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The JSG is a campaigning organisation which is active on issues directly affecting the Jewish community, other minorities and oppressed groups, and the wider labour movement.

The group works and campaigns with other organisations sharing some or all of our aims and always welcomes new members who support our political principles. All members receive a regular internal discussion bulletin, a frequent newsletter detailing meetings and events and can participate fully in our annual conference and in any aspect of the group's work.

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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.

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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.



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a tribute to
MAREK EDELMAN

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

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.

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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BOMBS RAIN DOWN ON GAZA • VOTES PILE UP AT THE UN
**WILL ISRAEL LISTEN
TO PALESTINE NOW?**

- Tony Lerman interview ■ Reproductive rights
- Stephen Lawrence questions ■ Algeria revolt

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't care about the southern Israeli town of Sderot. And Sderot's residents probably don't care too much for him either. A working class immigrant town with high unemployment is hardly helped by his neo-liberal economic policies. Unsophisticated missiles, without guidance systems, flung towards Sderot, which have taken 25 lives over 11 years don't worry Netanyahu unduly. These sorties did not suddenly escalate to intolerable levels in November 2012, and cannot explain Israel's far more destructive bombing campaign which it launched officially in mid-November.

Two other events that month threatened Israel's political establishment more directly. Israel relies on its massive American subsidy and political support. But Netanyahu doesn't trust Obama. He was convinced that Obama would lose the presidential election to a right wing Mor(m)on – Mitt Romney. But Romney failed. On 29th November the Palestine Authority was due to approach the UN general Assembly to upgrade Palestine's status. In a few weeks – another Israeli election is looming. Netanyahu prepared the ground for safe re-election by formally allying with Lieberman's ultra-right party Yisrael Beiteinu, but he also knows how well wars play in the short term among Israel's electorate.

These were the factors that actually led Israel to turn its ongoing war on Gaza into an another openly declared military operation in mid-November: a murderous assault that destroyed infrastructure and claimed more than 160 Palestinian lives in eight days, sarcastically entitled "Pillar of Defence". Five Israeli's (three civilians and two soldiers) lost their lives too in the hostilities. Rockets landed near Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, and, for the first time since 2006, a bomb was placed on an Israeli bus – wounding several passengers, some seriously.

Israeli, government spokespersons claim massive public support for their military strategy, but don't have the confidence to allow pictures of the victims of devastation – especially Gaza's children – to appear in Israel's mainstream media.

In Gaza, wretched conditions of poverty and hunger maintained by a siege continue to blight the lives of its 1.7 million inhabitants. Though constrained by circumstances imposed by its occupier, Gaza's ruling party, Hamas, had achieved little and had become increasingly authoritarian and unpopular. But Netanyahu has rescued them politically. In Israel he talks tough against Hamas, but in Gaza he strengthens their hold, helps to stifle Hamas's critics both within and without, and further weakens the Palestine Authority in the West Bank as a voice for all Palestinians. But Abbas's overwhelming success at the UN on November 29th has stymied him.

Cover photo: a Palestinian child challenges a heavily armed Israeli soldier at a weekly demonstration against the separation wall, Al Ma'sara, West Bank, 31st August 2012. If completed as planned, the barrier will cut off the village from agricultural lands owned by its residents.

Photo: Ryan Rodrick Beiler/Activestills.org

Editorial committee: Julia Bard, Paul Collins, Mike Gerber, Ruth Lukom, Simon Lynn, David Rosenberg.

In the short term, the interests Netanyahu represents will gain, but it is an incredibly high-risk strategy. It fuels increasing hatred for Israel in general among the mass of disempowered, starving people, who are overwhelmingly the youth and are the people of tomorrow.

Around the world protest movements against Israel's war have returned to the streets in impressive numbers. Their political pressure has helped to stop Israel launching another ground invasion. But there is a depressing lack of political sophistication in these protests. They provide symbols of hate to rally against but don't question Netanyahu's deeper tactical motives. They don't exploit the contradictions within Israel, which could be prised open so much more. They stick to simple slogans and barely acknowledge the wider regional context.

For example, it is taken as given at protests in Britain that our mainstream media – the BBC and major newspapers – are clearly anti-Palestinian and pro-Israel. The news bias may favour the Israeli government, but not the Israeli people. The courageous, militant actions of anti-war protesters within Israel can only be seen and heard through alternative media.

