

JOIN THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

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

For further information write to:
Membership Secretary
Jewish Socialists' Group,
BM3725, London WC1N 3XX
jsg@jewishsocialist.org.uk
www.jewishsocialist.org.uk

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Send this form to: Jewish Socialist,
BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.
(cheques/POs to Jewish Socialist Publications)

- ☐ Please send me the next four issues of Jewish Socialist starting with issue.....
I enclose £10 (inc p&p).
- ☐ I also enclose a donation of £.....

Name

Address

Postcode

Country

Overseas subscription £18 Sterling

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism January/February 2012 #254 £2

Busking for bankers



Jan/Feb issue out now...

- Wendy Savage on NHS
- Sasha Simic on Egypt
- Tehmina Kazi on Arab Women
- Glenn Power on Fairtrade
- Frank Lee on Economy
- Karen Buck MP on Housing Benefit

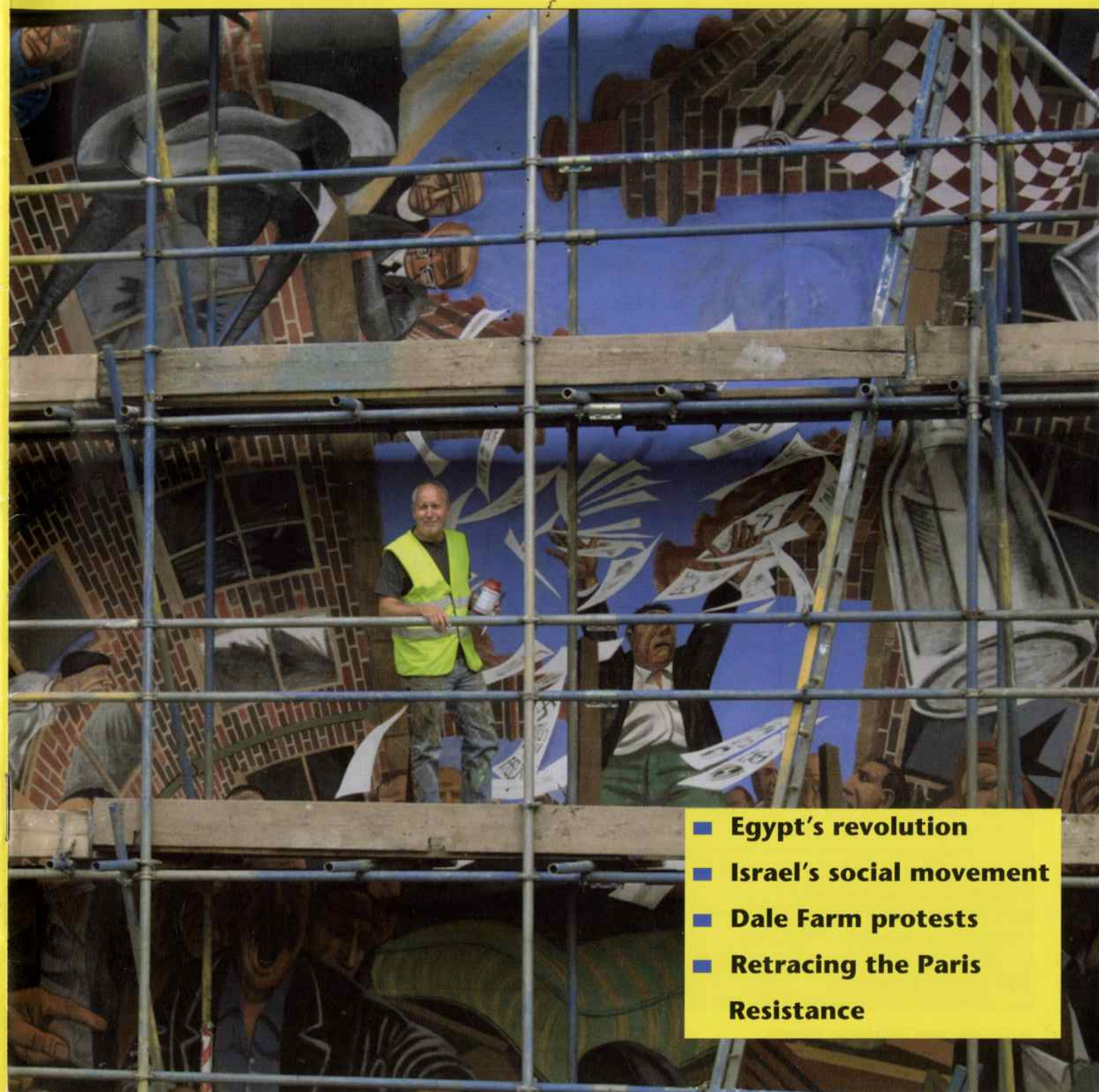
Subscribe online at:
www.chartist.org.uk

JEWISH SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

No 63 Winter 2011-12 £2

CABLE STREET 75 DRAWING ON THE PAST



- Egypt's revolution
- Israel's social movement
- Dale Farm protests
- Retracing the Paris Resistance

Through this forum we aim to:

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

The year 2011 was an incredible time of protest, when the actions of grassroots movements overshadowed the elite politicians who normally monopolise the headlines. Who would have predicted that this year the streets of New York, housing the world's most powerful financial institutions, would be occupied by anti-capitalist protesters, and that the police there would have to resort to such brutality to evict them? As the year closes, thousands are flooding Russia's streets to protest against electoral fraud.

The process began with the "Arab Spring" – a wave of civil resistance to dictatorial regimes. In the last issue we analysed its progress especially in Tunisia and Egypt and its beginnings in Libya. Using common tactics of strikes, mass rallies, demonstrations and occupations of key symbolic ground, it has spread. These thoroughly modern uprisings use social media to mobilise support and tell the world instantly what is happening.

Mass oppositional movements fighting for democracy against immensely powerful elites, unite disparate elements. Alongside socialists, religious forces are also gathering momentum. Those seeking to overthrow dictators do not all have the same instincts for enacting progressive policies should they succeed, and socialists must prepare for the coming political battles.

Western leaders watch the unfolding drama with unease. They can't stop it so they focus on managing change in a way that safeguards their access to oil and markets.

Loyal dictators who served them for decades are casually hung out to dry as they seek out new compliant leaders. The contradictions are unavoidable, as they back democracy movements in some countries while simultaneously backing those ruthlessly putting down resistance in others.

The left must also face its contradictions. Its relative silence on the murderous Syrian regime of Bashar al Assad has been shameful. While Syria parades itself as a backer of radical Palestinian movements, many leftists in Britain have been reluctant to criticise it openly or at all. Some groups mourned the demise of Gaddafi the "anti-imperialist" hero rather than unequivocally condemning a tyrant who gagged and oppressed his people. Any progressive politics he once espoused soon collapsed under his dictatorship. NATO, committed above all to Libyan oil, took advantage of the relative military weakness of the Libyan opposition to "assist" and enforce regime change on its terms, but the Libyan people welcome the fall of Gaddafi's regime.

As the Arab world continues its political convulsions, democratisation puts welcome pressure on Israel's right wing regime, which maintains its increasingly hollow claim to be "the only democracy in the Middle East". Israeli hawks could make official and unofficial deals with the dictators, even those who officially espoused anti-Israel policies to placate

their publics, but Israel cannot cut deals so easily with the peoples of the region. Only a genuine peace process that ends the occupation and brings full equal rights for Palestinians can do that. But in Israel too, a social movement for change has arisen – and we report on its prospects (page 12).

If western powers were content that popular movements for change remained far from their own shores, the growing Occupy movement, which has made itself felt in the USA, Canada, Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and here in Britain, has destroyed that illusion. Popularising the slogan "We are the 99%", the movement openly targets "capitalism", especially bankers. New forces are being energised and politicised, and orthodox left groups have been outflanked by new forms of protest. But there are dangers too of an inexperienced radical movement being diverted towards reactionary politics. Incidents have been reported where, instead of criticising a system, activists have targeted individual bankers with Jewish names. The shadowy Zeitgeist organisation, which we exposed in JS60, has insinuated itself into the Occupy movement and spreads its poison. Simultaneously, more cases of police infiltration into protest movements are exposed. We need to strengthen the anti-capitalist movement but also make it inhospitable for those who wish to divert it into antisemitism or subvert its tactics on behalf of the state.

CONTENTS

NEWS

3-4 Tainted banner Racists march in Tel Aviv; Fatality at Nabih Saleh

FEATURES

- 5 **Caravan counterblast**
Dale Farm: Dave Landau reports on a new solidarity movement
- 7 **Real time revolution**
Paul Collins talks to Nadia Idle about the Egyptian uprising
- 9 **Between the lines**
John Bunzl examines recent speeches by Bibi Netanyahu
- 11 **Potholes and sour milk**
Reuben Bard-Rosenberg's guide to separating anti-Zionism from antisemitism
- 12 **Change is in the air**
Miri Weingarten evaluates the protests in Israel
- 15 **From where I'm standing**
Frank Barat argues against the UN Palestinian bid for statehood
- 16 **The ghosts of Cable Street**
Steve Silver makes some unexpected discoveries while researching for the 75th anniversary of the Battle
- 18 **Restoring local pride**
David Rosenberg spoke to mural artist Paul Butler
- 20 **Quality street**
Roger Mills makes connections across the decades
- 21 **Personal journey**
Matthew Collins describes moving from far right to anti-fascist

- 22 **This Jew business**
Extract from David Rosenberg's book, *Battle for the East End*
- 24 **Whitechapel Road 3rd September 2011**
Poem by Michael Rosen
- 25 **Vive la resistance**
Karen Adler tracks down the Parisians who challenged the Nazis
- 28 **Life-lines (remembering Anna and Martha)**
Poem by Binnie Yeates

REVIEWS

- 29 Jewish Identity and Palestinian Rights
- 30 May Day
- 31 Lords of the Land: Israel's settlements, 1967-2007
- 32 Threat: Palestinian prisoners in Israel
- 33 Multiculturalism: A very short introduction

REGULARS

- 3 Wiseworlds
- 4 Change the World: Labour Behind the Label
- 34 On the shelf
- 35 Dybbuk's diary

Editorial committee: Julia Bard, Paul Collins, Mike Gerber, Ruth Lukom, Simon Lynn, David Rosenberg. Cover photograph: Artist Paul Butler restoring the Cable Street mural. Photo: Anna Sherbany. www.annasherbany.com

Tainted banners



Organisers of Raise Your Banners, an annual festival of left wing political song, defied calls from anti-fascists and trade unionists to rescind their controversial invitation to Israeli saxophonist and proud "self-hating Jew" Gilad Atzmon to play at the festival in Bradford at the end of November. Although Atzmon portrays himself as a supporter of the Palestinians, many pro-Palestinian activists consider him a liability to that cause, accusing him of peddling anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and advancing Holocaust revisionism. Last year Atzmon derided the Holocaust as "the new Western religion ... the most sinister religion known to man", and his writings are frequently reproduced on antisemitic, far-right and conspiracy theory websites.

Performers at earlier Raise Your Banners festivals were among the longstanding socialists and anti-racists who first wrote to the organisers to express their concerns several months ago, soon after Atzmon's invitation was confirmed. They provided unequivocal evidence to back their claims

about Atzmon's beliefs, from his own published statements. When they were told of Atzmon's record, the Raise your Banners committee was divided on the issue and left the committee officers to make the final decision, which was to uphold the invitation.

In the weeks preceding the event, further progressive voices, including leading anti-fascist activists from Hope Not Hate and Bradford Trades Council, called on Raise Your Banners to rescind the invitation. Nick Lowles of Hope Not Hate told the festival's organisers: "Gilad Atzmon supports Holocaust deniers and claims that the established history of the Holocaust is misleading. He attacks Jewish identity in a way that would clearly be recognised as racist if it were about any other minority identity, and claims that because of how Jews behave, in the future people might think Hitler was right about Jews." Bradford TUC voted unanimously to denounce Atzmon and his invitation to perform at the event.

The festival organisers defended their decision by invoking a statement they attributed to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), claiming that PSC had no boycott of Atzmon. But PSC Director, Sarah Colborne, hit out at Raise Your Banners for misrepresenting its views. She confirmed that PSC did not work with Atzmon and was not linked to him in any way, and stated that when Raise Your Banners had contacted PSC about Atzmon, PSC had in fact advised them to take very seriously any concerns raised about him. It was precisely in response to antisemitic piggy-backing the pro-Palestinian movement that PSC itself issued a statement a few months ago stating that: "Any expression of racism or

intolerance, or attempts to deny or minimise the Holocaust have no place in our movement. Such sentiments are abhorrent in their own right and can only detract from the building of a strong movement in support of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people."

Critics of the festival invitation spanned the political spectrum from anti-Zionist, pro-Palestinian activists and longstanding socialists and anti-racists through to right-wing Zionist bloggers and the *Jewish Chronicle*. Raise Your Banners issued a statement shortly before the event in which they said Atzmon's writings "stir up keen arguments about identity politics", but "their main target" was "the Israeli government". The organisers said that they "do not believe the claims of antisemitism are justified". Atzmon himself then undermined this line of defence by accusing his opponents of exerting "Jewish pressure" to stop him performing.

A spokesperson for the Jewish Socialists' Group said: "We cannot understand why Raise Your Banners has allowed the good reputation of its festival to be tarnished by extending an invitation to anyone proud to call himself a "self-hating Jew", especially when they have received a wealth of evidence, from friends of the festival, exposing Atzmon's politics for what they are – harmful and abusive to Jews, and equally harmful to the Palestinians by associating their just cause with antisemitism. Of course Raise Your Banners is not the first progressive organisation to be fooled by Atzmon's paper-thin pro-Palestine rhetoric, that masks his appalling statements about Jews, Nazis and the Holocaust, but we certainly hope they will be the last."

WISEWORDS

Francisco Ferrer 1859-1909



"I also wish my friends to speak little or not at all about me, because idols are created when men are praised, and this is very bad for the future of the human race. Acts alone, no matter by whom committed, ought to be studied, praised, or blamed ... I desire that on no occasion shall demonstrations of a political or religious character be made before my remains, as I consider the time devoted to the dead would be better employed in improving the condition of the living."

This is an extract from the will of the educator and radical freethinker, Francisco Ferrer. Ferrer was executed after the Barcelona riots of 1909 when socialists, anarchists and anti-clericalists led a general strike against the conscription of reservists for Spain's military activities in Morocco. Ferrer's radical educational ideas strongly influenced anarchist thinkers and activists such as Rudolph Rocker and Emma Goldman. Rocker sought to apply them in informal education through radical workers' clubs in the Jewish heartland of London's East End.

CARAVAN COUNTERBLAST

The evictions at Dale Farm brought to a close another sordid episode in the history of prejudice against Travellers. But does the launch of a new solidarity network mark a turning point? **DAVE LANDAU** reports



Year after year Gypsy and Traveller sites are brutally evicted. Bailiffs specialising in such "clearances" brutally go into the sites physically abusing the people, smashing up their things and moving them on. And if the people find a new site, they do it all again. This goes on with hardly anybody noticing or saying anything.

But now the silence has been broken. Dale Farm has thrown the situation of Travellers and Gypsies on to the front pages and TV screens. The building of a solidarity movement, the growth of a determined resistance and the huge forces of repression deployed by the state to overcome this resistance ensured that, this time at least, the eviction of Travellers was not hidden from view. Hopefully this will be a turning point.

To give some background to this eviction we need to go back to the 1970s when some kind of accommodation was reached between the state and Roma, Gypsy and Traveller people. A requirement was put upon local authorities to provide sites. In return the sites were subject to some degree of regulation. This situation was rudely torn apart when the Tory government of 1994 took away this requirement, instead promoting the idea that Gypsies and Travellers should buy their own land.

This was a cruel trick. People made huge efforts to raise money to buy land, only to find that they could not get planning permission. In the main,

when they applied for planning permission, the prejudices of the settled people generated a pile of objections. An estimated 80-90% of these applications have been refused over the years. The consequence was that Gypsies and Travellers began living on their own land "illegally" and were then being subject to eviction from their own land.

The first Travellers to arrive at Dale Farm were successful in getting planning permission, but people who came later and bought the adjoining scrapyard met opposition. So Dale Farm ended up being divided into an authorised and an unauthorised site.

The legal excuse for refusing planning permission and ultimately for the eviction is that it is Green Belt land. But hang on: who has ever heard of a Green Belt scrapyard? Basildon council argues that the scrapyard itself was in breach of planning laws and they were going to take action against it. But recently the man who used to own the scrapyard has claimed that the council itself laid down some of the concreted area to accommodate their tow-away vehicles.

So if the Green Belt is only a legal figleaf, what was the point of the eviction? Basildon made a big song and dance of saying that they would offer the Travellers properties in bricks and mortar. But even if they had wanted to live in little boxes or blocks of flats, Basildon has thousands of people on its waiting lists so this would not be in the local

The message from Tel Aviv: "Send them back"

Michael Ben Ari, a West Bank settler and one of four Knesset members from the far right National Union Party in Israel, led a march and hate rally in Tel Aviv on 11th December calling for African migrants and asylum seekers to be expelled from Israel. The rally was held in Levinsky Park, in Southern Tel Aviv, an area that has a substantial population of refugees, particularly from Sudan but also from Eritrea and Congo.

As the demonstrators marched, they chanted "Sudan! Sudan!" (Sudanese to Sudan) and called for Tel Aviv to be a city for Jews only. As they reached the park, their numbers were swelled by local residents who had joined the protest.

But they were met by a strong

counter-protest consisting of refugees and anti-racist Israeli supporters of refugees. The counter-demonstrators attempted to drown out the rally speakers by chanting "Prison - No, Freedom - Yes" and "Enough of racism!"

Pointing at the refugees and their allies, Michael Ben Ari MK told his supporters that "over there" were "those who want to destroy our country". One of his fellow marchers confronted the counter-demonstrators, shouting: "You sons of bitches. You are the cancer of this country!"

The 11th December demo followed other protests in southern Tel Aviv and nearby in Bat Yam calling for the expulsion of Arab residents and migrant workers.



