect the fortunes of the US in the region that foreign journalists swoop down to roost in the bars of Tegucigalpa hotels, and the 'further reading' suggested at the end of this book shows how few studies have been published in English.

Although presenting the Honduran side of the story, the focus of this analysis is also, inescapably, the inter-relationship between North American influence and Honduran political and economic formations. It explains how it is that Honduras has become the base for the US presence in Central America, to keep an eye on the Guatemalan opposition over one border, to contain the struggling revolutionary forces in El Salvador on another frontier, and to assault the successful Nicaraguan Sandinistas over the other side. The authors, Richard Lapper and James Painter, consider why Honduras does not also have its own guerrilla forces strong enough to challenge the status quo.

The answer to these questions lies in Honduran history. Unlike its neighbours, Honduras had no coffee boom in the nineteenth century to establish a strong landed oligarchy, and the subsequent domination of the economy by the banana companies from the turn of the century inhibited the formation of a coherent national bourgeoisie or central state. A company letter written to a local henchman in 1920, and reproduced in the book, is worth quoting here as a supreme example of the contempt with which colonialists have regarded those whose land and labour they appropriate:

It is indispensable to capture the imagination of these subjugated peoples, and to attract them to the idea of our aggrandisement, and in a general way to those politicians and bosses that we must use. Observation and careful study have assured us that a people degraded by drink can be assimilated to the demands of necessity and destiny; it is in our interest to make it our concern that the privileged class, whom we will need for our exclusive benefit, bend itself to our will; in general, none of them has any conviction or character, far less patriotism; they seek only position and rank, and on being granted them, we will make them hungry for more.

These men must not act on their own initiative, but rather according to determining factors and under our immediate control.

Language may be more diplomatic nowadays, but the sentiments

remain. The characterisation of the 'privileged class' also has been a self-fulfilling prophecy: Honduran political parties are divided both within and between themselves as much by a scramble for perks and patronage as by political philosophies; the corruption of those in high places is staggering even by the standards that prevail elsewhere in the continent.

Into this vacuum of power has stepped the military. Created under US tutelage in the 1930s, it has continued to represent North American interests as much as those of any one party. Presidents Carter and Reagan promoted a return to civilian government to justify their role as protectors of 'democracy' in a region beleaguered by 'communism'. But the army remains the power behind the presidency. It is also the key to Reagan's control of the region. Latin America Bureau details the long list of US-Honduran joint manoeuvres in the area, ranging from small-scale shows of force to massive deployments involving a permanent legacy of military infrastructure. The streets of Honduran towns are awash with the hundreds of US forces now based in the country, and military aid has increased tenfold since 1981. Without Honduran support, the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, the contras, camped inside the country, could not continue.

The carrot on the end of the 'big stick' to beat the Sandinistas is economic assistance. One solution to the economic crisis according to an Honduran presidential adviser is 'to sell Honduras to the foreign investor'. The other is to beg for economic aid. This comes in the familiar IMF/World Bank package, entailing increased taxation, an end to price controls on staples and slashed welfare budgets. In 1984 nearly two-thirds of rural health centres closed through lack of resources.

Why, then, has revolutionary resistance been relatively weak? The book points out that pressure on land is less acute than elsewhere, and limited agrarian reform has defused peasant activism. On the union front, militancy has been undermined by co-option by US labour organisations. A divided popular opposition is countered by a repression still severe, but not yet of the style of El Salvador, Guatemala or Somoza's Nicaragua which pushes the people towards armed action.

The book accurately situates Honduras in the Central American context, and succinctly analyses the particular Honduran experience. But the country itself still remains elusive. What strikes you when travelling down the Central American isthmus is the difference between its constituent countries, not only in socio-economic development, but in physical and human character. The 'feel' of Honduras, its quirks of culture, its people rather than its rulers, are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the book. Important ingredients are missing – there is no mention, for example, of Honduras' indigenous peoples. There also could have been more on the radical church, crucial to the development of the left, especially in an account aimed at a western and therefore largely

secular readership, accustomed to think of 'progressive' priests in terms of liberalism rather than revolution. In Central America you learn about the latter.