Zionist groups have tried to shift the blame on to Hamas and claim that Israel acts only in self-defence – ignoring the massive gulf in power and the ongoing economic war through the siege. When they ask why so much attention is paid to Gaza while far more people died at the hands of Assad's regime in Syria during those eight days, we know they are cynically attempt to deflect from the destruction wreaked on Gaza. But you don't need to be trying to outdo one wrong with another to ask why our movement fails to speak out and act against Assad's murders. And leftists who naively welcomed the forward march of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's revolution, next-door to Gaza, must surely be alarmed by the Brotherhood's leader suddenly usurping so many powers.

Let us continue to protest the atrocities the Israeli army commits in Gaza and do everything we can to support its people in their campaign to lift the siege, but no one, including the Palestinians, will benefit from us ignoring the wider issues in Palestine, in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

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Full of eastern promise

There was standing room only in Bookmarks Bookshop in central London on 8th October for Sholem Aleykhem Comrade – a presentation in words and music of Jewish life in pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Russia. This collaboration between Jewish Socialist magazine and the London Klezmer Quartet included poetry from David Edelstadt, readings and quotes from revolutionaries such as Vladimir Medem and Esther Frumkin; stirring music from the 1905 barricades (Hey Hey Daloy Politsey) and workers songs such as Dzhankoye. The evening finished with a powerful rendition of Morris Winchevsky's Di Tsukunft (The Future)



The London Klezmer Quartet have just released a new CD called Welcome to Butterfield Green N16 with 16 fabulous tunes. www.londonklezmerquartet.com

Rebuilding lives with dignity

Since operations Moses and Solomon, tens of thousands of Ethiopian Jews have left for Israel. A third operation, Dove's Wings plans to bring out the last of the Ethiopian Jewish community. By June 2013, it is claimed, there will be no more Jews left in Ethiopia.

But this all depends on the definition of who is a Jew. Controversy has surrounded the immigration of Ethiopians. Alongside practising Jews – the Beta Israel – have lived the Zera Israel – Jews who converted to Christianity in the time of 19th century famine but who were never accepted as fully Christian. Over the past decades they have gone back to living a Jewish life. They cannot make aliyah under the Law of Return, but Israel will absorb them under the Law of Entry if they can demonstrate an unbroken line of matrilineal Jewish descent. Ethiopians have always defined their status through the father. Thousands of patrilineally Jewish Zera Israel identify themselves as Jews.

The town of Gondar has become the centre

for the Zera Israel. Families moved there from their villages in the expectation that they would soon be airlifted out. No promises were made, and agencies operating in the area urged people to stay put, but they have ended up in Gondar without money or the necessary skills for urban living. Having lived off charity in recent years, they see the various agencies moving out leaving them to make a meagre income through poorly paid menial jobs. They are the lowest stratum of society in one of the poorest countries in the world.

A new charity, Meketa, has been set up this year to help Ethiopian Jews of patrilineal descent who will remain in Gondar. They say: "We have raised money to create a weaving co-operative and to sponsor a number of children through their education. We are now fundraising to establish a bakery, and hope to develop other projects to enable the Zera Israel to regain their dignity and some control over their lives."

Rabbi Sybil Sheridan www.meketa.org.uk

Voices against austerity

Leon Rosselson and Ian Saville have both performed at benefit events for Jewish Socialist magazine over the years. In 2012 they teamed up with a collection of singers and songwriters to take the Anti-Capitalist Roadshow to several venues.

Their music and poetry has now been produced on a 30-track double CD called Celebrating Subversion. The eleven performers include veterans of the radical music

scene such as Roy Bailey and Frankie Armstrong, Palestinian singer Reem Kelani and the upcoming Grace Petrie. Through their words, says Leon Rosselson, they collectively protest against "the ideologically driven austerity programme imposed by this millionaire government on all but the elite and in particular on the poor, vulnerable and disabled... we are part of another way of looking at the world."



Celebrating Subversion is available for £16 (including p&p) from Fuse Records, 28 Park Chase, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 8EH.