The banners of Jewish and Bengali groups led a triumphant procession from Aldgate to the Cable Street mural on the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street at the beginning of October. Behind them were the banners of trade unions, Irish organisations and anti-fascist groups. The rally at the end of the march was addressed by Cable Street veteran, Max Levitas, David Rosenberg from the Jewish Socialists' Group, trade union leaders and Bengali activists. See the Cable Street 75th anniversary section on pages 16-24



Bunda'im is a new 48-minute film about the Bund by Israeli film-maker Eran Torbiner, who also made the acclaimed film, *Madrid Before Hanita*. His new film is based on interviews with Bundist survivors in Israel. The film is in Hebrew and Yiddish with English and Hebrew subtitles, and is made in PAL, the broadcasting system in Europe and Israel. (Readers of JS in North America will be able to watch it on computer.) You can obtain this film on DVD for NIS100 / €20 / \$30, including shipping, by credit card to Eran Torbiner's account using www.paypal.com. Contact Eran Torbiner at: erantor@gmail.com

Nabi Saleh's first fatality

Defying frequent beatings and arrests, the Palestinian village of Nabi Saleh holds a weekly protest against the confiscation of its land and water supply, in favour of the illegal Israeli settlement, Halamish.

On 9th December, at a demonstration to mark two years since the start of the campaign, the Israeli army used tear gas and rubber

bullets. Mustafa Tamimi, 28, whose brother is in an Israeli prison, was hit in the face by a gas canister, suffered a brain haemorrhage and later died in Belinson hospital in Petah Tikvah. There was further violence by the soldiers at his funeral.

Nabil Saleh has now had its first fatality but the villagers are determined to continue their struggle.

CHANGE
THE
WORLD

LABOUR BEHIND THE LABEL campaigns for the rights of garment workers internationally who face a daily grind of excessive hours, forced overtime, poverty wages, poor health and lack of trade union rights.

Among its current activities is the Campaign for a Sweat Free Olympics, which is targeting the employment practices of the Adidas, Nike and Pentland Group (Speedo) brands who are all major sponsors of the Olympic Games that will

take place in London in 2012.

Labour Behind the Label has recently documented the lives of women workers producing Adidas's 2012 Olympics range at the Sheen Zhou garment factory in Phnom Penh, through a slideshow called *Made in Cambodia*. Workers at this factory regularly opt for overtime to try to make ends meet and frequently work 11-hour days starting at 7am. Their basic wage is £39 per month. Workers there are forced to sign new short-term contracts every six months. They

have representatives who raise workers' concerns but there is no trade union at the factory.

Labour Behind the Label has produced a teaching pack aimed for use with 9-14 year olds called *Fair's Fair: Life and rights in the global sports industry*, which it hopes many schools will use in the run up to the Olympics. They have an Action Pack for campaigners of all ages to take up the issues within the garment industry that Labour Behind the Label highlights.

www.labourbehindthelabel.org/

REAL TIME REVOLUTION



NADIA IDLE grew up in Egypt but left in 2002 and now lives in London, where she works as activism and outreach officer for the global justice charity, War on Want. She returned to Cairo during the uprising in early 2011 and afterwards co-edited the acclaimed book, *Tweets from Tahrir*, which gave a direct voice to those who made the revolution. **PAUL COLLINS** asked her about her experiences in the early days of the uprising and her reflections on the current trajectory of the Egyptian revolution

What made you return to Egypt during the early days of the uprising?

I had been watching the live images of Tahrir Square and following the tweets on my computer at work every day, and I could no longer take it. After much hesitation, false starts, hearing about Egyptian friends from London going over, and my family telling me not to come, I had this irrepensible drive to be there. It just took over everything. I just felt I needed to be in Cairo so I booked a flight with a friend who had reached the same conclusion.

How would you describe the atmosphere in Tahrir Square? What was it like to be in Cairo at that time? It was incredible. I never have romanticised Egypt, especially Cairo and I still don't. I left in 2002 because I had become worn down by the effects that Mubarak's policies had on the populus: the relentless harassment of women, the lack of civic pride, a feeling that Cairo had become a dystopia, a once cosmopolitan city, now in decay. But all of this evaporated in Tahrir. The square was a space of unity. I had never felt so welcome, so free, so part of a community, as I did in those days, in that space.

The project to oust Mubarak was ours collectively, and differences of class, gender, religion and culture all seemed to disappear. Food was shared by everyone and anyone. Songs were sung and battles were fought. I was lucky to be there only during the relatively peaceful days, so I did not witness the violence that others did, and I only have positive memories of the experience. I was not under any illusions that the amazing unity and functioning grassroots democracy that was there at Tahrir Square could automatically be replicated across society. But it left me hopeful that people have it in them to recreate the values of Tahrir across the new Egypt, in the years to come.

When the uprising started, what did people think their protests could achieve?

The people wanted Mubarak to step down. That was the unifying demand. It was a simple and tangible objective. He represented all that was unjust with regard to people's lives.

How did you come to co-edit *Tweets from Tahrir*? When I came back from Egypt, I received a call from Alex, an ex-colleague, who was excited by the revolution. He told me that he had this idea for a book and asked whether I wanted to come on board. I thought it was a brilliant idea. We had been glued to the #Jan25 hashtag on Twitter. It provided a new kind of reporting of a great historical event. The tweets provided a second-by-second, real-time account of a revolution as it unfolded. But much of this important information is then lost in the vacuum of cyberspace. After a few weeks it becomes very difficult to even find old tweets, as they gradually disappear from Twitter. But the narrative of how the revolution was reported, in the way that it inspired us, was asking to be captured. We felt this had to be documented for history, but also we wanted the Egyptian revolution to inspire others.

What has the Egyptian revolution told us about the power, or otherwise, of social media?

As Ahdaf Soueif said in her foreword to our book, without social media the revolution would not have happened in the way that it did. The revolution was a long time coming, but Twitter and Facebook provided the instant communication that allowed certain events to evolve, adapt and manifest themselves swiftly and effectively.

The revolutionaries primarily used Twitter as an alternative press, and many "citizen journalists" were created during those 18 days. Tweeting was used as a

JOHN BUNZL examines recent speeches by Israeli premier Binyamin (Bibi) Netanyahu to identify their underlying assumptions and perceptions of the conflict between Israel

Tweets from Tahrir: Egypt's revolution as it unfolded, in the words of the people who made it, edited by Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns, with a foreword by Ahdaf Soueif, OR Books, £8.

authority's interests. The council has no credible plan for doing anything with the land at Dale Farm, yet in this time of austerity they were prepared to put aside £18 million pounds – realistically £22 million and rising – for what? Destroying a community, creating homelessness and putting people on the roadside. Why?

It gets worse. The Travellers identified possible sites where the owners, a government department, were prepared to let them stay. But Basildon said no again. Objectively its position was ludicrous. So again, why?

The answers can only be prejudice and racism. There is the prejudice of the councillors themselves. There is the general prejudice against Roma, Gypsies and Travellers – there are still pubs across the country who ban them (illegally).

Then there is the material interest of the people who live close to Dale Farm. Here prejudice meets class. Dale Farm's neighbours are not typical Basildon residents. They are well-to-do people living in big houses, semi-mansions, with large amounts of ground. They are the Basildon burghers. And because of the prejudice, the Travellers threatened their property values.

The eviction of sites is all of a piece with a wider repression of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers that has been going on across Europe for centuries. Jewish Socialists' Group member Donald Kenrick has written about this history. His collaborator in much of this work has been Grattan Puxon, who was the

indomitable spirit of Dale Farm, convincing both the Travellers and their supporters over a period of years that resistance is not futile, whether in the courts or on the ground.

In Hungary, Roma sites have been set alight and people shot running away. In France they have been rounding Roma people up and illegally deporting them to Eastern Europe. In Italy they have been rounding Roma up and taking them out of the city. In Britain, East European Roma are being demonised as thieves, as dirty, as child traffickers and so forth, with some local politicians stirring the issue up in a disgraceful way.

In turn many prejudices facing Roma, Gypsies and Travellers overlap with those of migrants in general – people seen as not belonging, who move from place to place seasonally. When fighting back, the demands are much the same: freedom of movement and the right to stay.

Some Jews have expressed solidarity. We have a tragic history in common in the Holocaust. We, like Roma, Gypsies and Travellers are seen as outsiders, not of this or any country, moving from place to place. So a number of Jewish activists, rabbis and others have made statements supporting Gypsies, issued press releases and organised solidarity. Even the *Jewish Chronicle* felt obliged to carry a sympathetic article.

On one level the battle of Dale Farm was lost. Despite the campaigning and resistance, the eviction has gone ahead. But it has opened up the opportunity for a deeper and broader solidarity movement. A Traveller Solidarity Network was launched on 5th November to make sure that the groundswell of support that has emerged is not squandered (see box below).

Local authorities around the country will want to avoid the events of Dale Farm happening on their patch. If this movement takes off they will have good reason to fear this and will see the sense in avoiding a repetition of Basildon's shocking and wasteful intransigence based on entrenched prejudice.

Traveller Solidarity Network

The Traveller Solidarity Network was set up in the aftermath of the eviction of the Travellers from their land at Dale Farm in Essex with the aim of building on the resistance that was carried out by Travellers and their supporters there. These are their founding principles.

- We are a network of Travelling and settled people, working together to promote and effect equality between Travelling and settled people.
- We are committed to principles of mutual aid and solidarity.
- We believe in everyone's right to a home and a way of life. We fight for freedom of movement and the right to stay for everyone.
- We use Direct Action as a central tactic. We support and work with a diversity of tactics.

- We will resist evictions and other expressions of violence and discrimination against Travellers, Roma and Gypsies.

- We see ourselves as part of the antifascist movement and the wider struggle against racism and class oppression.

- We do not aim to duplicate or replace other organisations and networks with similar goals. We have done and will continue to co-operate with such groups whenever relevant.

- We believe that the current political and economic system plays a central part in shaping the way Travellers experience oppression today.

- We are committed to educating ourselves and others as part of our political work.

Find out more at: <http://travellersolidarity.org/>

means to truthfully report the facts on the ground and to get the word out not only to fellow Egyptians, but also beyond Egypt. It was a successful attempt to report the events as they unfolded, especially when the state media was churning out ludicrous reports. The 25th January protests, which materialised into the first day of the revolution, were advertised, and news spread like wildfire in minutes on Facebook. Twitter particularly proved an excellent medium for people to express their fear, anticipation, excitement and dismay, and to electrify people around the world with their words.

So, yes, social media was powerful. But this was not a "Twitter revolution", as described by many western commentators at the time. That simplistic description ignores the deep-seated causes that led to the uprising, the extreme poverty, the lack of economic opportunity, and oppression by a police state. It also ignored the role of the urban poor who fought and died on the streets, and the working class whose strikes provided the last push that toppled the regime. The percentage of these revolutionaries who had smartphones and were tweeting was minor. Tunisia can be cited as having more of a mobilising effect on the majority of Egyptians than Twitter, for sure.

To what extent did the protesters foresee the backlash by the interim government and the military?

That depends on who you ask. The protesters in Tahrir and cities around Egypt were not a homogeneous force, and the level of foresight differed significantly. Many socialists and politically educated groups could see the impending danger of the army's appearance on the scene, in particular. It would have been impossible to have predicted how exactly the army would behave in the square in January and February. One view is that because the army did not expect the people to be so welcoming, the protesters rendered it almost impossible for the army to attack people in that phase. But it was unpredictable and it could have gone either way, depending on the events of the day. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces, though, could also see advantages in not having Gamal Mubarak succeed his father, as he did not have a military background. However, after the fall of Mubarak, when the army took charge of the country, it showed its true colours, and its alliances and interests surfaced. Many were surprised, but others were not.

How politically significant were the political Islamists back in February, and how significant are they now, as protesters return to Tahrir Square and the elections take place?

Firstly, it is important not to lump all political Islamists together. The recent period has seen the surfacing of Salafis, who are to the right of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood played a significant role in the organising and dealing with logistics in Tahrir Square in the first 18 days of the uprising. Grassroots organising is their strength as a movement. In recent years they have filled the void that the corrupt failing state created. They built hospitals and schools and provided medicine, doctors, lawyers and education to the poor. This is very significant in influencing the poor and illiterate to vote for them. I would – it makes sense. It especially makes sense given that Egypt is at the early

stages of building its democracy. Political parties have not had time to form and campaign in the run-up to the election. So established groups like the Brotherhood have a huge advantage. They did flout regulations by campaigning outside polling stations and guiding people to vote for them, though others did as well.

The party's leadership has also been wary of criticising the currently unpopular military and has thus alienated many people, including many of their own younger and urban middle class membership. However, the Brotherhood are hierarchical, and reformist at best; they are definitely not revolutionary in their outlook. Many protesters do not believe that the Brotherhood can provide solutions to the extreme neoliberal policies that have entrenched poverty in Egypt, or ensure a less brutal state in terms of political and civil freedoms. I don't think they have the macro-economic analysis or viable alternative. Nor can they provide the free society that the revolutionary youth demand. So they are a significant force, but not one which can satisfy the true calls of those who brought down Mubarak in February.

What has been the involvement of women in the uprising, at the beginning of 2011 and more recently?

Women were absolutely central to the revolutionary uprising in January. But so were Christians, and the urban poor and many other groups that have been politically marginalised in Egypt for decades. Yet the western media seemed obsessed with the story that women were actually involved. Of course they were! Don't women want a new Egypt too? And yes, granted, women did not do much of the frontline fighting, and yes many risked sexual harassment and violation, a known tactic used by authorities to humiliate and deter women. But, despite that, women of all ages and backgrounds were in the square, in the field hospitals and on the marches in numbers. Of course, every time the dust settles after a stage in the struggle, the regime's remnants and other right wing factions immediately seek to marginalise women and religious and political minorities, and understate their role in the revolutionary struggle. This is predictable and a well known strategy, not just in Egypt; there are many examples in history everywhere.

How might the uprising in Egypt affect the country's relationship with Israel?

It is difficult to gauge in the short and medium term. Whatever the character of the forthcoming government, I do not think it will want to risk fundamentally altering the country's relationship with Israel, at least not any time soon. There is too much at stake. Any serious challenge to the status quo could mean a retaliation in some form by the hegemonic powers. Rocking the boat when it comes to Israel means risking US aid, and especially military aid. It also could mean international trade embargoes, which Egypt cannot afford at the moment. However, the Egyptian population was disgusted by the role Mubarak's regime played as Israel's lackey when it came to its treatment of Palestinians, especially on the border. The wall built on the Gaza border epitomised its willingness to do Israel's work for it. In the longer term, though, I believe things will be very different. The Egyptian

people have shown they will not stand for injustice any more. And if they succeed in building democracy in the country, they will demand that Egypt withdraws from the mechanisms that continue to treat Israel preferentially and to oppress Palestinians.

How have Egyptians in London related to this year's events back home?

I am not part of an Egyptian community in the UK, so I cannot claim to represent any group's views. But what I do know is that the revolution has brought

many Egyptians together. It has united them in their hopes for a new Egypt – an Egypt that they may want to live in and be a part of. Many who have had little interest in politics have become rejuvenated. The revolution has given many Egyptians a cause and given all of us a sense of national pride. It has made all of us so proud of our fellow countrywomen and men who took that chance, and have changed Egypt forever. Colonialism, then imperialism, had broken people's sense of self-worth, but now the first stage of the revolution has made it possible for us to feel so, so, so proud to be Egyptian.

twitter

TravellerW Mo-ha-med

Police throws rocks @ demonstrators while we raised our arms. We're unarmed, they're in full gear. We are strong, they're weak. #25Jan #Egypt
25 January 2011 16:27:33

Gsquare86 Gigi Ibrahim

The government have blocked everything because they are so afraid, but the people are not and will not give up!!
29 January 2011 13:47:53

Gsquare86 Gigi Ibrahim

The plan is to get Mubarak out, there is no organization, the people are the ones driving the revolution!!
31 January 2011 16:51:30

Gsquare86 Gigi Ibrahim

The revolution is being twitterized even with the internet being shut by the government #Egypt
31 January 2011 16:56:27

3arabawy Hossam

Plainclothes thugs (police) are on horses now, trying to storm Tahrir Square, with whips! #Jan25
2 February 2011 15:01:23

Gsquare86 Gigi Ibrahim

I WILL NOT LEAVE TAHRIR TONIGHT so stop telling me to

do so! We need more people in TAHRIR NOW!! Get here for our freedom!!! #Egypt
2 February 2011 19:39:22

monasosh monasosh

2 of my friends confirm another one is shot through the head, dead. My friend called me crying #Jan25 this is awful, something has to be done
3 February 2011 05:29:33

MohammedY Mohammed Yahia

No one can imagine the beautiful feeling one gets as you enter #Tahrir Square. It's like coming home & being surrounded by loved ones #Jan25
4 February 2011 22:06:49

beleidy Amr El Beleidy

I cannot believe what just happened! Hosny Mubarak resigned! The army now controls the country!
11 February 2011 18:03:42

mosaaberizing Mosa'ab Elshamy

Tears filling Tahrir!
11 February 2011 18:08:14

monasosh monasosh

Today we fulfilled our promise to those who died #Jan25 #KhaledSaid
11 February 2011 18:44:23

monasosh monasosh

I'm in Tahrir square. This is where it all started on #Jan25 when we declared our demands ppl thought we were mad. Look where madness got us
12 February 2011 00:31:48

BETWEEN THE LINES

A basic justification of Zionism is the claim that Jews were exiled by the Romans in 70CE, and are now "returning" to their ancient homeland, however, historical research does not substantiate this narrative. There was no violent expulsion by the Romans; two thirds of the Jewish people lived outside Palestine at the time and Judaism spread mostly through conversion. The idea of "exile" as a fateful condition was not a Jewish one, originally, but was a Christian interpretation of exile as punishment for rejecting Jesus. But Bibi Netanyahu tries to give a personal confirmation of the Zionist story. In his speeches he talks about an ancient seal from Biblical times bearing an inscription of the name "Netanyahu"; he offers this as historical proof of the narrative of "exile and return". But, to uphold the myth, his family's name – Milikowski – had to be changed.

Bibi Netanyahu's speech to the United Nations last September included the following strange

statement: "The settlements are a result of the conflict." The dominant Israeli rhetoric frequently blurs cause and effect. When Netanyahu states, correctly, that the conflict began before a single settlement was established in the West Bank, he implicitly refers to the fact that, all along, the core of the conflict was the clash between Zionism as a settler movement and the original inhabitants. Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the founding father of the political tradition with which Netanyahu identifies, understood this in 1923 when he said: "It is utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs for converting 'Palestine' from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority ... there is no solitary evidence of any colonisation being carried on with the consent of the native population."