The book is, however, dense with information, and is written with the meticulous research characteristic of a LAB 'special brief'. There are useful appendices of facts and figures, and guides to decoding the host of acronyms – parties, groups and organisations – that bedevil the political scene. Because of its value as a reference book, I would have welcomed an index. But much more than a handbook, especially for those already interested in the region, it provides an invaluable analysis of how, in the words of its one liberal newspaper, Honduras has 'sold its birthright for a mess of pottage'.

London

HERMIONE HARRIS

Black and White on the Buses: the 1963 colour bar dispute in Bristol

By MADGE DRESSER (Bristol, Bristol Broadsides, 1986). 69 pp.
£1.95.

In Britain there exists no historic equivalent to the great civil rights struggles which took hold of the southern states of the USA in the 1960s. Yet one local, now largely forgotten, episode is still of contemporary significance: the fight against the colour bar on Bristol buses in 1963. There is an irony that this conflict should have come to a head in Bristol which in its days of most stupendous wealth had been truly an Atlantic city, as proximate to West Africa, the Caribbean and the eastern seaboard of North America as to the imperial centre of London. Through its counting-houses has poured the capital which sustained the take-off of Britain's industrial revolution – the lifeblood for an emerging class of manufacturers – the value of which could be calculated in direct ratio to the number of black slave bodies, the quick and the dead, transported across the Atlantic. Thus, it is fitting that at the very onset of Britain's post-imperial epoch this Atlantic dimension should re-emerge, the reverberations from the black insurgency in Alabama echoing most loudly in Bristol, and fitting, too, that these events were as closely monitored by Kingston's *Gleaner* as by the press of Fleet Street.

With fine insight Madge Dresser reconstructs the story of the Bristol colour bar and the fight against it. In 1955, as the St Paul's district witnessed an acceleration of Caribbean immigration, the white bus-workers took the (perfectly legal) step of adopting a colour bar. Eight years later, the campaign against it centred in the first instance on one Paul Stephenson, the city's first black youth officer, who favoured an imaginative community struggle, appropriating the tactic of the boycott, and thereby by-passing the established institutions of the local

trade unions and the city council. Thus, in initiative and objective, the campaign emerged principally as a collective, autonomous black resistance. A broad struggle resulted, drawing in some – but not all – of the city's black population; national politicians and union leaders (Wilson, Cousins, Benn); Learie Constantine, then High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago, and author some ten years earlier of an angry denunciation of the colour bar; Claudia Jones and her *West Indian Gazette*; and the local white students and activists. The cricket match between Gloucestershire and the West Indies was transformed into an occasion for sustained campaigning. After a long struggle, by the end of 1963 a measure of success was secured and – formally at least – the bar destroyed.

The account draws from a wide range of local archives, secondary histories and a number of taped interviews with the participants. The booklet may not be particularly well written, and could have done with more drastic proof-reading, but it is attractively produced and buzzes with excitement. In this it is symptomatic of a burgeoning revolution in contemporary historiography in which the black experience is just beginning to find its due place. Alongside the great set-piece history books – those which need to be placed on the bathroom scales to appreciate their full weight, such as Fryer's passionate engagement, or the more recent and more aldermanic survey by Ramdin – the work of the little presses, from the independent black publishers to the stream of material coming from the local history groups, is making its own specific, valuable contribution to a history which we need to know and possess.

North East London Polytechnic

BILL SCHWARZ

Race, Class and Power in Brazil

Edited by PIERRE-MICHEL FONTAINE (Los Angeles, Centre for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985). 160 pp.

Academic social scientists from the USA have a long-standing fascination with Brazil. In the old days, the focus was the exotic, coffee-coloured ethnography of Brazil's 'melting pot' society. More recently, the progressives have been interested in exposing the race and class rifts which had been papered over with 'melting pot' ideology. And, of course, as against the purely academic imperative, there is the fact that Brazil is the richest plot for capitalist expansion in the American backyard – so far, very unevenly developed.