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A turbulent month

Israel's latest war on Gaza began with an assassination from the air of Hamas's military leader Ahmed Jabari in his car. Missiles were then fired into southern Israel. The next day the full Israeli air assault began. But there is a bigger picture. Only some of the voices we present here were echoed through the mainstream media. Others came through alternative outlets.

From under the bombs

My aunt lives in al-Bureij refugee camp in the centre of the Gaza Strip, not far away from where I live in Deir al-Balah. Her house was bombed many times during Israel's 2008-09 attacks on Gaza and is still a very possible target for the Israeli air strikes.

The actual target is her brother-in-law who now has taken Ahmad Jabari's place as a new commander in Hamas's military wing. For the sake of their target, Israeli F-16s couldn't care less when they kill children, women or the elderly or to destroy a five-story building even if they know that "the wanted man" doesn't stay with his wife and children in this home.

We heard a very loud explosion in al-Bureij and swiftly we called my aunt who was barely able to speak to check on her safety. The blast was in her neighbour's house and the victim this time is a one-year-old baby Eyad Abu Khusa. Though she has refused to leave her house since the start of this ongoing assault,

she, along with her two sons, came today to stay with us after the repeated bombardment of al-Bureij. No shelter is safe...

People have learned not to trust the occupier's forces. There has been a general sentiment not to gather in large numbers. For Israel has repeated its vicious tactic of bombing a place, waiting five minutes, as people will gather to help and carry the victims – then it will hit the same place again to score more deaths. What a continuous process Israel is applying to dehumanise the people of Gaza.

We have been asking ourselves why we always have to pay the bill of the Israeli elections...

At 7am on 19th November, two people from my extended family and a neighbour were hit by an Israeli missile. All three (Tamer, Amin and Rashid) were martyred at once.

It was Amin's birthday.

Charred, shrunk and torn into pieces, piled up upon one another as they were covered by their white coffin shrouds.

The three weren't going to fire rockets on Israel, they weren't going to kill Israeli children or women or even soldiers. They hadn't got weapons, they were not "terrorists."

I knew two of my relatives Tamer and Amin personally and am certain that they had never been involved in armed resistance. The three were farmers who grew tomatoes on their land – this was their work. Their van was open and the Israeli jet, with its high technology, could easily recognise the tomatoes in the back.

It hit them with a missile that not only killed them, but terribly deformed their figures. Nothing happened to the tomatoes because they were not the target.

Through their high level of technology and an expertise in killing, the computerised missile wasn't dropped vertically as you might imagine, but from the side direction to penetrate the front door and kill the three sitting beside each other. It is only the

front part of the van which is completely destroyed, but the back part is intact.

Tamer and Amin were cousins who were 32 and 40 years old respectively. Tamer had two sons and one daughter; Amin had two daughters. All children are less than eight years old. We went to Tamer and Amin's house where hundreds of people gathered – relatives and otherwise, old and young, men and women.

Their mother was bawling, their wives fainted many times; their aunts were running after their funeral and their children were standing shocked with no expressions on their faces as if they were in denial or as if they couldn't fathom what was going on as the tragic loss of their father was something beyond their comprehension.

Ayah Abubasheer, a graduate of LSE, is a member of the Gaza-based organising committee for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. This is an extract from Ayah's article published on 23rd November in *Electronic Intifada* www.electronicintifada.net

Like father like son?

Ariel Sharon's son Gilad wrote in the Jerusalem Post on 18th November:

There is no justification for the State of Gaza being able to shoot at our towns with impunity. We need to flatten entire neighbourhoods in Gaza. Flatten all of Gaza. The Americans didn't stop with Hiroshima – the Japanese weren't surrendering fast enough, so they hit Nagasaki, too.

There should be no electricity in Gaza, no gasoline or moving vehicles, nothing. Then they'd really call for a ceasefire. Were this to happen, the images from Gaza might be unpleasant – but victory would be swift, and the lives of our soldiers and civilians spared.

If the government isn't prepared to go all the way on this, it will mean reoccupying the entire Gaza Strip. Not a few neighbourhoods in the suburbs, as with Cast Lead, but the entire Strip, like in Defensive Shield, so that rockets can no longer be fired. There is no middle path here – either the Gazans and their infrastructure are made to pay the price, or we reoccupy the entire Gaza Strip. Otherwise there will be no decisive victory. And we're running out of time – we must achieve victory quickly. The Netanyahu government is on a short international leash. Soon the pressure will start – and a million civilians can't live under fire for long. This needs to end quickly – with a bang, not a whimper.