Netanyahu frequently refers to the lack of Palestinian recognition of Zionist Israel as the "core" of the problem. He regrets the "refusal of the

Defenders of Zionism often call their critics antisemites. Pro-Palestine activists say that Zionists often shout "antisemite" dishonestly to shield Israel from criticism. REUBEN

ROSENBERG presents a simple guide to separate anti-

JOHN BUNZL examines recent speeches by Israeli premier Binyamin (Bibi) Netanyahu to identify their underlying assumptions and perceptions of the conflict between Israel and Palestine

19th March 2011 appeared in The Jewish Socialist Winter 2011



Palestinians to recognise a Jewish state in any border", and says, "Palestinians should first make peace with Israel and then get their state". He demands that they should

"recognise the Jewish state and make peace with us". His underlying assumption is that Palestinian behaviour is responsible for the conflict, which could therefore be overcome by Palestinians changing their behaviour. Yet Zionist-Israeli aims and goals were always independent of the needs, wishes or aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs – though they constituted part of the circumstances that had to be taken into consideration and dealt with.

The demand for recognition is actually a recent phenomenon resulting from diplomatic tactics. An eventual counter-recognition of Palestinian rights by Israel was never spelled out in detail because such a recognition might put into question the essential historical gains of Zionism/Israel that were achieved by unilateral force. From the late 1970s the Palestinians made clear both their readiness to limit territorial aspirations, and their preference for diplomacy over armed struggle. There was specific recognition in 1988, and from the Oslo accords 1993 to the present day. The PLO renounced violence, abrogated its charter and accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338. But neither Palestinian recognition of Israel nor the changes in PLO tactics or ideology have resulted in relevant policy changes by the Israeli state.

When the Palestinians tried to fulfil these demands from a position of relative weakness, they were then confronted with new ones. At the UN, Netanyahu asked Palestinians to recognise Israel as "the Jewish State", which could also be interpreted as a state with a Jewish majority. But in Israeli-Zionist parlance the meaning of the concept is clear. As Netanyahu himself declared in April 2009: "Recognition of Israel as the national state of the Jewish people is a matter of substance and principle ... without which it will not be possible to advance the diplomatic process and reach a peace settlement." According to the "Palestine Papers" – the confidential files of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations leaked through Al Jazeera – the same demand was raised in off-the-record meetings. Israeli minister Tzipi Livni told the Palestinian negotiator Ahmad Qurei (Abu Ala): "Israel is the state of the Jewish people ... Israel was established to become a national home for Jews from all over the world."

These demands are actually raised in the implicit hope that they will be rejected by the Palestinians, so that the stalled "Peace Process" can then be blamed on them. Even if the Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas became a Zionist, sang the *Hatikva* or wore a *kippa*, this

would still not lead to Palestinian national rights being granted. After his Bar Ilan speech of 2009 in which Netanyahu mentioned the words "Palestinian State", his father, Benzion, told Israeli TV Channel 2 News about a private conversation with his son, in which his son confirmed that he did not really support a Palestinian state: he supported it only "under conditions that they [Palestinians] will never accept".

Bibi Netanyahu advocates "direct negotiations without preconditions". At the same time he and his predecessors insist on several "Noes: no return to the 1967 borders; no "partition" of Jerusalem; and no right of return for Palestinian refugees. Although the Palestinian Authority/PLO have been flexible on these issues, out of weakness, in endless direct negotiations (officially since 1991), they have not achieved any substantial move on the Israeli side. Nevertheless, Netanyahu advocates "only ... direct negotiations", and claims that "so far the Palestinians have refused to negotiate".

Netanyahu used these words on the occasion of the Palestinian bid for recognition of statehood through the UN, but they represent a longer-term strategy. Ever since the period of the British Mandate, negotiations were not rejected but neither were they seen as an instrument for solving the conflict between the two communities in Palestine. The priority was to gain time to promote the Zionist project. They conducted negotiations either to improve conditions for this project or as a result of outside pressure. They attributed failures of negotiations to the other side being intransigent. Netanyahu claims that the "generous offer" by then Prime Minister Ehud Barak, at the 2000 Camp David summit (an offer which Netanyahu actually opposed), was totally rejected by Arafat who subsequently started the Second Intifada. This narrative was questioned by participants and refuted by scholars, but it became a rationalisation for refusing to continue negotiations, as it was claimed that "we have no partner on the other side".

Since the Palestinians have no legitimate political/national claims, according to official Israeli discourse, and since they are considered guilty of sabotaging peace efforts, the questions remain: why do "they" behave that way, and what are "their" motives? The answers to these questions have many variations but they amount to the contention that, rather than being driven by real grievances, the Palestinians are motivated by factors such as culture, Islam, racism, fanaticism and antisemitism. Ancient enmities against Jews are presented as the source of Arab hostility. Netanyahu insinuates that the Palestinians wanted to ethnically cleanse the Jews – to make the country *judenrein* (Nazi-terminology meaning "clean of Jews").

Both Palestinians and Israelis have talked for decades about a political separation between the two peoples. Netanyahu claims that Jews would not be allowed to live in Palestine, and he calls it "apartheid". But the Palestinians are not

challenging their right to live there but oppose their status as settlers, who are being used as instruments of another country (Israel) to prevent Palestinian independence and statehood (in what is actually 22% of Mandatory Palestine). According to frequent statements of Palestinian officials, which are acknowledged even by some settlers, Jews would be able to live in Palestine as long as they took Palestinian citizenship and accepted Palestinian sovereignty.

Netanyahu said in his speech to the UN: "Let's listen to one another", but Israeli discourse seems to be driven by Freudian "projection" in which Israeli leaders attribute their own experiences,

intentions and actions to the "Other". Most commentators associate the term "Apartheid" with the status of the settlements and with the separation wall that Israel has built in the West Bank. And the insinuation about ethnic cleansing is strange coming from the head of a state that itself came into being through massive ethnic cleansing (the Nakba), a process which still continues, on a smaller scale, up to today.

John Bunzl heads the Middle East desk of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs and is professor of Political Science at the University of Vienna. He has worked and published on the Middle East since the late 1960s.

POTHOLES AND SOUR MILK

A few days ago I saw a rather disturbing video of a man at the Bristol Occupation – part of the Occupy! movement that has targeted bankers – explaining that, "the Rothschilds and Zionists want to build a new world order", and getting an incredibly warm reception from the crowd. One of my friends commented: "There's so much of this about at the moment and otherwise nice, well-meaning people who usually try to be anti-racist don't see it. Time for a basic 'What is antisemitism' FAQ?"

Well quite. And while anti-Zionism is sometimes wrongly condemned as antisemitism, it is not unknown for the term "Zionist" to be used as a euphemism for "Jew". Working out when that is the case is not an exact science, but I suggest that the following checklist might help to dissect some of the rhetoric.

Does Zionism oppress the Palestinians, or does it cause potholes in your road and make your milk turn sour?

Zionism obviously does oppress the Palestinians, and one would expect Israel to be blamed for their suffering. However when "Zionists" are blamed for things unrelated to the Middle East – like, for example, the financial crisis – one is entitled to wonder what exactly is meant by the term. "The Credit Crunch: A Zionist accident" was the title of a chapter in a book recently put out by "progressive publishers" Zero Books. Is the writer really saying that a category of people, delineated only by their support for Israel, got together to redistribute the world wealth towards financiers. It's worth taking the

sentence, and replacing the word "Zionists" with "Israel supporters". If the sentence you are left with makes no sense whatsoever, then it's probably worth thinking carefully about what exactly is being said.

Equally, the right-wing Venezuelan opposition leader Capriles Radonski is not trying to oust his government because he is a "Zionist". Nor is the opposition led by the "Jewish Zionist bourgeoisie" as pro-Chávez media have alleged. Support for, or opposition to, Israel is not one of the major social and political cleavages in Venezuela.

Do Zionists want to build a "New World Order"?

No. Many of them want to royally screw over the Palestinians and maintain Israel as a Jewish ethnic state. And yes, some supporters of Israel, like supporters of other causes, do seek to influence their governments specifically in relation to their policy towards Israel. The idea that "Zionists" have a comprehensive plan for world domination is completely barmy, except from the perspective of longstanding Jewish conspiracy rubbish.

Who is being fingered as a "Zionist"?

When you hear a bunch of prominent people being described as a "Zionist cabal", check who is being talked about. Are these people particularly known for what they've said about Israel? Or has the person speaking or writing just selected a bunch of politicians with Jewish sounding names?

The Google test

This one should be done with care, and with the understanding that it does not yield definitive answers. But it is sometimes worth googling the formulations you encounter and seeing what turns up. Googling "Zionists + settlements" or "Zionists + occupation" tends to yield a rather different crowd to googling "Zionists + new world order".

A caveat: coincidences do occur. Over the centuries Jews have been accused of many things, and it is plausible that some criticisms made of Israel may innocently coincide with pre-existing antisemitic myths. A case in point is the killing of children. In the course of occupying the West Bank and Gaza, Israel does kill children. It is also true that opponents of oppressive governments highlight these governments' inhumanity by noting the killing of children. Sometimes people are too ready to represent these accusations against the Israeli government as a kind of reborn blood libel.

And finally... the moron test

If somebody objects to the term "antisemite" because "Arabs are Semites too", this might not indicate anything about their political beliefs, but it does suggest that they are moronic.

The meaning of words is established culturally and historically. If all words were interpreted by stripping them down to their etymological roots, the English language would sound very strange indeed.

Defenders of Zionism often call their critics antisemites. Pro-Palestine activists say that Zionists often shout "antisemite" dishonestly to shield Israel from criticism. REUBEN BARD-ROSENBERG presents a simple guide to separate anti-Zionism from antisemitism

This article first appeared on The Third Estate blog in October 2011. www.thethirdestate.net

EVEN IF THE PALESTINIAN LEADER MAHMOUD ABBAS BECAME A ZIONIST, SANG THE HATIKVA OR WORE A KIPPA, THIS WOULD STILL NOT LEAD TO PALESTINIAN NATIONAL RIGHTS BEING GRANTED

MIRI WEINGARTEN of the Israeli Human Rights Consortium evaluates the protests that have taken hold in Israel during the year that has seen uprisings all over the Middle East

CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

This summer's extraordinary wave of popular protest in Israel began with a successful consumer boycott protesting at the high price of cottage cheese. It continued with a tent encampment against high housing costs in Tel Aviv that escalated rapidly into mass camps and squatting countrywide. These were accompanied by weekly demonstrations and local protests on a variety of issues, and, in mid-August, a demonstration of hundreds of thousands in Tel Aviv. The demands were for everything from free childcare and better working conditions to an end to privatisation of services – all under the banner of an overarching demand for social justice and a restoration of the welfare state.

The uprising marked an abrupt end to years of apathy, during which citizens' participation in politics steadily decreased, voting rates sank and, more recently, even typical political argumentative bickering, a hallmark of Israeli social gatherings, petered out.

It is marked by a rare vitality and enthusiasm. Ha'aretz journalist Gideon Levy, better known for his caustic critique of Israeli policies against Palestinians, has said, "From the first large demonstration on July 23, it was marked by an enthusiasm we never witnessed at any other demonstration, perhaps since the birth of the state." Israeli journalist and activist Dimi Reider pointed to the dramatic development of solidarity and co-operation among activists from completely disparate spheres of Israeli life.

It is the biggest protest movement in Israel's history. The only comparable mass mobilisation was the "protest of 400,000" organised by Peace Now in Tel Aviv in 1982, in response to Israeli involvement in the massacres of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatilla in Lebanon.

The comparison seems incongruous today. It would be hard to imagine any such protest on behalf of Palestinians in Israel's current hard-line climate. Indeed, the protests have determinedly avoided the issue – a precondition for bringing so many out to the streets, despite all the attempts of the Israeli government to discredit it.

THE BACK STORY

To understand the roots of the movement and its overwhelming public support, it is necessary to examine Israel's history.

The state of Israel was dominated in its early years by David Ben-Gurion's party, Mapai (Workers Party of Eretz Israel), and its trade union, Histadrut. For the first decades of its existence, Israel defined itself as a socialist-leaning, or at least a social welfare state. Residues of its structures still survive today, and it would seem that even younger generations, who never knew the collective and the kibbutz first hand, still believe in its basic premises. In repeat surveys by the University of Haifa in 2008 and 2010 (and largely ignored until this summer), 86% of Israelis said they believed the state should be responsible for basic needs such as minimum income, affordable housing, free healthcare and free schooling from nursery age. In a country with financial policies and inequality indices comparable with those of the US, such figures are striking.

The Mapai government was characterised by discrimination, however, not only against Israel's Arab minority but also against Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, the Mizrahim, who were sent to remote settings and allocated working class roles. Menachem Begin, leader of the rival Herut (later Likud) bloc – ultra-nationalist politically and liberal economically – used this exclusion to define Ben-Gurion's party as elitist and racist. In 1977 Mapai's reign came to an end when Likud won a sweeping victory through the support of the Mizrahim.

Likud has consistently campaigned for a "Greater Israel" and supported the settlements and Jewish supremacist groups, while Mapai (later Labour), originally a founder and supporter of settlements, gradually came to espouse separation and a two-state solution, based on a partial withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory. Since the late 1970s, every election campaign has centred not on the socio-economic and political image of Israeli society but on these differing visions of the relationship between Palestinians and Jews.

Israelis have voted, therefore, according to their position on the occupation, not the economy. By the mid-1990s, they could not have voted according to their socio-economic preferences even if they had wanted to, because by then there was little to distinguish Likud from Labour. Both parties had relinquished all pretensions to collectivism and, gradually, the idea of the welfare state. From Netanyahu's first term as Prime Minister in 1996, a drastic liberalisation of the market ensued and the gaps between rich and poor widened at alarming speed. Labour's leader at the time, Shimon Peres, fully supported this process.

In 2000 a blow was dealt to Labour's two-state position by its leader Ehud Barak, who declared at the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada that he had offered Yasser Arafat "everything" and received violence in return. This declaration, although not supported by the facts, was taken at face value and led to a collapse of the Israeli peace movement, a mass defection from the two-state aspiration (and from Labour itself) and a steady shift toward pessimistic, hard-line nationalist views. From there, it was a short step to the current ultra-nationalist parliament and its distancing from democratic and pluralistic traditions.

THE POOR GET POORER

Meanwhile, the gap between rich and poor has never been wider. Ten Israeli multi-billionaire families control more than 30% of the economy. They do not hide their wealth and rarely give to charity, causing widespread anger. Israel's richest 10% are 14 times richer than the poorest 10%.

Israel's poor – Arabs, Haredi-orthodox communities, new immigrants and people living in the far north and south – have become much poorer, and their access to public services and a basic income is steadily shrinking. Middle-class families have found that even two full-time salaries cannot meet the rising costs of housing, fuel, electricity, transport and basic household products.

The past two years have seen an erosion in social

solidarity and aggressive, predatory social and economic competition, leading to an increase in the number of millionaires alongside deepening poverty. This has been accompanied by a marked hardening of nationalist and racist attitudes toward both Palestinian citizens of Israel and liberal Jewish critics of Israeli policies. This is expressed on multiple levels, through draconian legislation, police repression, media incitement and street violence.

The image of Netanyahu epitomises both trends in Israeli society. It is a telling fact that he is supported by Israelis for his unashamedly hawkish stance toward Palestinians, but at the same time heartily loathed as a "capitalist pig". Israelis know that he, more than any other politician, is responsible for the growing inequality. Yet they have continued to support him for his position on the Palestinians because they know that elections and the current party system are irrelevant to their economic problems.

This reality underpins the Israeli social movement that burst forth this summer: the failure of an entire political system to address the needs and aspirations of the majority of its citizens. The polls suggest that the main drivers of this disgruntled mass are the middle classes. The protests directly threaten not just the government but the entire system in Israel. The government is well aware of this and has responded to the protests variously with dismissal, hasty "reform" laws, committees, defamation and sheer panic. It fears that none of these will make much difference, because the street has decided that this is not a matter that can be addressed with the usual remedies, and that neither Likud nor Labour nor any other party of the old order can provide the answer.

WHAT ABOUT PALESTINE?

The protest movement faces various challenges. It is in danger of co-option by the government, which has set up a committee to "deal" with its demands and is presenting some of its privatisation initiatives as "reforms" implemented in response to the protests. There is a danger that the middle class will be bought off, while the poor and marginalised are ignored. And there is a danger that the protest will just run out of steam as the summer holidays come to an end.

The most serious danger, however, relates to the Palestinians. And it is not just the silent complicity of the movement in the occupation or its failure to tackle racism against Arabs within Israel that are causes for concern. There is also a real danger that, in this respect, the movement could bring about change for the worse, not the better.

Some Arab citizens of Israel have joined the protests, and indeed, as the poorest in Israeli society, they need to. But their concerns are voiced with caution and the leaders of the movement steer clear of being identified with "leftists" (that is, opponents of the occupation and supporters of equal rights for the Arab minority).

Most public references to the settlements in the movement so far have been made by settlers themselves, who have suggested increased construction in the occupied West Bank as a solution to housing shortages. The government, for



its part, has approved thousands of new housing units in the settlements since the protests began.

Criticism of the settlements has only been voiced by small parts of the movement – and even then usually with a heavy emphasis on unfair allocation of funds and the burden they impose on the Israeli economy (alongside the gargantuan security budget). The issue of social injustice to the Palestinians themselves is consistently avoided. More radical activists who are committed to justice for Palestinians have been vilified not only by opponents of the movement but also by organisers within the movement itself, who fear the loss of public support if these ideas are voiced.

The majority of the protesters seem to agree with what would be Labour leader, M K Shelly Yachimovich, who is seen as a supporter of social justice and has addressed the issue publicly. In an interview in August she said that the settlements are not relevant to the struggle for social justice and that linking the two issues would be a mistake. She added that the settlement project is "not a sin or a crime" and that she would welcome settlers to the movement, which she believes provides a "unifying language".

The veteran anti-occupation journalist Amira Hass has referred to Yachimovich's words as indicative of the movement's current "selective justice" approach. She pointed to a grave risk represented by "social-nationalist" (not to say national-socialist) tendencies.

Other commentators have also voiced fears that the movement could usher in a blind, nationalist consensus, which aspires to social justice – but for Jews only.

Hass is adamant, though, that the Israeli anti-occupation left should not abandon the movement. If it were an academic exercise, she argues, the left might be justified in taking a purist approach. But it is not. It is a dynamic movement capable of – indeed, representing – change. The role of the left is therefore to contribute its experience and knowledge and to try to affect the final outcome of this still-evolving process.