The text under review is compiled from papers first read in 1980 at a conference held at UCLA of left and liberal scholars working on or in contemporary Brazil. The broad background themes are the legacy of

slavery; race relations; racism and anti-racism in the Americas; and the heritage of plantation society. All the essays are informative, but, as is usual with academe, the interesting, plain-speaking questions which arise have to be extracted from the 'sub-text'. Why are there fundamental similarities in the conditions of African (descended) peoples in the Americas? Or, alternatively, why does this occur under European cultural hegemony? And, when the legal base of discrimination and segregation can no longer be maintained in the face of rebellion and resistance, so that racist attitudes are driven underground, how then is racism re-installed or reproduced? Or, put another way, how does a racist society maintain the impression that its Blacks are humble but happy?

On all these issues which particularly interest citizens of countries like the USA, Britain, Israel and South Africa, Brazil provides useful lessons. To be sure, the lessons are different, according to whether you are rich or poor, racist or anti-racist, imperialist or anti-imperialist – since the social science of this book shows that Euro-defined race is an important determinant of one's location in the class structure, and that racism is an important tool for maintaining capitalism in Brazil. 'African (descended) people are over-represented among the underclass.' And the country's much vaunted 'economic miracle' of the 1960s and 1970s has by-passed the Black majority of the population. In fact, the predicament of the lowest economic strata has worsened.

Brazil is a country where the muscle in the labour power and the samba in the soul of the nation is Black (African), and where the colour of privilege, oppression and exploitation is white. But, traditionally, the state has fiercely defended a notion of racial democracy, and denied the charge of a race/class connection. In the 1960s three anti-racist social scientists (Fernando, Cardoso and Ianni) were dismissed from their university posts for arguing the contrary. The writers in this book aspire to this radical tradition. Their findings, sometimes difficult to decipher through the sociologese, are not surprising to those who know racism.

We learn that in a racist society brown-skinned people do no better than Black-skinned people. And there is evidence that even when they work harder, the return for Blacks is less than for whites. We find that, if one cares to ask, there is some diffidence amongst sectors of Blacks about their 'Africanness', but a growing interest in government and business in Africa as a capitalist trading market.

As to the possibilities and processes of change, they are predictably convoluted. Elements of a professional middle class attempt to counter a Black revolutionary cultural activism with a Black ethnic identity movement. Meanwhile, the state has initiated *abertura* reforms for improving race relations – which some see as variations of an ancient Brazilian programme to whiten Blacks and so make them more 'integratable'. One writer (Fontaine) weaves a complex web of possibilities

from the variety of survival and resistance strategies in Black struggle, waged through local government representation, 'sections' of the national political institutions and personal and community 'self-help' within the status quo. The most engaging essay is by Lelia Gonzalez. She is a professor and an activist in the movement about which she writes – the United Black Movement against Racial Discrimination. The UDM has been the major new Black political organisation in Brazil since the late 1970s. It is independent of the mainstream political apparatus, with a radical race and class political programme. It employs a strategy which it describes as 'integrationist' – where its members are encouraged to be active in other organisations, but on the basis of the UDM's programme.

The notion that Brazil, although not a political democracy, is a racial democracy was first argued by the famous social scientist, Gilberto Freyre, in the 1930s. This was picked up by the state and, since then, has become, apart from coffee, Brazil's major basis for world acclaim. What Brazil faces in the 1980s, as these essays demonstrate, is the challenge – following the major industrial-capitalist shifts of the 'economic miracle' – to make real changes to political democracy and, therefore, racial democracy, at last.

As we approach the end of the decade, the debt-collecting hand of international capital has been exposed in the 'miracle'. Brazil's dependency is deepened through its development. Political and social oppression, managed through race and class, is more elaborate than ever. The masses struggle with greater vigour – part and parcel of a new 'civil war' that engulfs the entire American continent. The social scientists wander behind the lines, but really can't tell us which way the battle is going.

Polytechnic of North London

COLIN PRFSCOD

South Africa without apartheid: dismantling racial domination

By HERIBERT ADAM and KOGILA MOODLEY (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986). 315 pp.

South Africa: a different kind of war

By JULIE FREDERIKSE (London, James Currey, 1986). 192 pp.

Beggar Your Neighbours: apartheid power in Southern Africa

By JOSEPH HANLON (London, Catholic Institute of International Relations, 1986). 352 pp.