The paper in Jabari's pocket

When Ahmed Jabari's car was destroyed in the targeted assassination on 14th November, the Israeli authorities knew that he was carrying the draft of a long-term ceasefire proposal drawn up by the Israeli peace activist and negotiator Gershon Baskin. This act also broke off an informal truce mediated by Egypt.

It was because of the informal truce that Jabari was moving freely in Gaza City, and this gave Israel its chance to assassinate him in a deliberate decision to

escalate the conflict. There is speculation that the decision to eliminate Jabari was taken before the informal truce came in, and he was being set up in a trap.

Baskin was directly involved in the negotiations that ended with Hamas releasing the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in exchange for Palestinian prisoners earlier this year. After the exchange took place he maintained his contacts in order to work towards developing an enduring ceasefire.

– voices from Gaza and beyond

In the West Bank

During the eight days of conflict, demonstrations took place each day in the West Bank as Palestinians there expressed their solidarity with Gaza. As well as marching through the major cities of Nablus and Ramallah, demonstrators went to checkpoints and passages, where they could express their anger at the Israeli massacres in Gaza and also clash with Israeli soldiers. Every day since 14th November, Palestinian youth have

demonstrated in front of Israel's Ofer Prison, located to the west of Ramallah, in Bab ElZawiya

in the centre of Hebron city, outside Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem and by the Qalandiya checkpoint to Ramallah.

Over 100 Palestinians have been injured by Israeli soldiers in these West Bank demonstrations, mostly by rubber-coated steel bullets, tear gas and sound bombs. In many cases Israeli soldiers opened fire and injured demonstrators with live bullets, such as on Tuesday at the Beit Aynon

junction, where Omar Jamal Crouch was seriously injured. Rushdi Mahmoud Tamimi, age 28 from the village of Nabi Saleh, died after being injured with live bullets in a solidarity demonstration. On Monday night Hamdi Al-Fallah, age 22 from Hebron, died after he was shot in the chest during clashes with soldiers in the city.

One of the main slogans being chanted at West Bank demonstrations is about the need to form one Palestinian leadership and end the division between Gaza and the West Bank

Before the onslaught

Shahd Abusalama wrote in her blog from Gaza a few days before Israel launched "Pillar of Defence":

Had a difficult evening at Shifa hospital in Gaza which I arrived at soon after Israel attacked a funeral in Shij'iyya, western Gaza leaving four dead and 30 injured. I saw the injured people, many of whom were kids and women. I saw a traumatised 10-year-old boy whose leg got injured by shrapnel. His leg was bleeding and got broken. His eyes were open wide, he was

traumatised, crying out, "Dad, I don't want to die."

I met another young man who had an injury in his leg. He witnessed the Israeli tanks when they shelled the funeral. He ... was playing football nearby with his childhood friends when they targeted the place. He survived but he lost his two childhood friends. They died right in front of him. He was uttering these words to me with indescribable strength. I think he was so traumatised to believe that what he went

through was actually real. Because the first word he said to me was, "It's like a nightmare." Everyone looked very shocked. It was crazy at the hospital. Injured people were arriving at the hospital one after another. There wasn't enough space for them. The operation rooms were all occupied. Five people died as a result of the latest attacks on Gaza so far and at least 35 people were injured. Gaza will not sleep tonight as Israel warplanes are still flying heavily over Gaza. Keep an eye on Gaza!

And in Tel Aviv...

A demonstration took place on 14th November in front of Defence Minister Ehud Barak's house in Tel Aviv, protesting the killing of Hamas military chief Ahmed Jabari and the launch of "Operation Pillar of Defence". The demonstrators called for an end to the bloodshed and for dialogue between Israel and Hamas. A further demonstration took place the following night and a larger demonstration was held on the Saturday in which the main slogans chanted and on placards were:

- Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies
- You want peace and security? End the siege today!
- Sderot and Gaza don't despair – we'll end the occupation
- The people demand a ceasefire
- This racist government is the security threat
- We refuse to kill or be killed in the service of Zionism

RED CARD ISRAELI RACISM

Mahmoud Sarsak, a Palestinian football player whose career was cut short by three years' detention without trial in an Israeli jail, has issued a plea for European football's governing body UEFA not to go ahead with plans to stage next year's under-21 finals in Israel.