A key activist put this idea to me more graphically: "If we want to make a difference in the movement," she said, "we have to put our hands right into the shit that is there." Indeed, any political changes effected by the movement will be first and foremost to its own participants, who are currently in a process of politicisation and radicalisation.

HIDDEN POTENTIAL

Israeli journalist Dimi Reider argues that there is positive potential in the fact that the movement is "gnawing away ... at the principle of separation, of

If the state is against the people, the people are against the state.

which the occupation is just one exercise". If he is right, this could lead to a deeper process of political awakening, exposing the hidden power structures and inequalities at the heart of Israeli society, and ultimately opposing all forms of segregation and injustice, including the oppression of Palestinians. The activists – and the public – might then learn to read the occupation outside the "security" and "survival" language imposed on them by state propaganda and nationalist axioms.

The government is keenly aware of this potential and will do all in its power to undermine it. This

includes initiating "security"-defined events to replace and supersede the protests before they are able to rise to the challenge. A first test of this sort for the movement was the short offensive against Gaza on 18–25 August, following an attack by unknown terrorists from the Sinai on soldiers and civilians in southern Israel. This ended after the killing of several Egyptian soldiers by Israeli forces led to fury in Egypt's own social movement and popular pressure on its government to send the Israeli ambassador home. Israel's protests, which faded to a whisper during the offensive, reawakened promptly afterwards, suggesting that the developments underway are neither transient nor superficial.

A further challenge will be posed by the Palestinian

Authority's bid for statehood recognition at the UN. The Israeli government has been gearing up for mass action by Palestinians in support of the bid. This not only threatens to overshadow the Israeli protests but also to throw into relief the contradictions between current Israeli approaches to the Palestinians, which have veered sharply towards extreme nationalist, racist and even fascist tendencies in recent years, and the Israeli protestors' declared wish for deep systemic change and social justice.

With the movement continuing to mobilise hundreds of thousands of protesters, it has come under attack from many quarters – not only from the right wing, the tycoons and those who benefit from the status quo, but also from the Palestine solidarity movement in the Occupied Territories and overseas.

Palestine solidarity activists have rightly represented the situation in Israel/Palestine as echoing apartheid and other colonial regimes. Palestinians, Israelis and internationals who embarked on a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) in order to force Israeli governments and citizens to change, may now be faced with the question of what kind of practical process of change they are seeking. If a potential for change has appeared, would they know how to recognise and influence it? Part of the answer lies in the ability of all activists – Israeli, Palestinian and international – to try to hold open, direct discussions with these agents of change, and to try to influence the direction they are taking.

That could contribute to a new vision of liberation and social justice for both Palestinians and Israelis.

free schooling from an early age; a new taxation system lowering indirect taxes and increasing direct taxation. Demands for equality for Israel's Arab citizens have been put forward but not officially adopted.

Participating movements (partial list) A movement for affordable and public housing; a movement of doctors and specialist registrars for better working conditions; movements of social workers, psychologists and teachers for better working conditions and for better public mental healthcare and education systems; single-parent families and young couples with children demanding free nursery age schooling; a movement for reduction of prices in dairy products; a movement of farmers opposing imports of dairy products; manpower company employees; trade unions; student unions; Arab rights groups; settlers' groups (withdrawn in July); human rights groups; peace groups; socialist and radical-leftist groups...

Decision-making By "popular assembly" in the encampments, inspired by similar assembly committees in Madrid's May protests.

Committees In July, Netanyahu appointed Professor Manuel Trajtenberg to head a committee to recommend ways of meeting the demands of the protesters. He undermined his own decision a few days later when he said he could not guarantee he would follow the committee's recommendations. The protesters established their own committee of 60 experts, chaired by radical leftist Professor Yossi Yonah and divided according to themes such as healthcare, labour and so on.

The facts

The label #j14, in Twitter format, means 14th July, the day on which Israel's uprising began. It is a way of showing that Israeli protesters are emulating the uprisings in Egypt (tagged #Jan25), Bahrain (#Feb14), Syria (#Mar15), Spain (#15M) and so on.

The media star Daphni Leef, 25, is the woman who pitched the first tent on trendy Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv to protest that she could not afford to rent an apartment in the city. Her action – and her Facebook page – inspired thousands. Within days, hundreds of tents lined the boulevard and dozens of other encampments appeared up and down the country, as well as in less privileged parts of Tel Aviv. Leef came to symbolise the protest, although she has repeatedly denied being its leader. She has come under personal attack from journalists and politicians opposed to the protest movement. In one case an anchor on a TV financial programme challenged her live on air to explain why she had not completed her military service (she has epilepsy).

Public support On 2nd August 2011, polls suggested that the protests had the backing of a staggering 98% of Kadima (opposition) supporters and 85% of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's party, Likud, supporters.

The official demands of the protests A general shift back from neoliberal policies to a welfare state; an end to privatisation of state-owned enterprises; more resources for affordable public housing and transport;



People before profits!

FROM WHERE I'M STANDING

The bid for Palestinian statehood through the United Nations has divided Palestinians and their supporters. **FRANK BARAT** argues that the initiative colludes with those who are perpetuating and supporting the occupation rather than challenging them

At the United Nations building in New York City on 23rd September 2011, Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) addresses the General Assembly in his bid to obtain full recognition of Palestine, as a state, in the United Nations.

As President Obama, and Prime Ministers Cameron and Netanyahu were when they spoke, Mahmoud Abbas is sharply dressed and wears a suit. There is only one major difference between him and the others, but a crucial one: Mahmoud Abbas gives his speech in Arabic.

Mahmoud Abbas wears the imperialists' clothes but does not speak the imperialists' language of choice. Abbas, in the eyes of Obama, Cameron and Netanyahu, represents the "other" – the "majority world" (often mistakenly called "developing world"), the oppressed. He represents the people that, for them, do not count.

For all the talk about the PA bid putting the US and Israel under pressure, for all the nervousness shown by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Barack Obama and the rest, they do not, at the end of the day, care the slightest about it. They do not care if all the polls in the world showed that the majority of people asked are in favour of recognising Palestine as a state, and they do not care if Abbas wears a suit or not.

Abbas could have worn Arafat's famous keffiyeh, the checked scarf that has become a Palestinian nationalist symbol; the result would have been the same. In their heads, there will always be masters (them) and servants (the others). Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinians, today, still represent the other. And the other does not have a voice, even at the UN.

The UN is one of the most undemocratic bodies in the world. After all, five permanent members have the right to veto anything they disagree with. The decisions of those five members, the masters – United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China – overrule the actions that the rest of the world is sometimes willing to take.

In a way, this arrangement mirrors internationally what goes on in most countries: a powerful elite living the high life and making decisions for everyone else while the majority of humanity is struggling to make ends meet.

The UN is therefore part of the problem and will never bring justice to the Palestinians. It is precisely this body which exacerbated in 1947 the mess the Palestinians are currently in by passing a resolution calling for the partition of Palestine without the consent of its indigenous people. Thus, the UN violated the Palestinians' right to self-determination at the very moment other colonised peoples were exercising theirs.

Since then, dozens of resolutions have been adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council upholding the Palestinians' right of self-determination, demanding an end of occupation and

colonisation and Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands, and the right of return of the refugees.

Yet without exception, those resolutions have been violated by Israel with total impunity. Why? Because Israel is part of the masters' clique. Israel is in their club and represents the same interests.

While it is easy to understand the PA's motivations in making a move at the UN – taking matters for the first time in a long time into their own hands, not succumbing to pressure, making a statement – it has unfortunately very little chance to make any real difference on the ground. By going to the UN, the PA continues to accept the rules of its master/oppressor.

In history, there has never been a case of a master relinquishing power for philosophical and altruistic reasons.

Did the slave masters suddenly decide that it was morally-reprehensible to use other people as slaves? Did the segregationists in the US decide that Rosa Parks, after all, should be able to sit in the seat of her choice when going on a bus?

Did white South Africans, after the Sharpeville massacre, think that killing black women, kids and innocents was not what their beloved God or nationalist ideology had in mind? Did Hosni Mubarak after more than 30 years in power think that it was time to have a real democracy in Egypt? They did not.

Those struggles were won by people's power. When the people said "no". When the people, despite eventually facing terrible consequences, organised, took to the streets, marched, chanted, went on strike, united, rebelled and said: "We will not have it your way any longer."

What will make the road shorter for the Palestinians – who have already struggled and endured for so long – is to mobilise as much international solidarity as possible, to shift the balance in favour of the people faster. And this is on the way. Palestinian civil society has done precisely this with its 2005 civil society call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

All over the world, people acting on the BDS call are building a movement, and building momentum that no one can control because it comes from the bottom up, is in constant evolution and keeps reinventing itself. A movement based on human rights and international law.

This movement, accompanied by other initiatives such as the International Solidarity Movement, the Free Gaza Movement, the flotillas and "flytilla", the Viva Palestina convoys, the Russell Tribunal on Palestine and many other creative and spontaneous actions have isolated and delegitimised Israel, a rogue state, far more effectively than years of endless and fruitless negotiations.

People are taking matters into their own hands; they are writing and making history. The masters know that this has happened many times in the past. The thought of it happening again sends shivers into their expensive suits.

Frank Barat is a human rights activist and co-ordinator of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine. He has edited two books, *Gaza in Crisis* (Haymarket/Penguin) with Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé and the forthcoming *Corporate Complicity in Israel's Occupation* (Pluto Press) with Asa Winstanley.

This article was first published in *The Electronic Intifada* on 26th Sept 2011. <http://electronicintifada.net/>

THE GHOSTS OF CABLE STREET

While working on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the day the fascists were defeated in London's East End, **STEVE SILVER** made some unexpected discoveries

My maternal grandfather, Hymie Hertz, was born at 111 Cable Street in June 1914. He lived in the flat above his father's bakery; in total they were a family of nine. He was there for 24 years, moving out in 1938 when he married my grandmother, who he first met at a Young Communist League dance.

Naturally, I grew up with my "Poppa" telling me of that great day on 4th October 1936 when the fascists were routed in the East End: the barricaded street, people throwing things out of the windows on to the police, and marbles being rolled under horses' hooves. This wasn't the sort of history that you learned in school.

Most of his stories were about growing up in Cable Street. He lived near the Cable Picture Palace, a fleapit cinema that was nevertheless very popular, by the junction of Christian Street.

Opposite was a square where they used to play football. Except some of the times when they were playing football they were meant to be in *kheder* (Hebrew class). The rabbi would come out and drag the footballers into class and chastise them in Yiddish, unaware initially that while those whose surnames were Abrahams, Levy and Isaacs might need the lesson for their forthcoming barmitzvahs, the Kellys and Donnelly's probably didn't.

It would be easy to feel sorry for the rabbi. He taught in a small room with an open fire. One day, when the rabbi's back was turned, one of his pupils threw a string of firecrackers into the fire. Unaware of where the sudden barrage of loud popping noises was coming from, he hopped around the room, cursing in Yiddish, while his ungrateful pupils giggled.

In 1982 my grandfather died, and my rich source of stories about Cable Street went with him.

I probably didn't hear much more about Cable Street for a few years. Then, in 1986, while I was president of my college students' union, a magazine came in the post that grabbed my attention. It was the October edition of the anti-fascist publication *Searchlight*, which had been sent by the National Union of Students to every affiliate in Britain.

This wasn't just any edition. The cover and four centre pages were devoted to the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street. There were interviews with veterans Mick Mindel, Jack Shaw, and Charlie and Joyce Goodman. The magazine was heavily illustrated with photos and brought alive what happened that day. I was already involved in anti-racist activity, and here the pages of the magazine brought the past and the present together.

I contacted *Searchlight* shortly afterwards, and within months I was volunteering and totally immersed in anti-fascism. I have had a connection with *Searchlight*, in one way or another, ever since,

so I was delighted when the magazine asked me if I wanted to put together a pamphlet to mark the 75th anniversary. The first thing I did was to thumb through my old October 1986 edition for inspiration.

When I found out that there were five new books coming out relating to the Battle of Cable Street I knew that they had to be reviewed in that publication. None of them were ready for print yet, so they were all sent to me electronically.

Roger Mills emailed me his book, *Everything Happens in Cable Street* (see page 20). I read a bit of it, found it enthralling, and then sent him an email to thank him. It was great stuff. There were all kinds of connections with the street that I had never known about.

I was going to shut the computer down but instead I carried on reading. There were some interviews that the Cable Street Group had carried out in the 1980s, and I found myself reading one with Gertrude Jones, a woman who had lived above her parents' bakery in Cable Street.

"That's funny," I thought. My grandfather lived above his father's bakery. I was already aware of at least one other bakery in that western "Jewish" end of the street. David Rosenberg, the author of another of the books I was set to review, had told me that Battle veteran Aubrey Morris's grandparents had a bakery at 86 Cable Street so I wasn't that surprised to learn of yet another. "They must have been rivals," he said at the time.

As I was reading, I came across the following words, "...my surname was Hertz." It took a few minutes to process what I was reading. The name Gertrude Jones had meant nothing to me. Then I realised. I was reading an interview with my grandfather's sister, my Auntie Gertie. I hadn't recalled her married name.

I didn't know that in 1988 she had responded to a letter written to the *Jewish Chronicle* by Jil Cove on behalf of the Cable Street Group, which opened with the words: "Did you ever live in or near Cable Street?"

When I read one of the other forthcoming books, *The Battle of Cable Street*, which is actually an updated reprint, I came across another part of the same interview. Funnily enough, I had reviewed an earlier version for *Searchlight*, in October 1996, but as it only referred to Mrs Jones, I had no idea I was reading an interview with a member of my own family at that time.

As I read her words again, the stories that my grandfather told me came back to me as vividly as ever: "We had to board the shop with shutters and stay above it, ready to throw things down on them. The non-Jewish people surrounding us said 'You're hard working people and you don't interfere with anybody. You're nice families and we're going to see



that he doesn't get through Cable Street.' And they gave us things to throw at them – bricks, knives, lumps of wood, anything."

The song, "The Ghosts of Cable Street", by The Men They Couldn't Hang, now had new meaning for me.

I have no doubt that the memory of The Battle of Cable Street will live on. As I got enmeshed in the forthcoming anniversary I found myself press-ganged into being one of the organisers of the march and rally this year. Several other grandchildren of Cable Street veterans wrote in response to our committee's email, who also felt a personal connection and were keen to keep the memory of the events alive.

One of them is the granddaughter of Charlie Goodman, who *Searchlight* interviewed in 1986. She was looking for a photo of his arrest that day which we have located for her [this photo was on the front cover of the very first issue of *Jewish Socialist*].

It wasn't only in connection with my own family that I found a surprise from the past. When I interviewed Dan Jones at his house in Cable Street, he talked about his background and his father, Frederick Elwyn Jones, who had a distinguished career as a Labour politician. He had been Attorney General in Harold Wilson's government in the 1960s, and was later made a life peer. The most interesting thing from an anti-fascist perspective, though, was that he had been junior British Counsel during the prosecution of leading Nazis at the Nuremberg Trials.

Before I left, Dan showed me some of his artwork, much of it with an anti-fascist connection. He also showed me some work done by his mother,

Pearl Binder, who was a fascinating woman in her own right. Some weeks later, when I was writing about Mosley's notorious Olympia meeting of 1934, I found an eyewitness account from none other than Pearl Binder. As Dan has been a lifelong anti-fascist I was sure he would have known about his mother being there. I emailed him to let him know what I had found and to check that the address tallied and it was one and the same person. His response was, "Oh blimey, like so much of my mum's life and activities this is another interesting area that she didn't talk about and, no, I had no idea that mum was at Mosley's Olympia fracas. Please send us the reference."

Her account is a useful glimpse into what the anti-fascists at Cable Street helped prevent from ravaging Britain as it had the rest of Europe:

"I saw several Blackshirts using knuckledusters near me in attacking hecklers. I saw male Blackshirts attack women who interrupted, and a man brutally thrown out who had just stood up in his seat and not even spoken... In the corridors the police were beginning to arrive. There were several injured lying in the corridor; one, with a badly-broken head, was barely conscious."

It will not be many years before there are no veterans of 4th October 1936 left. Today's generation of anti-fascists has been entrusted to retell the story of the historic defence of the Jewish community of the East End of London. Long may it provide inspiration to anti-fascists everywhere – No Pasarán! They Shall Not Pass!

The pamphlet, *75th Anniversary The Battle of Cable Street*, is available from Searchlight Education Trust, £4 inc p&p, www.hopenothate.org.uk/shop/cablest

Building the barricades in Cable Street on 4th October 1936

Above: The Cable Street Group in the process of building the barricades in the morning of the Battle of Cable Street. Photo: Alan Turing

RESTORING

Many people went to great lengths to ensure that Cable Street was ready to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Battle. One went to great heights. **DAVID ROSENBERG** interviewed artist Paul Butler

There are riveting contemporary newspaper reports of the Battle of Cable Street, with dramatic photographs. Veterans of that amazing day have recorded radio interviews and written down their testimony. But none of these can match the power and permanence of a gigantic piece of public art that stands half way along this narrow East End street. The Cable Street mural completely covers the side wall of the old St George's Town Hall.

The brainchild of artist Dave Binnington, the mural was commissioned in the late 1970s, in the wake of the Battle's 40th anniversary, but it was repeatedly defaced and vandalised by fascists. In 1981, with "RACE WAR IN BRITAIN" daubed in huge letters across his work in progress, Binnington felt distraught and overwhelmed, and he abandoned the project. "He quit and left me holding the baby," says Paul Butler, who continued the work and ensured that the fascists would not have the last word.

Butler had already been involved in the mural. Binnington had asked him to create a series of predella panels along the bottom, which would be a narrative of the mural. Butler contacted Des Rochfort – who had worked with Binnington painting the Royal Oak mural in West London. He also recruited Ray Walker, an artist raised in the impoverished working class community of Toxteth in Liverpool, who Butler describes as "a socialist to his bootstraps". They set up their studio in the basement of the St George's town hall building.

Ray Walker died at the age of 39. Rochfort now lives in Alberta Canada, where he is Dean of Fine Arts at Lethbridge University. So it was Butler alone who spent the summer of 2011 perched on scaffolding, painstakingly restoring the mural, bit by bit. He completed it in mid-September, on the same day that an exhibition celebrating the mural's origins and development opened at the 1:1 gallery in Shoreditch. And it was basking in the bright sunshine at a small ceremony on 1st October to celebrate the restoration of the mural, addressed by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman, fellow Bengali councillors, Cable Street veteran Max Levitas and Butler himself. At that ceremony Butler described the mural as his proudest achievement, which reflected a cause he identified with totally.