Racism and exploitation still exist in most countries of the world, but the degree to which they dominate the majority of lives in South Africa is uniquely repellent. These three very different books all examine the

nature of the existing situation in South Africa and look at the possibilities for change.

South Africa without Apartheid is an uneven and often myopic book that is sometimes over optimistic about the likelihood of a peaceful transformation of South Africa society. The authors speculate that the reform movement may develop its own dynamic – even though they acknowledge that most black people view apartheid as irreformable. They argue that the apparently powerless do have some power since the Boers are dependent on both black labour and consumption. Yet they condemn black activists as either caught in the ‘sterile protest politics of the past’ or placing their hopes in ‘self-defeating’ violence. Just as they underestimate the potential of violent struggle, they dismissively misjudge the strength of black culture. They are more percipient when they point out that by being anti-racialist the majority of African nationalist movements have avoided the ‘ideological trap’ set by the oppressor. They are also aware that the Black Consciousness movement was not anti-white – only anti-liberal white paternalism. They are, however, far too dismissive of Black Consciousness and the Azanian Peoples Organisation, deeming them virtually paranoid and relatively insignificant. As in so many books, and the media in general, the ANC is credited with catalysing the activism that was often generated by the Black Consciousness or Azanian movements. The tone of the book is not only pessimistic about, but wary of, fundamental change. The hope of these authors is for black and white power sharing arrived at by peaceful means. Their somewhat unrealistic rationale for this is that black and white South Africans are economically interdependent and have ‘common values’. The basic assumption is that capitalism in South Africa should and will survive.

A Different Kind of War is a book with more balance and impact. Its brilliance lies in its reliance on the words of South African people themselves. Nothing could better express the bigotry of the dominant Afrikaner minority than their own words. Nothing could better express the hopes and aspirations, despair and plight of the black South African majority than their own words. The manipulation of the attitudes of future generations of the white elite in the veld schools is exposed through the words of the white students themselves. One calmly stated that ‘you’re never supposed to challenge the line that they’re putting out’ – and that line is always the line that divides white from black and asserts the continued inevitability of white supremacy. Tshediso Matona, a national organiser for the Congress of South African Studies, asserts that ‘the system is realising that the great threat is non-racialism’. Matona sees whites joining the black liberation movement and that movement itself becoming more and more based on the taking of economic power. Saths Cooper, a leading exponent of Black Consciousness in the 1980s, and a former vice-president of the Azanian

Peoples Organisation, who is now in the United States, has a perfectly clear view of the whole problem: 'We basically analyse the problem as one constituted by racism and capitalism, there is an amalgam, the one bolsters the other. The solution to that problem can never come from within the ranks of that problem.'

Julie Frederikse presents such views without any apparent bias, but nonetheless fails to appreciate the strength of the Azanian movement. She accepts the verdict of Zwelakhe Sisulu, a black journalist, that Azanians are not genuinely committed to socialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. She does, however, stress that all the politically active organisations, from the ANC to the established and emergent trade unions, are moving in a socialist direction and that most black South Africans see the ownership of land as fundamental to any acceptable resolution of the struggle. Unlike more blinkered commentators, she is aware that 'South Africa's future will be resolved by war – and more importantly, that it will be a very different kind of war'. She sees it as a war where the battlefields will be the workplace, schools and communities and the weapons will not only be guns and petrol bombs but also strikes and meetings, songs and pamphlets.

Joseph Hanlon's *Beggar Your Neighbours*, is a book that explains and clarifies the muddled waters of South Africa's past devious actions towards its neighbours. It puts in a historical perspective the untimely death of Machel and his replacement in Mozambique with Joaquim Chissano. Hanlon stresses the dramatic intensification of the war for the control of Southern Africa over the last six or so years. He sees the results so far as a costly draw in which the Southern African Development Coordination Conference attempts to reduce its economic dependence on South Africa but is prevented by Pretoria from delinking and establishing a pattern of independent economic growth. Hanlon suggests that neighbouring states need the assistance of a full international economic embargo. The front line states (Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) had 'lacked sanctions by the autumn of 1985, but their efforts alone are not enough. This well-researched and scholarly book is also passionate in its belief that it is incumbent on the western world to support the front line states in their attempt to bring down the racist and exploitative South African government by enforcing effective economic sanctions.