The following day his handiwork could be admired by a much larger crowd, as more than 1,000 marchers, led by Bengali, Jewish and trade union banners, filed past the mural to a rally on a nearby stage, organised by the Cable Street 75 Committee.

Butler admits that his knowledge of the events of 1936 was initially very limited. "I knew that the Battle was a very important symbolic moment, after which Mosley wasn't permitted to wear his uniform, but it was really Dave Binnington who fleshed it out and gave me more detailed information. He introduced me to Phil Piratin's writing."

Binnington did the initial research and fundraising, and had started sketching in the design, but much of the mural depended on the team that took over the project. "The upper parts you can see with the buildings are based very

closely on what Dave (Binnington) had done," says Butler, "and we had to paint them and finish them, but the lower two-thirds had to be grit-blasted and reprimed so we were starting from scratch. We had to research the subject and redraw it."

It was painted using the German Keim system, based on a technology that goes back 100 years. "It is a wonderful paint system," says Butler. "Dave Binnington and Des Rochfort had used it on the Royal Oak mural. It uses mineral pigments in water on a porous ground not dissimilar to a fresco type technique. Then it is sprayed with a silicate solution which makes it fuse with the ground, and the colour is very, very beautiful." The 2011 restoration used an adaptation of that original system which aimed to return to the mural its original luminosity.

Many artists prefer their own company, and three into one doesn't go easily, but Butler, Rochfort and Walker developed a very close working relationship and hammered out a plan for the mural that could reconcile their differing styles. "We divided it into three sections. I took the middle section, Des took the right hand section and Ray took the left hand lower two-thirds. There is quite a contrast between what Des did and what Ray did and, in a way, what I did in the middle reconciled the two guys either side of me. It was quite difficult but it seemed to work out. You have bits that show the events allegorically – a Hitler-type fascist being tipped out of a gyrocopter – and you've got very abstracted and exaggerated elements. And then there is a sense of the ordinary folk – who are believable as real people – like the guy with the white shirt. Desmond's section is much more Arabesque with more curved, muscley twisted forms, while Ray's has harder edges – it's more flattened. Much as I admire Des's work, I think Ray's sections are absolutely brilliant."

Despite contrasting styles, they shared a common inspiration. "We were all figurative artists and we were all very committed to figuration because at that time we felt it was accessible. We were all interested in the Mexican muralists, such as Sequeiros and Rivera, so we wanted to do something dramatic which would be very exciting in terms of its formal design and which had a very dynamic structure. What remained from Dave's design was the focal point of the mural being the curve of the horse's head in the centre and the curve of its neck coming round and forming a vortex. In Dave's design this was much more pronounced."

Butler recalls the life model for the horse: "We drew a nag down on Hackney farm!" it took two years from his first involvement to complete the mural, the time being shared equally between research and painting. The practical aspects of creating such a large mural were extremely challenging: "The most difficult part was when the scaffolding was against the wall; seven floors of scaffolding. You get vertigo and, in bad weather, you get a gust of wind that blows your paint off. But the other aspect was you couldn't see what you were doing because the scaffolding was in the way, so when you painted a diagonal, even though we had it squared up, you would have to

LOCAL PRIDE

come all the way down to see if it was right then go all the way back again."

In the early 1990s, fascist activity revived with a vengeance in East London. The BNP temporarily gained a council seat on the Isle of Dogs, its thugs roamed the streets, and the mural was attacked and paintbombed. Butler recalls: "Des Rochfort had gone to Canada and so I was left to restore it and had a guy helping me. I had my car tyres slashed and white gloss paint poured all over my car and we had to have a police guard. You felt very vulnerable up the scaffolding and you could be shaken off it like an apple off a tree." At the same time, though, they often received more welcome attention: "We used to get guys who would come by and tell us they were there, and they would tell us stories about what happened."

When you stare at the mural, you can almost hear the maelstrom it portrays and the raised, determined voices of the characters in the foreground. Butler explains: "We wanted images which were convincing, powerful and hard-hitting but we needed to formalise them, to flatten, to abstract them, to see the folds of the jacket as they are being grabbed by the copper." The white-shirted protester in the central section is about to launch a missile at the police. Butler says: "I did the white shirt which I'm very pleased with – those folds and the piece of barricade and the pieces of furniture and the heads all had to be integrated as a design."

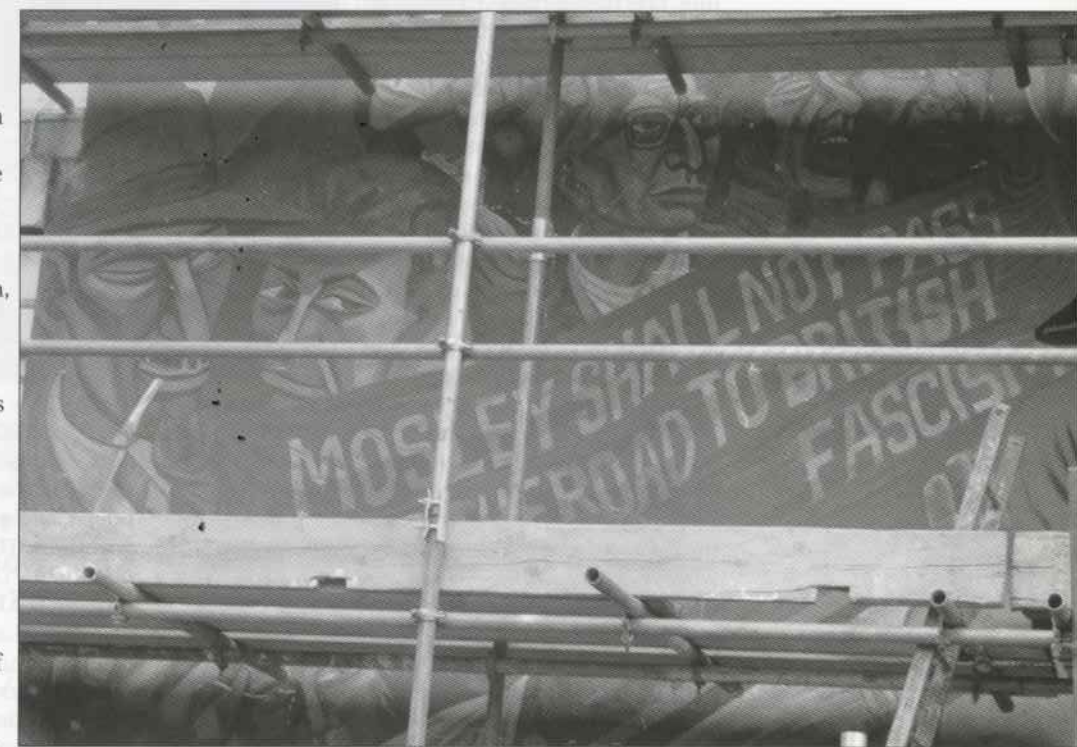
But who are the sharply-drawn characters in the mural? Many were based on original photos from the day of the battle. "There were photos of the mass of the people there. You see hundreds if not thousands of figures but with a magnifying glass you could pick out a particular figure that had some resonance. I've got the original drawings I did from the photograph of the guy with the white shirt. He's facing the other way in the photograph and he's only got a bit of his head and shoulder visible and I posed myself in the mirror to get the throwing action right, how you hold a missile in your right hand."

With missiles, bottles and fists flying, truncheons drawn, and marbles ready to be flung under the hooves of police horses, the violence of the confrontation is undeniable but, for Butler, "It is not a celebration of violence but celebrates the barricade and the slogan from the Spanish civil war – they shall not pass."

Most of those who took to the streets in 1936 were the local residents. Although many had later moved to other parts of London, a new local community, also largely descended from immigrants, has had to contend with modern day racists and fascists and the conditions of poverty and hopelessness on which they breed. The artists had the locals past and

present very much in mind. "It was painted for the local community to celebrate this place, which, at that time, was much more impoverished and much more rough. And we were very proud to do something celebratory of that community." But it was also painted for a wider audience. "It is such a significant site symbolically. It was a great feeling to be doing something that was like a monument that transcended that sort of local aspect."

The deep resonance among a wider audience was brought home to Butler when he invited a visiting Jewish artist from Latvia to see the mural. Farida Zalarilo had come for the Rothko residency at London's Tate Modern in 2009. Like her, Rothko



had come from Daugavpils in Latvia. Butler recalls: "I brought her to see the mural. We were talking about the pogroms and all the terrible stuff – Latvia was at the eye of the storm – and we were talking as we were looking at the mural. There were tears streaming down her face and it was just a very moving moment."

Butler knows that the mural does not merely evoke the past. He enthuses about the educational role it can play for the growing generation. He recently did a project with youngsters from Bethnal Green Technology College, who were primarily of south Asian descent but identified strongly with its narrative. "There is a continued threat from far right fascistic elements. Unfortunately, young people need to be reminded of this, and I hope the mural does this. It is also a celebration of the left's solidarity – the mix of Irish dockers and Jewish workers and all the other groups involved in the 'Battle'. I would say we still need such a coalition but I fear the word has taken on negative connotations recently!"

Above: the Cable Street Mural in the process of restoration in the run-up to the 75th anniversary of the Battle.

Left: artist Paul Butler at work on the mural.

Photos: Anna Sherbany

QUALITY

The Battle of 1936 has overshadowed the many disparate but important events in Cable Street's history in recent decades. But they, too, are connected with the day Mosley's fascists were driven out, as **ROGER MILLS** discovered when he wrote his new book

When I told friends that I was writing a book about Cable Street, most assumed that it would be about the now semi-mythical Battle of 4th October 1936, when East London stood up to Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. His attempt to intimidate the largely Jewish Stepney of the time, and his subsequent defeat, was the subject of recent 75th anniversary commemorations. Even though the title, *Everything Happens in Cable Street*, is a line from Arnold Wesker's play, *Chicken Soup with Barley* – which begins on the day of the Battle – it actually takes up only part of the story. Yet it remains central to my book. As I explain: "...its influence, directly and indirectly, seeps out into the subject matter of the larger part of all the other histories contained here. Many of them would not exist at all were it not for the Battle, and its story is also told through them."

Some might argue that I'm overstating my case, but I'll cite a few examples. One of those "other" histories which certainly wouldn't have happened is, obviously, the painting of the giant mural in Cable Street itself (see page 18). This brilliant work depicts the fighting between anti-fascists and the police, who were attempting to clear a route for the BUF Blackshirts. I had the honour of assisting on the research for the mural as part of a team – including its original artist Dave Binnington – who interviewed Battle veterans. Many details they gave us found their way into the finished picture: the marbles rolled under the hooves of police horses, the mattresses and household furniture borrowed to build the barricade, the pisspots emptied on to the heads of the coppers – and the somewhat less comedic pair of pliers lobbed into the crowd. The mural site has understandably become the focal point for regular commemorations.

The Battle has also been recalled in a wealth of books and theatrical productions, well known and obscure, large and small, which have utilised the power of the struggle. *Chicken Soup with Barley* follows the lives of an East End Jewish family involved in the Battle, up to the time of the play's debut in the late 1950s. Wesker's play may be the most famous to feature the Battle but it has also found its way into other works. It has featured in any number of books. Some of them, like *King Sol*, written by Barnet Sheridan and published in 1939, were written from first-hand experience. Others, such as *All Shadows Fly Away*, by Audrey Willshire in the 1990s, used it as background material in the "family saga" genre.

Some other stories wouldn't appear to be linked

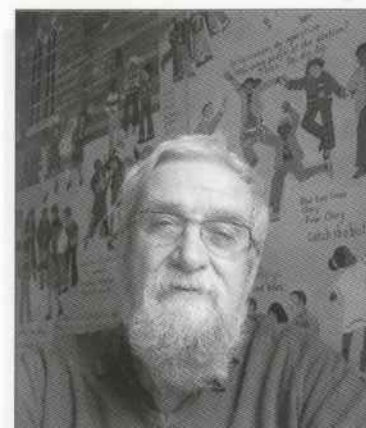


to the Battle at all. Yet it is intriguing to seek out connections. One chapter of my book tells the story of Stepney schoolteacher Chris Searle who was sacked in the early 1970s for publishing his pupils' poetry, against the wishes of the John Cass School governors. They felt the work showed the area in a poor light. "Drab", they said. Searle's dismissal brought the kids out on a strike that made national headlines. Later on, he formed the Basement Writers, a group of his pupils who wanted to meet outside school hours to read and discuss their work. They met in the depths of the Town Hall in Cable Street, which is where I enter into the story myself, eager to find out what all the kerfuffle was about.

As a young man I threw my lot in with them. Interviewed in my book, Chris Searle said of the Battle: "... it was instilled. It was imbued in every word that was written. You were writing in a site of great historical significance where people had fought like hell against racism and fascism – and been successful!"

Group members celebrated the Battle in poetry, in plays and song. Other endeavours emanated from the Basement Youth Project. Local artist Dan Jones was a founder, bringing with him an arts bias to the work they did there: painting, music, photography. And films, such as *Tunde's Film*, directed by Maggie Pinhorn and young mixed-race youth Tunde Ikoli, based on his life on the street. While it would stretch a point to associate everything that has happened in Cable Street – stories of the sordid "red light" years, the creation of the wonderful community gardens, and the rave culture at the edgy Artists Studios – with the Battle, I tried to identify what it was that connected them in my own mind.

STREET



I came to the conclusion that it was the very same attitude that unified people on the day of the Battle which also fed into the cultural activities that I documented. So many of them are communal enterprises, instigated for the many, rather than individual promotions created for personal aggrandisement. In the East End of London, where some commentators would have us at each other's throats in terms of race and class, people work well together. There are a variety of current campaigns that link the communities: necessary when people are being pushed into a corner.

Yet I still had doubts about my approach. Was my

whole thesis built on an artificial construct? After all, the book has stories dating back to the 1930s, when the residents of the Jewish end of the street weren't even talking to the Catholics at the other end! So was I looking for a link in all the stories where, beyond a street name, none existed? I found an answer towards the end of my research, which I spell out in the epilogue. The attitude encapsulated in Cable Street is: "...a revolt against expectation. Don't expect us to bring down the shutters while the bully boys march past. If you think we're just a bunch of troublesome black boys then we'll make a film and show you our side of it. As truants, dropouts and no-hopers we've become poets, playwrights and publishers. We make music in cellars, we paint pictures on gash hardboard, we take photographs of old men in the markets and, oh, any number of things. The people of East London make their own art and their own history: they don't like others imposing it on them. And everything that has ever happened to them has, at some point or other, happened in Cable Street."

Everything Happens in Cable Street, Roger Mills, Five Leaves Publications, £8.99

Far left: school students defend their radical teacher, Chris Searle. Left: Dan Jones, Cable Street resident, artist and inspirational activist.

Personal journey

Matthew Collins was drawn to fascism as a teenager but now devotes his life to fighting the far right. He spoke to Mike Gerber at the Cable Street 75 commemoration

I joined the National Front because at 15 [it] was going to relieve me of a life of boredom on a crappy old council estate in Thatcher's Britain, in Lewisham, South London. For three years I was within the National Front until such a time as eventually I realised that all the hatred and violence was going nowhere. They told me that all the problems I was facing, about class, about employment, all those kind of things, was because I was white and that there were too many black people, and too many Jewish people who were stealing from us, all this kind of stuff.

Then I got a full time job in the NF, and later volunteered in the BNP bookshop. Then after a while, and watching all these words play out into violence, I began working for *Searchlight* magazine, and I passed information. And now I work for Hope Not Hate.

And my opinion is just this: people came and spoke to me on my doorstep and I became a fascist, so we need to go on people's doorsteps. We can't wave flags and banners at people and shout slogans; unfortunately it's hard work.

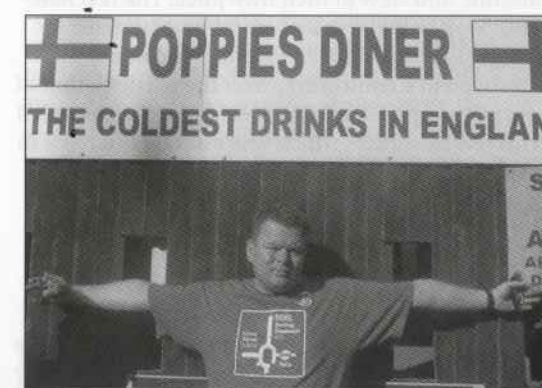


Photo: Ruth Lukom

Because people say they're extremists, they're Nazis, fascists, yeah, but for a lot of people they're not extremists. Nazis, fascists, they're people that have got very simple answers to very, very complex questions. Some people think you can go and wave a placard at a fascist and change the world; you can't, you've got to hurt your knees doing the hard work on the ground.

Trade unions are the most important thing because it's only through the trade union movement that we really talk to people at home, at work and in society. It's a vacuum in society which the Labour Party left, and the trade union movement, as best it could, filled that vacuum. And even now against the Tories, when we've got the cuts agenda, people really struggling, trade unions become even more important, because, as result of cuts, it's worker against worker, and also the un-workers.

Matthews Collins is the author of *Hate: My Life in the British Far Right* (Biteback Publishing, £14.99)

THIS JEW

Antisemitism in 1930s Britain is most associated with the aristocratic politician Sir Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirt movement, which mobilised its mass base in working class areas. But his hostile attitudes to Jews were more widely shared within the upper echelons of British society, as **DAVID ROSENBERG** shows in this extract from his new book *Battle for the East End*

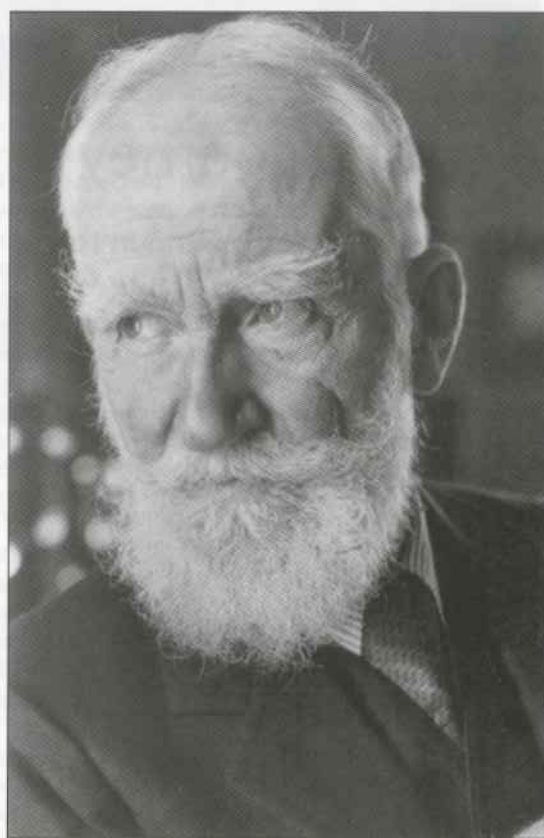
In 1930s Britain, there were people holding high positions in political or social life, or renowned through the arts, who were widely respected and reported, and their views carried extra weight. Several of them explicitly pledged their allegiance to the cause of combating antisemitism and fascism, such as Vera Brittain, Cecil Day-Lewis, Margaret Storm Jameson, Henry Nevinson and Naomi Mitchison. There were others, though, whose role in relation to antisemitism was ambivalent at best and often they displayed hostility.

The author HG Wells engaged in a series of polemics with the *Jewish Chronicle* in which he consistently denied the legitimacy of Jews as a self-defined group. He claimed that Jewish culture was narrow and racially egotistical, and that Jewish insistence on separation provided a justification for antisemitism. "It may not be a bad thing," he argued, "if they [the Jews] thought themselves out of existence altogether." The playwright George Bernard Shaw, in an interview in the *American Hebrew*, offered the following advice for Jews: "Those Jews who still want to be the chosen race – chosen by the late Lord Balfour – can go to Palestine and stew in their own juice. The rest had better stop being Jews and start being human beings." Fellow author JB Priestley became embroiled in a controversy over the participation of Jews in enterprise and finance. In an article entitled "This Jew Business", which was ostensibly a reply to antisemitism, he suggested instituting a quota system through which there would be one Jew in every business, but, he added as qualification, "not at the top".

Elsewhere in the publishers' lists was Douglas Reed, a former foreign correspondent of *The Times*, who emerged as a prolific and popular writer with a set of searing social commentaries, such as *Insanity Fair*, *Disgrace Abounding*, *All Our Tomorrows*, and *Lest We Regret*, which were eagerly devoured by a growing readership. Each of these eminently readable books, which ran to several reprints, typically contained at least one colourful chapter incorporating a multi-faceted attack on Jewry. Reed would attack Jews' foreignness, make allegations of clannishness, and denounce their corporate action, which, he claimed was not merely inimical to the national interest, but expressed their striving for power and dominance. "When you give Jews full equality," he argued, they "use it to become a privileged group, not to become equals". Such arguments registered with non-Jewish readers feeling economic hardship and looking for someone to blame. Through his journalistic role as a foreign correspondent he knew Berlin and other German cities very well, and although he had a low opinion of Adolf Hitler, whom he regarded as crude and unsophisticated in his propaganda, he nevertheless attempted to justify the pre-war actions of the Nazi party that



H G Wells: "It may not be a bad thing if they [the Jews] thought themselves out of existence altogether."



George Bernard Shaw: "Those Jews who still want to be the chosen race – chosen by the late Lord Balfour – can go to Palestine and stew in their own juice."

had stripped Jews of their place in German society.

Among political figures, Norwich MP George Hartland alleged and then attacked "Jewish control" of the cinema. He claimed that: "There are millions of boys and girls in this country... [whose]...souls are being taken from them as blood money

BUSINESS

for a syndicate of dirty American Jews – the Hollywood magnates."

Admiral George Cuthbert Cayley, a patron of the British Israel World Federation – a very right wing body claiming to defend "Christian constitution and divine destiny" – was addressing a fête held by the Berwick Conservative Association when he commented on the aspirations of Herbert Samuel by asking: "Why should we want a Jew to lead our party?" He added for good measure, "Hitler is quite right to a certain extent in getting rid of some of the Jewry of Germany. I am inclined to think we may have to do the same at home."

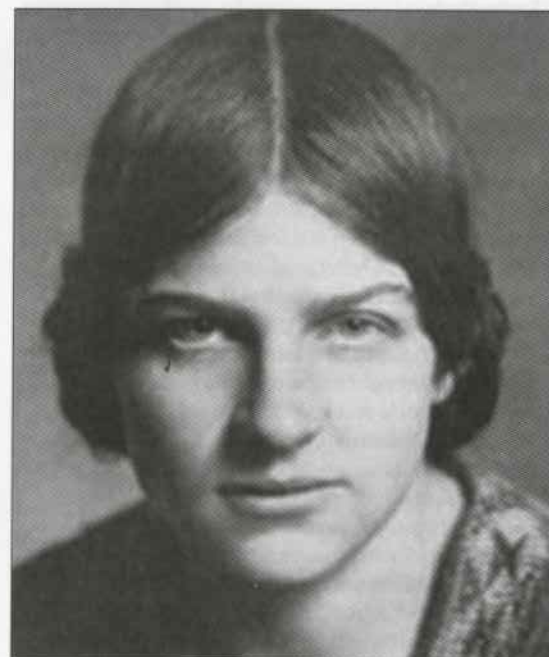
Other political figures focused on the popular antisemitic theme of linking Jews and communism. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Kerr, the National Liberal Chief Whip, claimed that there were "many influential people in this country supporting the Communist Party, the insidious propaganda of which is backed by the Jews". Lady Ninian Crichton-Stuart, wife of Captain Archibald Ramsey, MP for Peebles and Southern Midlothian, put a similar message even more emphatically: she believed that there was "an international group of Jews behind world revolution in every single country at the present time". When challenged through the *Jewish Chronicle*, she reiterated the charges with full backing from Captain Ramsey.

Ramsey himself, an aristocrat deeply involved with fundamentalist Christian organisations, became convinced that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were true. He was unabashed by the accusation of being anti-Jewish, although he considered the terminology used by his accusers often lacked rigour. He openly acknowledged and justified his oppositional attitude to the Jews:

"The only correct term for the mis-called

'antisemitic' is 'Jew-wise.' It is indeed the only fair and honest term. The phrase 'antisemite' is merely a propaganda word used to stampede the unthinking public into dismissing the whole subject from their minds without examination: so long as that is tolerated these evils will not only continue, but grow worse. The 'Jew-wise' know that we have in Britain a Jewish *Imperium in Imperio*, which, in spite of all protestations and camouflage, is Jewish first and foremost, and in complete unison with the remainder of World Jewry."

The instances of discrimination and expressions of ideological conviction... testified to the existence of a widespread belief, though held to different degrees, that Jews were an alien and disruptive force in society. The essence of their threat was seen as being rooted in Jews' corporate action. When Jews shared an activity it was evaluated differently from a group of Gentiles engaged in exactly the same activity. This was particularly the case in relation to Jews entering the professions. The Nobel Prize winner Sir Henry Hallett Dale, Director of the National Institute of Medical Research, unwittingly caused a few eyebrows to be raised during his guest of honour speech to the 10th annual dinner hosted by the Jewish Hospital Medical Society at Piccadilly's Trocadero Restaurant in December 1937. He argued forcefully against Jews "crowding" the professions, claiming that he did not believe it more healthy for a predominantly non-Jewish people to receive all or most of their medical attention from Jews, "than it would be for a Gentile nation to be subjected to a wholly Jewish government".



This extract is published with permission from *Battle for the East End: Jewish responses to fascism in the 1930s*, Five Leaves, £9.99. It is one of five books published by Five Leaves Publications on the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street. The others are: *Everything Happens in Cable Street*; *October Day*; *The Battle of Cable Street*; and *Street of Tall People*.

Parliament fought back against the Nazi occupation of France

Left: Agnes Ashworth, a Jewish member of the 1930s Communist Party who was active in the Cable Street protests

Some explicitly pledged their allegiance combating antisemitism and fascism, including Margaret Storm Jameson (far left) and Naomi Mitchison (left).

WHITECHAPEL ROAD

3RD SEPTEMBER 2011

by MICHAEL ROSEN

You Connie Ruby Isakofsky
From Globe Road in Bethnal Green
You Harold Rosen
From Nelson Street, Whitechapel
You Connie with your mother and father
From Romania and Poland
You Harold with your family from Poland

You Connie
You Harold
Your families working in the rag trade
Hats, caps, jackets and gowns
Hats, caps, jackets and gowns

You both saw Hitler on the Pathe News
You both saw Hitler blaming the Jews
You both collected for Spain,
Collecting for Spain
When Franco came

When round the tenements,
The whisper came
Mosley wants to march
Here, through the East End

So what should it be?
To Trafalgar Square to support Spain:
No pasarán?

Or to Gardiners Corner to support Whitechapel
They shall not pass.

Round the tenements
The whisper came
Fight here in Whitechapel
The whisper came:
Winning here
We support
Spain there.

These are the streets where we live
These are the streets where we go to school
These are the streets where we work

They shall not pass.

You Connie
You Harold
Went to Gardiners Corner
You went to Cable Street
You piled chairs on the barricades
The mounted police charged you
A stranger took you indoors
To escape a beating
And thousands
Hundreds of thousands came here
Fighting Mosley
Supporting Spain
Thinking of Germany



And
Mosley did not pass.

You Connie
You Harold
Said, today the bombs on Guernica in Spain
Tomorrow the bombs on London here.
And you were bombed
The same planes, the same bombs
Landing in the same streets
Where you had said
They shall not pass
And the bodies
Piled up across the world
Million after million after million
You Connie, your cousins in Poland
Taken to camps
Wiped out
You Harold, your uncles and aunts in France and
Poland
Taken to camps
Wiped out.

But you Connie, my mother
You Harold, my father
You survived
You lived
We were born
We grew

You mother
You father
Told us these things
I write these things
And today,
I tell you these things
We remember here together
Thanks to you
And we say:
They shall not pass.

VIVE LA RESISTANCE

Can we trace the past through standing in the same places as others did before us? Does the physical experience of being in a place tell us more about it than can looking at pictures or reading books? Participants who went on a guided walk with me, a historian of occupied France, to discover Resistance Paris may have had this in mind. Many of the streets we walked on would have been familiar to the figures we discussed. Much of the street architecture and naming of roads owes a debt to former resisters who are remembered on the walls and in the street names.

Paris became the centre of Nazi rule in France from June 1940, six weeks after the invasion on 14th May 1940, until 25th August 1944, when Paris was liberated. During that time, a wide array of resistance activity grew up, which involved everything from running soup kitchens and distributing leaflets to assassinating senior German officers. These activities have been the subject of countless books and many feature films, from the first, René Clément's *La Bataille du Rail* (Battle of the Railways) in 1946, via Jean-Pierre Melville's *L'Armée des Ombres* (Army of Shadows) in 1969, based on Joseph Kessel's book published in London in 1943, to Robert Guédiguian's homage to that film, *L'Armée du Crime* (Army of Crime), brought out 40 years later, in 2009. This constant cinematic output and the shifting focus of these movies provide some idea of the extent to which resistance

has persisted at the forefront of popular memory in France, and yet has altered its perspective in the decades since the end of the war. Particular kinds of resistance, though, were applauded immediately, and to such an extent that historians



identified a condition called *résistancialisme*, that continued in France in the two decades following the end of the war. This would, first, celebrate resistance that was regarded as having been carried out to unify the country; second, it would exclude resistance regarded as divisive; and third, it insisted that most French people during the German Occupation had been resisters. Little by little, that view of the occupation has been chipped away. We

now know much more about resisters who were marginal to the two main resistance arms of the Gaullists and the communists. Hundreds of resisters worked across the country outside the large networks and organisations – important though they were – but it took diligent historical research to track them down and ensure their place in historical memory.

Women, too, were excluded from the immediate post-war celebration of resistance. Of the 1,061 medals of the *Ordre de la Libération*, which had been awarded by 1946 – the highest honour that could be bestowed on a resister – just six were attributed to women, and only four of those to women who were still alive. Today, women's often unspectacular resistance work, frequently regarded as "support" but without which resistance would not have been possible, is more properly recognised. Even though women like Agnès Humbert presented themselves as little more than typists and secretaries, they were integral to resistance efforts and were also seen as such by the Nazis who deported them just like the men, in Humbert's case to Ravensbrück, like the majority of female resisters deported from France. She survived and told her story in the now translated memoir *Résistance* (Penguin).

While resistance by women was simply dismissed, like women's part in history more generally, any recognition that foreigners and Jews were in a different position from non-Jewish resisters born in France to French parents was considered for many years to be akin to dismantling the Republic. This is because Republicanism for a long time depended on a sense of sameness. Jews, of course, were clearly targets for the Nazis in France whether they were resisters or not, and after the mass round-ups in 1942, they swelled the ranks of resistance groups far beyond their numerical proportions in the population. It took many years before France started to come to terms with its own willing collaboration in the deportation of more than 75,000 Jews, three-quarters of whom did not have French nationality.

Each time that historians tried to focus on these different groups and individuals, however, it has engendered major disputes within the historical profession and the broader polity. Marcel Ophul's film, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (The Sorrow and the Pity) from 1969, famously was not allowed a screening on French television until 12 years after its release. This was because it described a nation that consisted of a few resisters, but a far greater number of willing collaborators or those who quietly supported the Occupation; of the resisters, it also showed people who were entirely independent of the larger networks. Likewise, considerable hostility was excited when feminist

KAREN ADLER
looks beyond
the mythology
to track down
the streets and
buildings where
courageous
Parisians fought
back against the
Nazi occupation
of France

Left: Agnès Humbert, a crucial member of the Resistance, deported to Ravensbrück but survived to tell her story



Still from Marcel Ophul's controversial portrayal of the Resistance, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (The Sorrow and the Pity)

historians tried to start to discuss female resisters from the 1970s onwards, and still more when gendered histories of resistance more broadly began to be written. Another major argument exploded when Mosco Boucault's documentary, *Les Terroristes à la retraite* (Terrorists in Retirement), was screened on television in 1985, which the French Communist Party even tried (unsuccessfully) to ban. This showed elderly, former Jewish resisters, many of whose comrades had been victim to the massive round-ups of 1943 in Paris. They claimed that they had been betrayed by the French Communist Party which had allowed their network to be decimated and dozens of their number to be tortured and killed. Those claims were probably untrue, but the party certainly did willingly sacrifice thousands of young lives, many of them foreign and Jewish, to the Nazis. Within historical circles, off the television screens, fierce debates arose about the role of Jews in the Resistance, and whether they resisted "as Jews" or "as resisters". Not much headway was made to reach a conclusion as the resisters cannot be easily put into one category or the other, and historians had to learn to live with the possibility of historical ambiguity. These debates now no longer excite such fierce polemic, and the normalisation of resistance as a very broad spectrum of activity, where resisters may themselves not have behaved with complete impunity, is now accepted.

Street names and the names of metro stations in Paris commemorate its past, so that one can zigzag across history as one walks about the city. Stalingrad, Campo Formio, Voltaire, Quatre Septembre – any number of metro stations invite commuters to recall battles, people or events from the past. Streets, being generally older than the metro network, which first opened in 1900, can demonstrate this even more clearly, and the different fashions of commemoration are revealed

in many of the names of the streets down which we walked. Jean Moulin, Charles de Gaulle's chief agent who was parachuted into France in 1942 to try to unify the disparate Resistance, before being arrested and tortured to death in 1943, has, it is claimed, more roads, parks, schools, bridges and squares named after him in France than any other person. In Paris alone, the Resistance museum, as well as a school, a tram stop and a road are named after him.

Resistance was a life-threatening activity in Paris during the four years

of Nazi occupation. Of the tens of thousands of men and women who made the decision to resist both Nazi rule and the political turn in France to repressive authoritarianism, many had widely divergent motives, and these motives also changed as the Occupation continued. Thousands were tortured and executed in French prisons, around 42,000 were deported to concentration camps, of whom about 23,000 returned; overall about 300,000 people participated in resistance. France, hacked into several parts after the armistice between France and Germany, saw the development of a variety of forms of resistance. Paris, still the capital but now under Nazi control, infested with swastikas, saw a great number of resisters from the very first days of the Occupation to the very last.

Our walk could have traced hundreds of different stories of resistance. We might have explored the individual political and historical trajectories of the social scientists, librarians and curators who formed the very first group of conscious resisters. These individuals were employed at the ethnographic museum, the Musée de l'Homme, opposite the Eiffel Tower in western Paris. Like countless other resisters, many of these women and men were foreigners and Jewish. The group organised escape routes out of France, published a clandestine newspaper called *Résistance* and provided information to the allies. The group was discovered in 1941, and by 1942 most of its members, men and women, had been executed or deported to concentration camps. Or it could have looked at the Jewish, communist women in the 20th arrondissement in north-east Paris, whose group, *Solidarité*, began at about the same time and specifically worked with the immigrant population in that district. Their means of printing was rather more homespun than the Musée de l'Homme group: they used a children's toy printing set on which they painstakingly

OF THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO MADE THE DECISION TO RESIST BOTH NAZI RULE AND THE POLITICAL TURN IN FRANCE TO REPRESSIVE AUTHORITARIANISM, MANY HAD WIDELY DIVERGENT MOTIVES, AND THESE MOTIVES ALSO CHANGED AS THE OCCUPATION CONTINUED.

reproduced their small leaflets.