University of Keele

MARY ELLISON

'But my cows aren't going to England': a study in how families are divided

By SUSHMA LAL and AMRIT WILSON (Manchester, Manchester Law Centre, 1986). £2.00

It is quite normal these days to be inured to the horrors of British immigration practice. Until, that is, one reads this book. It is packed full of horror stories, page after page, with a useful background analysis of the social, political and economic situations under which these immigration policies operate.

It is now common knowledge that Britain's immigration laws are racist, and many critics have suggested that Britain has no immigration 'laws' to speak of insofar as these are even further circumscribed by the racist immigration practice of government ministers and immigration officers.

In Bangladesh, one of Britain's neo-colonial outposts, those seeking to join their relatives in Britain are set apart by the Entry Clearance Officers (ECOs). When a Bangladeshi applies for an entry visa, the ECOs turn it into an occasion for a degradation ceremony. To prove that one woman applicant was 37 and not 40 years old as she claimed, her skull was examined, her teeth counted and her pubic hair 'vetted' by a male doctor. ECOs routinely disbelieve the authenticity of official documents issued in Bangladesh. Hence they require applicants, most of whom are villagers, to make fruitless journeys from distant villages in Dacca; when they arrive at the British Embassy, they are herded into a packed waiting room and treated with the utmost disdain. Most of the applicants are invited for the ostensible purpose of interviewing them, but the interviews themselves are a farce. The villagers are asked questions not related to the purpose of their application and the process is gone through without regard to the basic rules of natural justice. One woman was asked how many cows and chickens she possessed, hence the title '... my cows aren't going to England'. The interviewers regard all the applicants as liars and appear to conduct the interviews for the sole purpose of reaffirming their prejudice and racism.

Those subjected to the Gestapo mentality of the interviewers are left with a profound sense of humiliation and violation. And incursions into the village by ECOs are reminiscent of commando raids. The following is an official account of one such visit to a Sylhet village:

The success or failure of a village visit is to a large extent dependent on the element of surprise. It is therefore imperative that neither the applicants nor sponsor receive any forewarning of a planned visit, for to do so would entirely negate the findings of the form of investigation. This also extends to the local authorities and police, none of whom are advised of our village visit programmes.

Manchester

PAUL OKOJIE

The Guardian Third World Review: voices from the South

Edited by VICTORIA BRITTAIN and MICHAEL SIMMONS
(London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1987). 188 pp. £5.95

It is difficult to review this book without giving some initial consideration to the role of the British newspaper, the *Guardian*, from whose pages this present anthology has sprung. The *Guardian* occupies a liberal position outside the battery of backward tabloids and right-wing 'respectable' British daily newspapers, but it is a position that does not necessarily manifest anything like a total detachment from the perspectives and approaches of such journals.

This ambivalence exposed itself on the front page of the *Guardian* on 16 October 1986, for example. As 500 prospective immigrants arrived at Heathrow Airport from the Indian sub-continent to join their divided families and beat the imposition of even more racist immigration restrictions, the British daily press had a field day, treating the new arrivals with the customary racist contempt and insults. The *Guardian* also made a contribution to this with a stereotypical and ambiguous cartoon on its front page, showing a woman of the 'South' reading a letter from England to her children in what we are led to believe is a village in India. The caption reads: 'It's from your brother Samir. He is doing very well in England. Unfortunately he has not been allowed in the country yet but they have kept him waiting such a long time at Heathrow he has opened a small corner shop ...'

Compared to such carping statements on the front page, the *Third World Review* of the paper is well submerged inside the middle to end pages and can sometimes be seen as the buried conscience of the *Guardian* that surfaces every Friday morning, only to dive back down below for the rest of the week. But this would be to take a negative view, for the *Third World Review* must clearly exist in something of a relationship of struggle with the rest of the newspaper, and the fact that it has lasted so long (since 1978) is a formidable achievement by progressive and determined journalists such as Victoria Brittain and Michael Simmons, who have edited this anthology.