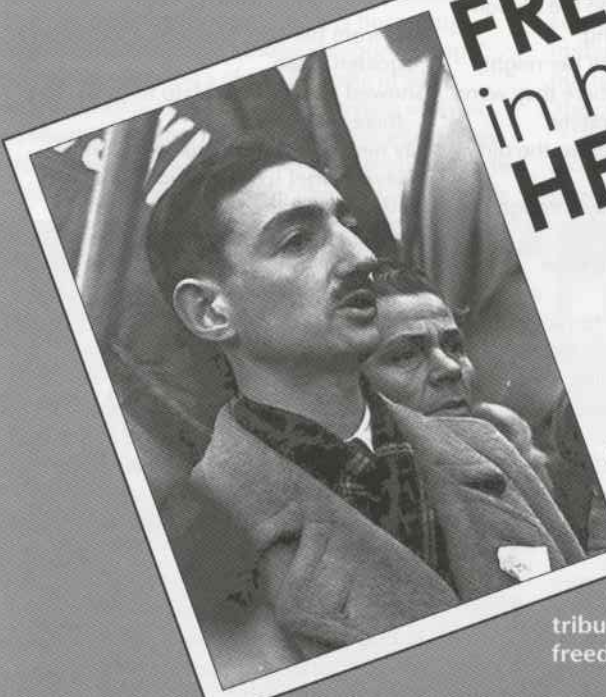
Our walk was in fact at the opposite end of Paris to the Musée de l'Homme, in the eastern 11th arrondissement. As we snaked through it, we noticed how it is still largely populated by immigrant and working class people as it was in the 1930s and 1940s, and they still work in small scale clothing businesses. Today, many have their origins in China, sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. In 1940, they were more likely to have come from Poland, Russia or Armenia. Bounded at one corner by Place de la Bastille, the district has a long history of radicalism. The walk led participants through streets which were named after resisters, and we saw buildings in which they had lived and worked. We discovered an abundant variety of types of resistance activity, such as those described above, as well as some of the terrible repression that was used to fight them, most dreadfully by the *Brigades Spéciales* police unit, set up with the specific purpose of tracking down Jewish resisters for torture and execution. We found buildings adorned with plaques, and many others, which, to the unknowing onlooker, appear quite banal, but in whose interiors extraordinarily brave activities had taken place. Knowing that we were walking through the same streets –

perhaps even following the same paths – as these ordinary women and men, being able to feel the same chill air, permitted us to gain a sense of place and geography, and to realise the extraordinary concentration of resistance activity in just one small part of Paris.

Karen Adler is a historian of 20th century France who teaches at the University of Nottingham. Among her published works are *Jews and Gender in Liberation France* and *Homes and Homecomings: Gendered Histories of Domesticity and Return* (Ed).



This walk is offered in English, French or German. To arrange a guided walk for your group about the history of resistance in Paris, contact Karen Adler: karen.adler@nottingham.ac.uk



FREEDOM in his HEART

a tribute to
MAREK EDELMAN

The Polish Jewish socialist, Marek Edelman, was the last surviving member of the Command Group that led the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in April 1943. He was an extraordinary individual who demonstrated his commitment to the values of freedom, socialism, internationalism and human dignity, and campaigned for human rights, throughout his life. He grew up with these values in the Bund – a Jewish socialist and trade union-based movement that played a very significant role in Poland especially towards the end of the 1930s. After the war Edelman stayed in Poland. He continued to fight for the lives of others as a cardiologist and renewed his political activism at both a local and an international level.

Marek Edelman died in 2009. This booklet presents fragments from his life, his experiences and his writings, and pays tribute to his forceful and sustained contribution to struggles for freedom and social justice.

Freedom in his Heart: a tribute to Marek Edelman is available from Jewish Socialist Publications, JS, BM3725 London WC1N 3XX for £3 plus 50p p&p



LIFE-LINES (REMEMBERING ANNA AND MARTHA)

by Binnie Yeates

Why rough boys in the street would jostle
her as she passed
Stepping over the broken glass
And jeer at her – "Yid! Yid! Hexe-Yid!"
But she was only ten,
And it was hard to understand.

It should have been exciting,
Like setting out on holiday.
But why was she going on her own,
With only the smallest case,
Some clothes
One book and just one toy – her precious doll?
And why, in its pocket, secretly safe,
Had Mamma and Papa tucked away
That locket on a golden chain,
The locket with their pictures?
"Don't forget us," they implored.
So why, then, were they sending her away?

What would it be like,
This place called England she was going to?
The people who'd look after her –
Would they get angry if she made mistakes,
Or comfort and be kind to her?
How would they understand each other?

The shriek and hiss of the train setting off
Sent shivers through her body.
Quickly, she ran to the window,
Leaning out, the cold night air icy on her
cheeks,
The smoke stinging her eyes,
Standing on tip-toe,
Searching, searching among the faces
Shrouded in the yellow light on the platform.
There! There they were, waving.
Wildly she waved back, with all her might,
With hands, pleading to be where they were,
Waving and waving so desperately,
Her beautiful red hat fell off, on to the dirty
platform floor.
And suddenly, pushing her way through the
close-packed crowd
Of tense, grim faces, watching their
children go
She saw her mother, running to pick it up,
Racing beside the train to reach her,
Stretching, stretching, but falling short,
Beaten, as the train gained speed,
Bereft,
Tearing the child away from all she loved,
Leaving her with that last glimpse –
Her mother, clutching the hat to her face,
And sobbing...

Leaving them – that was the worst,
The journey, too, filled her with dread,
Not knowing what she was supposed to do,
"First on the dark and smelly train," she said,
"And then aboard the ship, a night and all
next day,
And then a night again,"

Wondering if it would ever end,
Afraid of what would happen to her next.
She told herself she must be brave.
Others had made their journeys, too, she said,
A hundred years before;
Her own great-aunt, sixteen like me,
Anna had made her difficult way, alone,
Leaving her homeland, her dear Poland,
Apprehensive, but full of hope;
Had felt the fear and excitement,
With no idea of what she'd find:
Everyone round her talking to someone,
She only, alone among strangers,
Excluded by strange words, strange food,
strange customs.

And, as we sat there,
Getting to know each other,
She drew me in, till we were close as lifelong
friends,
In spite of all the years,
Sharing the deeply-rooted thread
Of feeling, understanding and belonging,
A thread as fine, as strong and intricate as a
spider's web,
Connecting me with all those others
I never knew.

"And now," she said, "In case we never
meet again,"
(I started to protest, but she went on)
"I want you to have this. It should be yours,
The generation that can keep the thread
unbroken,
As long as you remember."

And from her bag, she took a locket on a
golden chain,
Showed me the little clasp to press, and
there they were,
My new-discovered, unknown family.
"Never forget us," she said to me;
As they had begged of her,
That last time that she saw them,
"Remember the life-line, stretching,
Linking your history, your fountainhead,
With our future."

How could I forget?
I sit, my thoughts retracing all those footsteps,
Rich with this new knowledge of partings,
And with more luggage, packed into my
consciousness,
Than I imagined I would gather
In a life-time.

Nearly home. I try to ring,
But can't connect, because the signal's weak.
Strange, when I can sense so irresistibly
The strength of that
Connection with those people
Far away in time and place,
Across the generations.

Settling down for the journey home again,
With all my stuff –
My mobile – music – water – magazine –
Backpack, stowed up there on the rack...
The luggage you have to carry around!
Belongings, they say, define my generation:
So many things you must have...

And now, there's this new kind of belonging,
Which fills me with an unexpected pride
In a possession
I didn't even realise I needed:
A sort of stretching out of hands
To touch an unknown, secret core of me.

The sudden slamming of doors and the
porter's shrill whistle
Shatter the pictures in my mind.
I play some music, snuggling back,
Watching the girl in the window seat
Hugging her knees like an abandoned child;
And, next to her, an ancient, muffled woman,
Her legs too short to reach the floor,
Groping for something in a huge, brown
bundle,
Searching,
(You see? The old have lots of baggage, too).

That's how I'd pictured Martha
Yesterday
I'd been so nervous.
Would I know what to say?
How should I talk to this old, old woman –
this stranger,
This great-great-aunt of mine?
Why was it me she wanted to see –
A sixteen-year-old she'd never met,
About something she wanted to pass on?

And as we sat in her little room, Martha and I,
She began to tell me of that night:
That dark, dark night she had to catch the
train,
Afraid of such a long, long journey to a
country
Far away across the sea.
She'd been so fearful, so confused,
She too, was wondering "Why me?"

The grown-ups tried their best to talk to her
About the bad things happening:
Why she couldn't go to school,
When no one came to her birthday party,

A constellation of activists

This is a timely academic engagement with a social movement that Landy defines as "diaspora Jewish opposition to Israel". The book forms a supportive and critical dialogue with movement activists (focused on Britain) providing validation, food for thought, and some useful critical tools for thinking about emphasis and direction, pitfalls and dilemmas, which can contribute to the consciousness and impact of this activism.

While this opposition is not new, he says it has recently "been transformed from a 'not in my name' individual opposition to and withdrawal of support from Israel to 'not in our name'; a collective attempt to withdraw legitimacy from Israel's claim to represent Jews and to forge a specifically Jewish collectivity that opposes Israel's policies. We can speak for the first time of a diaspora Jewish social movement criticising Israel." This perceived shift gives motivation and context for this study.

There is perhaps a bias here in Landy setting the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) campaign as a kind of touchstone in relation to groups' and individuals' stances, but in keeping some academic distance he is helpful in bringing out the arguments and discussions around this tactic. Landy finds a distinction on this issue between activists who are trying to engage with and influence the Jewish community and those who are less interested in this field as a focus of their activism.

However, as Israel's oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people continues unabated, Landy sees resistance to this tactic changing and says, "as part of the radicalisation of this movement, the boycott tactic is becoming increasingly acceptable among diaspora groups". While he seems to be a clear advocate of BDS, Landy is open to the voices and activism of those who see this as a less effective tactic or who favour more targeted implementation. In this openness he mirrors the generally constructive relationships he

finds between people in different Jewish social movement groups with differences in perspective and forms of activism. He observes interestingly that this pluralism seems to be a strength, which allows groups to develop their politics and activism without always having to seek wider consensus (seen as important by activists in Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods – J-BIG – for example). Perhaps at its outset, some of us hoped that Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) would develop into being an umbrella group for activists, but this has not happened and it has just joined the pluralism of dissident groups.

Landy's study focuses centrally on two British groups and their activists, Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JJfP) and Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (J-BIG). The study also addresses the voices of activists from the Jewish Socialists' Group, Just Peace UK, Jews against Zionism, Jewdas, Independent Jewish Voices and others. He shows a growing connectedness between UK activists and the development of European Jews for Just Peace (EJJP) evidenced for example in the Jewish Boat to Gaza (see JS60) and he also offers some wider discussion of the work of groups in Europe, Australia Canada and the US.

Landy sees perhaps the most significant achievement of this movement is in breaking the assumption that diaspora Jews support the Israeli state, saying: "this movement has succeeded in putting Jewish opposition to Israel on the agenda, encouraging non-Jews to express their doubts about Israel." However, he sees it as being less successful in its impact on the wider Jewish community in the UK: "Groups have successfully managed to recruit among other Jews, and to reach out to the odd progressive Jewish organisation, but 'the community' as such remains largely closed."

Perhaps the critique here that gives me most food for thought is about the lack of engagement he sees between Jewish movement groups and

Palestinian activists. He observes that, often, Jewish groups' activism is mediated through, or highlights the work of, dissenting Israeli groups and individuals. This mediation can make attentiveness to the Palestinian people's struggle and to Palestinian activists less direct and more distant, affecting the consciousness, direction, politicisation and impact of the movement. Landy says: "Palestine is not just an empty signifier to be filled up with whatever meaning the social movement activist chooses. In the end, Palestine and the lived experience of Palestinians matter ... the contacts made,



Photo: Simon Lynn

JEWISH IDENTITY AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS: DIASPORA JEWISH OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL

David Landy

Zed Books

£19.99

relationships contracted that impel participants and make demands on them. Such demands prevent Jewish critics of Israel from sinking into identity traps inherent in the Jewish civil war. It also prevents the discomforts of their positions engulfing them and making them draw back from action."

Activists need to be aware of traps (examples being: creating myths of an "essential" alternative Jewish identity upholding justice and universalism; privileging the significance of Jewish involvement in Palestinian solidarity work; tempering valid critiques and opposition action to Israel in seeking to influence other Jews) but Landy, I think, sees this social movement as developing the experience, confidence, self-awareness and outward focus necessary to be able to counter these and other traps for activists and this study is a useful resource in this respect.

The book confirms my feeling that Jewish activists who have challenged Israel and Zionism and actively supported the Palestinian people are surviving and coming through the concerted attempts of the pro-Israeli Jewish community to delegitimise this stance. Landy confirms the importance of the organisations studied as creating "a home for Jewish critics of Israel" building confidence and deepening politicisation among the progressive Jews who become involved. Perhaps there are still some problems in relations between Jewish activist groups and the wider Palestinian solidarity movement, and I think Jewish activists still see themselves as having a role in challenging some alliances as well as examples of insensitivity and antisemitism where these arise (while not seeking to be gatekeepers of other people's

activism). This can be a respected role if it is done as part of (rather than in opposition to) the wider movement. Landy, though, treads lightly over some of the presently tender areas in this respect, such as attitudes in the wider solidarity movement to Gilad Atzmon's politics (see page 3).

While this minority movement has begun to visibly disrupt the association of Jews with a pro-Israeli stance, and has developed some hard-won confidence (many activists have come through difficult and painful times challenging families as well as community), and built some resilient, supportive organisations – Landy sees that we could develop some more direct links with Palestinian activists, supporting "Palestinian resistance and capacity to resist".

I think there are some flaws in the study; Landy misses some of the links that have existed and continue to exist between diaspora Jews and Palestinians. His theoretical framework too, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's "fields of practice", is quite difficult for a reader without some prior knowledge of some of the concepts. But this is a thoughtful book that does not claim too much for itself and aims to be a useful and tentative study of, and dialogue with, these small but determined linked groups of social movement activists. Here is Landy in concluding the book: "But what they have done is important. They have established a praxis through which diaspora Jews may one day no longer be a barrier to Palestinian freedom, but may instead proceed down the path that these people have begun to model; that of walking with the Palestinians in their struggle for liberation while fashioning a new future for themselves in the diaspora."

Simon Lynn

Rediscovering working class fiction

MAY DAY

John Sommerfield
London Books,
£11.99

John Sommerfield left school at 15, worked as a newspaper runner, carpenter and merchant seaman, was a Spanish Civil War volunteer and member of the British Communist Party, and wrote politically charged fiction that has long been unjustly neglected by mainstream publishers.

His first novel, *They Die Young*, which drew on his time at sea, is long out of print, but London Books has revived his innovative multi-protagonist 1936 second novel, *May Day*. The socio-panoramic curtain-raiser passage gives way to the main narrative, which kicks off with a ship entering port. It is carrying home James, a young socialist seafarer, to a London still recovering from the great economic depression: "Now, really," Sommerfield writes, "we are at our journey's end, James told himself. And either we will sail away again, or there will be the hungry, idle days, hoping before the grimy doors of shipping offices. He remembered the New York dockside last summer, men starving on the grimy pavements in bright sunlight..."

James wanders the London streets attempting to

track down his married brother John who – following an impoverished spell on the dole – is employed as a carpenter at Langifer's factory. John enjoys the job and the banter with the other men, but down on Langifer's shop floor, women on piece rates work in dangerous conditions, all the more so as their bosses have imposed a speed-up of the machines. If the women can't keep pace, they lose pay and so they take risks. A dark militant mood is brewing; following an accident the women, who have no union representation, form a works committee and enlist the backing of the men for a confrontation with management. John, with a wife and young child to support, despite qualms about putting his job in jeopardy, is outspoken in support of his female colleagues. Meanwhile, the strongly unionised busworkers prove an inspiration for the disgruntled working class across London. Everything converges towards the climax of the May Day demonstrations.

Sommerfield brilliantly captures 1930s London – the sights, smells, colours, cacophony, dramas and

dilemmas of life in a pulsating city – in prose that is often poetic but never pretentious or purple. His novel, though experimental in structure, is a highly readable tour de force; the author masterfully juggles a kaleidoscopic confluence of narratives involving Londoners of every social class. Although the book's political objectives and widescreen focus limit his scope to fully develop his large cast of protagonists, the main characters are not without depth.

I have one grave misgiving about his characterisations, however. While it is broadly true, as the back-jacket blurb asserts, that *May Day* "rejects stereotypes as it searches for the common humanity of every individual", Sommerfield cannot resist stereotyping the obviously Jewish characters in his book in an exchange between the stage manager of a new show and its backers, the old Mr Finkel and the young Mr Finkel. The stage manager warns them that the stagehands will not work all night again; they want double pay for the previous night and are talking about walking out: "'Chessus Christ,' shouted the elder Finkel.



'Lissen to vot the man is saying. O just lissen to him. As if I had not got some other things to worry about' ... the younger Finkel said 'Tell them they should think themselves lucky for a chanst of the extra work with new cinemas opening all the time.'"

Given that many Jewish contemporaries were fellow members of the Communist Party or active elsewhere on the left, and were mostly working class, why is there no more sympathetic representation of Jews in Sommerfield's pages than these comical sleazy exploiters?

May Day can nevertheless be hugely recommended. Sommerfield's London surpasses the scholarly novelisations of Peter Ackroyd. But while fictions by middle class writers stay perennially in print, books by working class writers often need to be rescued from oblivion. That is an indictment of the publishing industry, so full marks to London Books for reviving not only *May Day*, but also other marginalised fiction in its London Classics series.

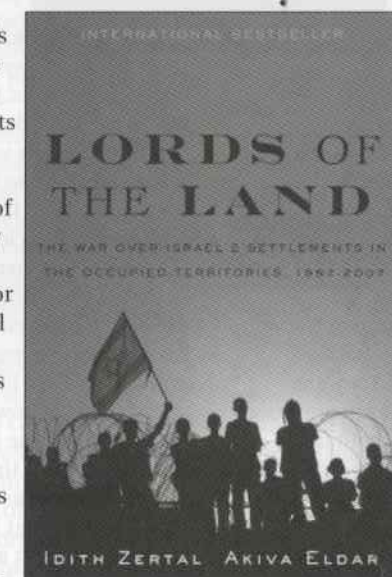
Mike Gerber

Understanding the settlements

This is not a very recently published book, but it is an important work, which would be of interest to readers of *Jewish Socialist*.

You wouldn't want to read this book as your introduction to the Middle East because you need a good grip of Israeli politics and its key personalities, as well as the context and history of the regional conflict to make sense of it. However, it is likely that many JS readers will know the key historical facts and know who, for example, Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon were. You won't find any background information here, as the book was first published in Hebrew for Israeli readers who would be familiar with their present and past political leaders and their parties, as well as the role and structure of the army and other local state institutions.

But if you know the background and really want to understand the first 40 years of creating Jewish-only settlements on the Israeli-occupied West Bank (or "Judea and Samaria") this book will tell you a very great deal. Idith Zertal is a professor, so I had expected a rather academic tome, but the book is a cracking good read, with some sections being real page turners as you read a succession of shocking revelations.



Some of the chapters are denser, in particular a long middle chapter, "Soldiers of the Messiah" which is about the ideological roots of the settlement movement. And the narrative jumps around chronologically, with a fair bit of repetition, but overall it's a strong, if highly partisan (anti-settlement), contribution to the literature of the Israel-Palestine subject.

Don't expect to hear many Palestinian voices here; the book is reporting on the Israeli side of the 40 years' war (45 years by 2012). The Palestinians appear only as the victims of the colonisation project.

Overall, this is a prolonged howl of anger against the injustices involved and the connivance – active or passive – of almost all parts of the Israeli establishment. The chapter

ironically titled "Everything is legal in the State of Israel" should be read by everyone who claims that Israel is a fully-functioning democracy governed by the rule of law like those in the west.

This book is thoroughly recommended for anyone who wants to understand the detail of how the settlements grew, and what has been created in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Paul Seligman

LORDS OF THE LAND: THE WAR OVER ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES 1967-2007

Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar
Nation Books

Behind the crumbling façade of democracy

THREAT: PALESTINIAN PRISONERS IN ISRAEL

Abeer Baker and Anat Mater (Eds)
Pluto Press

The smooth exterior of all repressive regimes hides a polluted centre. There can be found those who protest, who believe in their rights, who wish for a world that treats them with dignity and who make their demands public, in tune with international law. These are the political prisoners who damage the illusion that these regimes so assiduously try to promote.

But just occasionally the façade crumbles, and something of the truth is revealed. The recent release of Gilad Shalit, a prisoner of renown, in return for 1,027 unidentified, faceless Palestinian prisoners, brought to international attention for a few fleeting moments the fact that Israel jails countless Palestinians and that one Israeli life is worth 1,027 nameless Palestinians, described in most of the media as "terrorists", whose freedom will impact on Israel's "security". The courageous hunger strike by over 400 Palestinian prisoners, which had started three weeks previously to obtain basic rights, merited barely a mention.

Thus is it possible to see how Israel's distorted perspective dominates the media and how its brutal oppression of those over whom the state holds authority can so easily be dismissed. *Threat* offers an alternative, more honest, view of the nature of Israeli control over the Palestinian political activists.

This is the first book to deal exclusively with Palestinian political prisoners, jailed because they resist occupation and colonisation. Sometimes resistance takes the form of violence, but more often it is related to their political beliefs. The book aims to show the nature of the process by which the expression of certain political beliefs is criminalised by a state that holds dominion over a captive population.

Once the label of "security" is attached to the prisoner, their personal identity is forfeit and, whatever the nature of their "crime", they are treated with the same brutality. This encompasses vicious arrest, denial of legal advice, solitary confinement, torture, illegal interrogation methods and, on occasion, administrative detention without trial or release date. The latest available information from the human rights group B'Tselem states that there are 5,204 political prisoners, including 272 administrative detainees.

The book steers the reader through the labyrinthine world of the "security" incarceration system, assisted by some able guides. These include Palestinian prisoners themselves from all the different political parties, lawyers, academics, activists, both Jewish Israeli and Palestinians from Israel and the Occupied Territories. They analyse the system, compare and contrast Israel's actions

with other judicial systems, document the arrest, interrogation, trial and release procedures, and provide first hand testimony of the nature of imprisonment.

It is the casual cruelty and endemic racism that strikes one so forcibly. Usually Palestinians are tried in military courts in the Occupied Territories, while Israeli illegal settlers are tried by their peers in Israeli civil courts. Even in apartheid South Africa, barbaric as it was, black and white people were tried with due process under the same system.

It is illegal to hold protected persons in prisons in the occupier's territory, but Israel's High Court decided that Israeli law trumps international humanitarian law, and ruled that the prisoners should stay in Israel. The courts are remarkably generous in their willingness to allow secret evidence, which cannot be tested in open court, and in their genuflection to the secret police, who only have to use the portmanteau of "security", for all other considerations to be dismissed.

Colonial regimes without a democratic mandate show similar attributes. Israel is no different. Like them, Israel increasingly uses the courts and the prison system to maintain control.

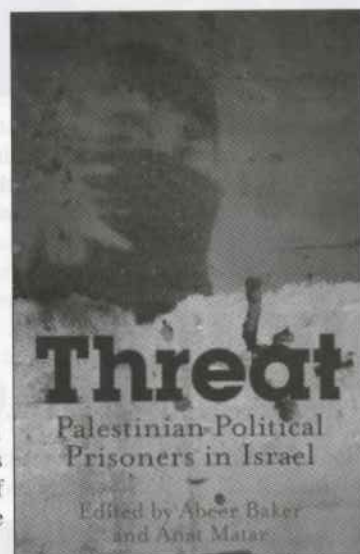
Prisoners of these regimes testify to the rotten core at the heart of these systems, which exist to criminalise

political demands. Eventually, however, the leaders will be released, their status enhanced. The roll call of "terrorist" leaders who have been released into power is too numerous to itemise. When a quarter of the young men from the Occupied Territories have been imprisoned, it is clear that whatever is at work here, it is not justice; rather is it vengeance and oppression.

Although I thought I was well informed about the issues covered in the book, I discovered that there are numerous areas that astonished even me and spurred me into further research. What did surprise me is how much the prison system mirrors in microcosm the system of control evident in the management of the Occupied Territories.

One of the reasons that Israel seems to get away with the idea that it is a democracy is that, unlike its neighbours, it abides by the rule of law. This book shows how baseless that statement is. Confessions, extracted under threat or torture are as prevalent in Israel as in the neighbouring states. Only those unwilling to contemplate criticism of Israel can any longer continue to maintain the fiction that Israel abides by civilised standards, at least in its treatment of Palestinian prisoners. This book is essential reading for all those committed to human rights and national self-determination.

Diana Neslen



Absent friends

The concept of multiculturalism has been used, misused and abused in the service of political agendas across the spectrum, so an accessible analysis is much needed both by people who are new to the subject and by those who have been grappling with it in practice for many years. Writing "a very short introduction" to such a theoretical and political minefield is a huge challenge for any author, but meeting that challenge is precisely the purpose of this eclectic and attractively produced series published by Oxford University Press.

This particular book, though, despite some sophisticated ideas and useful and important information, is not quite up to the job. Anyone expecting a clear overview of the issues or lively examples to illustrate difficult theoretical questions will be disappointed. Instead of finding ways of clarifying the history and development of how states relate to ethnic, cultural and religious minorities overall, before focusing on how this is manifested in particular situations, the author seems to have kept the text down to the required length by focusing on a limited (very recent) time span and by excluding many minority groups. Rattansi says: "Given the constraints of space ... I am primarily going to be concerned with the issues and debates concerning the immigrants who have migrated to Western Europe in the second half of the 20th century."

There is a reasonable if rather too general explanation of the meaning of "multiculturalism" – which "usually refers to policies by central states and local authorities that have been put in place to manage and govern the new multi-ethnicity created by non-white immigrant populations after the end of the Second World War" – as opposed to the more colloquial use of the term to mean simply ethnically or culturally mixed. However, while these policies may have been enacted in response to immigration, mainly from former colonies, they are underpinned by a much older set of majoritarian ideas and practices, which governments have invoked to promote or undermine multiculturalist policies.

Rattansi's focus on immigrants from former European colonies, for example, results in the peculiar absence from the text of Gypsies, Roma or Travellers and only a few minor references to Jews (though none at all in the frustratingly limited index). Indeed, the vast majority of examples of multiculturalism in practice are drawn from Asian communities, with an emphasis on Muslim groups – a troubling mirror image of the preoccupations of post-9/11 Western states.

This is not simply a question of staking out the territory, but results in an ahistorical analysis which makes it impossible to understand why or how, for example, Britain might want to deal with ethnic minorities through communal or religious institutions, while France does not acknowledge the political existence of minority groups – it only recognises individuals.

British governments, both Tory and Labour, have wheeled out the example of the Jewish community as a model for other minorities to follow. The Board of Deputies and other Jewish communal organisations talk directly to state institutions on behalf of all Jews, despite the absence of democratic mechanisms that might enable them to represent the "community" in any meaningful sense. In France, on the other hand, while communal organisations exist, since the Revolution the Republic granted "to the Jews as individuals, everything; to the Jews as a people, nothing".

The chapter entitled "Is multiculturalism bad for women" looks at important issues which feminists such as Women Against Fundamentalism and Southall Black Sisters (SBS) have explored in depth over many years, and the author summarises them clearly. However, this section glances off the thorny – and central – question of religion. This is not a matter of arguing for or against faith or religious belief, but of challenging the conflation of religious institutions and leaders with the conflicted and diverse communities they claim to represent.

"Tradition", usually articulated by religious leaders who materialise as the voice of their "community", is a powerful means of controlling women within that community and also inhibits outside agencies, such as doctors, social workers, friends and colleagues, from intervening in support of women who are being oppressed in the name of that tradition. Cultural relativism is more than a misguided, or even racist, attitude; it is a lived reality of power and powerlessness, facilitated by concrete mechanisms that need to be challenged.

This book, which contains a lot of high quality information, could have been a great resource, for activists, policymakers, students and professionals. The author has done some good research and has a nuanced understanding of many of the issues arising from the distorted relationship between the state and its diverse citizens who are finding new and creative ways to navigate within and between the boundaries of shifting, organic communities. To describe and explain this complex reality requires clarity of thought and careful structuring of the material. Unfortunately, this felt like a first draft, rather than a final, edited text.

Julia Bard

MULTICULTURALISM: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION

Ali Rattansi
Oxford University Press, £7.99



RAF SALKIE
shares
inspirational
discoveries and
rediscoveries of
historic radicals
whose ideas are
much needed
today

Behind the facade of democracy ON THE SHELF

It's time to continue my occasional series, Neglected Jewish Socialists From The Past, with Nos. 92 and 93: Albert Meltzer (1920 - 1996) and Zellig Harris (1909 - 1992). They couldn't have been more different. Meltzer was British, barely interested in Jewish matters, uncompromisingly working-class, and an active campaigner all his life. Harris was American, a professor of linguistics, a left wing Zionist who spent much of his time on a



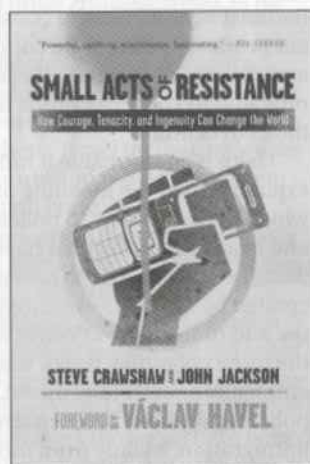
kibbutz in Israel, and was barely involved in political activity after the war. What they shared was a commitment to non-Stalinist left politics. Meltzer was an anarchist: his autobiography *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels* (AK Press, 1996) is subtitled "Sixty years of commonplace life and anarchist agitation" (also freely available on the web). I heard him speak many years ago, when he was working as a printer at the *Daily Telegraph*: his explanation was that you don't have to be a whore to work in a brothel. A central part of his life was supporting the exiles from Spain, many of them anarchists who came to England after Franco took over. Meltzer writes: "It is still not appreciated that after his victory Franco killed more Spanish people than Hitler killed German Jews." He campaigned tirelessly for prisoners in Spain, many of whom could not be adopted by Amnesty International because they had either fought in the Civil War or were falsely labelled terrorists by the fascist regime.

Meltzer's admirable disrespect for power and authority extended to some well known anarchists, including Emma Goldman – an elderly exile by the time he met her in the 1930s, Nicholas Walter (author of the best-known introduction to anarchism) and the group who ran the paper *Freedom*. Meltzer repeatedly dismisses the latter as woolly intellectuals, who sniffed at his skill at boxing, his blunt manner, and his robust working class militancy. Well, speaking as an anarchist and an intellectual, I sympathise with his disdain for people who talk a lot but lack courage and avoid humdrum and unglamorous activism.

On the other hand (as we woolly intellectuals say when we can see both sides of an argument and drone on instead of changing the world), the gulf between working class and middle class socialists is one of the most self-destructive and paralysing splits on the left. It diverts the anger of poorer workers against more privileged working class people like me, instead of against the real enemy – and I don't mean the Judean People's Front but the owning class. Just like left wing antisemitism, hatred of middle-class people is the socialism of fools.

Which brings us to Zellig Harris, mostly remembered nowadays as the person who introduced Noam Chomsky to linguistics and left libertarian politics. Robert Barsky's book *Zellig Harris: From American Linguistics to Socialist Zionism* (MIT Press) tries to rescue Harris from the neglect that he suffered during his lifetime and posthumously. An interesting part of the book describes Avukah, an American socialist Zionist organisation of the 1920s and '30s, which has been airbrushed out of history, and in which Harris was prominent. Another noteworthy chapter discusses his book *The Transformation of Capitalist Society*, published after his death by Harris's friends, from his extensive notes. The book asks a simple question: how can we end capitalism without violent revolution (which failed in Russia) and with a line of attack which includes the self-governing and anti-authoritarian principles of the kibbutz movement? It's still a vital question, perhaps the most important one facing the left. Harris advocates worker co-operatives, and also proposes that workers should obtain shares in the companies for which they work. He argued that this can be done within capitalism and that as part of a broad strategy it can help to undermine capitalism from the inside. As a strategy it is rather naïve, and Albert Meltzer would doubtless have written it off scornfully as middle class fantasy. Saul Alinsky (1909–1972), NJSFTP No. 94, who shared Meltzer's blunt, no nonsense style – see his book *Rules for Radicals* (Vintage) – also advocated massive employee share ownership as a route to social change. So stop your sneering, right now...

Instead, take a look at *Small Acts of Resistance: How courage, tenacity, and ingenuity can change the world* by Steve Crawshaw and John Jackson, with a foreword by the late Václav Havel (Union Square Press), an inspiring collection of short pieces about courageous, non-violent and often successful actions for social change. The book leaves aside the famous figures in favour of those who deserve to be better known. Instead of Rosa Parks, we learn about Claudette Colvin, a young black woman who refused to sit at the back of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama a year earlier; about Fritz Kolbe, a German diplomat who with immense courage passed Nazi secrets to the Allies for much of the war and was then punished by the West German government for "betraying his country"; and about the Muslim leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his 50,000-strong Servants of God, whose commitment to non-violence in the struggle against British colonialism in India astonished even Gandhi. Good stuff.



MAIL FINDS "PLOT"; MELANIE LOSES IT

Although it dumped Sir Oswald Mosley, the *Daily Mail* has maintained another tradition. Having brought us the famous "Zinoviev Letter" in 1924, it continues to discover plots against the Realm and Faith of loyal subjects. On 24th September 2011 it reported: "BBC turns its back on year of Our Lord: 2,000 years of Christianity jettisoned for politically correct 'Common Era'."

Chris Hastings said the Beeb had replaced the familiar Anno Domini (the year of Our Lord – AD) and Before Christ – BC) with "the obscure terms Common Era and Before Common Era", so as not to offend non-Christians. "Some of the BBC's most popular programmes, including University Challenge ... and Radio 4's In Our Time ... are among the growing number of shows using the new descriptions."

A photo of the BBC's head of religion, Aaqil Ahmed, was captioned: "The Corporation say, bizarrely, the change has nothing to [do] with Mr Ahmed." Later, pointing out for slower readers that Ahmed was a Muslim, the *Mail* said the BBC Religion and Ethics website was "littered" with references to "BCE" and "CE".

Mail columnist Melanie Philips, who also writes for the *Jewish Chronicle*, confessed that, "along with many other Jewish people I sometimes use CE and BCE since the terms BC and AD are not appropriate to me". But she condemned alleged efforts to impose such terms as "part of the wider desire to obliterate Christianity in British culture". ("Our language is being hijacked by the Left to muzzle rational debate", 26th September 2011)

James Delingpole blamed the Marxists. His article (*Daily Mail*, 27th September 2011) was illustrated with a photo of Herbert Marcuse, whose disciples, the "long-haired students" of the '60s, had infiltrated the civil service, politics, the universities and the BBC.

The Beeb said it was left to individual programme producers. But Boris Johnson and Ann Widdecombe had been enlisted to the *Mail* outcry, and angry readers were shouting online in block capitals: "If non Christians find our Christian values offensive ... GO AND LIVE IN A NON CHRISTIAN COUNTRY. WE ARE FED UP PANDERING TO OTHER RELIGIONS WHO CAME HERE OF THEIR OWN FREE WILL – Jane, UK 02/10/2011"

Discovering further evidence of the plot, Chris Hastings took credit for tipping off the government, with a happy ending. ("Government to save Year of our Lord from BBC's 'Common Era'", *Mail on*

Sunday, 2nd October 2011). So besides taking readers' minds off worries about jobs and homes, the *Mail* could reassure them that, however many years they must wait for their pension, they can still serve them out in anno domini.

DIFFERENT WORLDS

London's mayor, Boris Johnson, is becoming a regular feature of the *Jewish Chronicle* and its website. In one month we had "Boris's timely appearance", "Boris backing the CST" (Community Security Trust), "Boris Johnson joins groundbreaking ceremony for Jewish Community Centre", and, as though blowing his own trumpet was not enough, "Boris Johnson tries to blow the shofar" (ram's horn).

Johnson confirmed in September that he won't be challenging David Cameron for the Tory leadership and will be standing again for mayor, but the elections are not due till May 2012. It could be worse. Johnson's Tory number two at the Greater London Authority, Brian Coleman, wanted to stand for London mayor himself. He had to make do with becoming mayor of Barnet. The number of residents there needing housing benefit is rising, as it is in other suburban boroughs despite the capping threat. But when a woman approached Councillor Coleman complaining her landlord had raised her rent from £870 to £1,100 per month, he told her it wasn't the council's problem, and she should "live in the real world".

Taking £128,000 a year from his public posts, and renowned for his expenses claims for taxis to attend free dinners and suchlike, Coleman is a single person living in a five-roomed property owned by Finchley Methodist Church, for a rent of £546 a month – about half what others in his road are paying. If this is the real world, I'm sure lots of other people would love to live in it, too.

BILDERBERGER AND CHIPS?

Gaby's, the Charing Cross road restaurant, favoured by West End actors, and by Jewish Socialists after demos, is threatened with closure under plans approved by Westminster Council's Planning Subcommittee on behalf of landlords Gascoyne Holdings. That's the business of Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 7th Marquess of Salisbury, of Hatfield House in Hertfordshire. A former Defence Minister and, as Viscount Cranbourne, Tory leader in the House of Lords, the Marquess is known to conspiracy buffs for attending the notorious Bilderberg conferences. If despite protests Gaby's goes, its place may be taken by yet another boring chain food outlet. This is definitely a conspiracy!