Voices from the South does indeed contain some impressive and memorable essays: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's speech on the thirtieth anniversary of the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya; Basil Davidson's moving tribute to Amílcar Cabral; Fidel Castro's address to the non-aligned summit, entitled 'The world we are handing to our children'; Adrian Mitchell's reflections upon Chile, 'A dream of Pinochet's fall', and Victoria Brittain's report from Burkina Faso. Such powerful writing constitutes a commentary on the huge strength of the rising world, a genuine antidote to the trivial and reactionary lies and nonsense being communicated about the world's struggling peoples in the *Sun*, the *Express*, the *Mail* or the *Telegraph*, and also the often uncommitted and

Janus-type journalism to be found and sometimes featured elsewhere in the *Guardian* itself.

The anthology is also very strong in its treatment of cultural themes, and there are some engrossing articles and interviews on such significant figures as the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, the Turkish film-maker, the late Yilmaz Guney, Wole Soyinka of Nigeria and the Egyptian poet, Lotfi El Khoulî. There is also a short selection of traditional Namibian poetry, including the vibrant *Battle Song of the Herero*, which declares:

Listen when the song of the frogs
Resounds from the marshes.
Listen to what they have to say:
It is good to come together,
It is good to reach agreement,
It is good to make the voices of many
The single voice of all ...

And indeed, there are moments when reading this collection that you feel, as a reader, that you are in touch with chorus of brave liberation from many parts of the world.

But from other parts comes an entirely different message and the positive quality of the book is occasionally marred by contributions from experts of the 'North' who tend to write as if they know it all. I was disturbed to read, for example, an account by Morris S. Thompson of the final hours in the life of Maurice Bishop, irritatingly and disrespectfully subbed as 'The day Grenada's leader went to the wall'. Information taken from statements given under torture to the occupying force by those accused of his murder is processed as 'fact', to be deemed worthy of printing in the pages of the *Guardian* – and the *Third World Review* at that – and hence accorded the status of truth.

But this is a blemish in what is generally an instructive, hopeful and often moving series of insights into a world and its peoples struggling to transform their space against all the odds.

Sheffield

CHRIS SEARLE

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- Black British literature: annotated bibliography.* By Prahbu Gupta. Warwick, Dangaroo Press, 1986. Paper
- Child of the sun.* By Cecil Rajendra. London, Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1987. Paper £3.95
- Drought and aid in the Sahel: a decade of development cooperation.* By Carolyn M. Somerville. London, Westview Press, 1986. Paper £28.50
- Hinduism in Great Britain: the perpetuation of religion in an alien cultural milieu.* Edited by Richard Burghart. London, Tavistock Publications, 1987.
- Indonesia: Muslims on trial.* By Tapol. London, Tapol, 1987. Paper £4
- Inside.* By Jeremy Cronin. London, Jonathan Cape, 1987. Paper £4.95
- Israel: an apartheid state.* By Uri Davis. London, Zed Books, 1987. Paper £6.95/\$10.50
- Kaffir boy: growing out of apartheid.* By Mark Mathabane. London, Bodley Head and Pan Books, 1987. Cloth £12.95, Paper £3.95
- The laughing cry: an African cock and bull story.* By Henri Lopes. London, Readers International Inc., 1987. Paper £4.95
- Our house in the last world.* Oscar Hijuelos. London, Serpent's Tail, 1987.
- The Pan-african movement: Ghana's contribution.* By Kwesi Krafona. London, Afro-world, 1986. Paper £3.95
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- Race, class, and the world system: the sociology of Oliver C. Cox.* Edited by Herbert M. Hunter and Sameer Y. Abraham. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1987. Paper \$12
- Race and color in Brazilian literature.* By David Brookshaw. Metuchen, The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1986. Cloth £32.50
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- Soweto: the fruit of fear.* By Peter Magubane. Trenton, Africa World Press, 1987. Paper £3.50
- A sport of nature.* By Nadine Gordimer. London, Jonathan Cape, 1987. Cloth £10.95
- Watchers and seekers: creative writing by Black women in Britain.* Edited by Rhonda Cobham and Merle Collins. London, Women's Press, 1987. Paper £3.95
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