Sarsak was released last July after a three-month hunger strike won him sympathy and support from influential voices in the football world including Former French and Manchester United star Eric Cantona and FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

In a letter thanking those who had helped win his freedom, Sarsak said Israel was not "a normal state where citizens can play sport freely". At least two footballers were among many hundreds of political detainees, and there were endless repressive impediments to playing the game.

"UEFA is legitimising Israel's continued occupation, oppression and apartheid policies. There can be no place in football for segregation and oppression so prestigious tournaments cannot be allowed to take place in Israel." Film maker Ken Loach and screen

writer Paul Laverty have endorsed a statement for football professionals to sign, supporting Sarsak's appeal, which says: "Taking into account the high profile given in European football to combating racism wherever it appears, we agree with Sarsak that it is inappropriate for European football's governing body to be staging international competitions in a country responsible for systematic discrimination against Palestinians."

Sarsak's letter was published on his behalf by the Palestinian Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement and has been taken up by the London-based Red Card Israeli Racism campaign.

Red Card Israeli Racism has gathered thousands of signatures for a petition calling on UEFA president Michel Platini to move the 2013 under-21 finals from Israel.

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi

www.change.org/petitions/uefa-president-michel-platini-remove-uefa-2013-european-under-21-championship-from-israel

CHANGE
THE
WORLD



NOVEMBER

RISING

CHARLIE POTTINS investigates the history of Algeria's Jews and discovers an untold story of their role in the Résistance

On 8th November 1942, Allied forces invaded North Africa in Operation Torch. Montgomery's 8th army had defeated Rommel's Afrika Corps at El Alamein and begun driving Axis forces back from the borders of Egypt. Landing in the west, at Casablanca, Oran and Algiers, the Allies would start a pincer movement, driving Rommel out through Tunisia, and preparing to invade southern Europe.

The United States hoped the Vichy French, bitterly anti-British since their fleet was sunk at Mers el Kebir, might be won over if Torch was presented as an American operation. The overall commander was General Eisenhower. Secret approaches had been made to senior French commanders.

In Algiers, not everyone relied on these approaches. On the eve of the Allied landings, fewer than 400 poorly armed rebels set out to seize strategic buildings, throttle Vichy communications, and open the city to the invaders. More than half the insurgents were Algerian Jews.

Jews had lived in the Maghreb countries of north-west Africa since antiquity. The 14th century Arab historian Ibn Khaldun wrote of mountain Berber tribes that adhered to Judaism. Later came refugees from Spain and merchants from Italy, who prospered under Ottoman rule.

The French invasion in 1830 brought destruction and disease to Algeria. The indigenous population declined by nearly a third, but 50,000 Europeans emigrated to Algeria. Settlers obtained land confiscated by the French army. Modern agricultural techniques increased productivity. But this did not benefit uprooted felaheen.

For Algerian Jews a major change took place after French Justice Minister, Adolphe Crémieux introduced this decree on 24th October 1870: 'The Israelites native to the departments of Algeria are declared French citizens; consequently, their real status and their personal status shall be, dating from the promulgation of the present decree, regulated by French law, with all rights acquired until this day inviolable.'

The Jews of Algeria accepted becoming French as a way to emancipation and progress. But they were by no means embraced by the settlers. Big landowners wanted cheap labour, and opposed anything which raised the aspirations of natives, whether they were Muslims or Jews. Europeans lower down the scale, Italians and Maltese as well as French, cemented their identity with racism, jealously guarding their status with imported hatred against Jews.

In 1881, on the eve of elections, Europeans attacked the Jewish quarters at Tlemcen. Jews fought back with sticks and stones. In 1896, antisemites gained control of the city council at Constantine, and sacked Jewish employees. Sick Jews were denied admission to the hospital, and children were

expelled from schools. The explanation was that, 'The young Israelites bring to school all sorts of contagious diseases and constitute a danger to classmates.'

In January 1897 rioters attacked Jewish premises in Algiers, killing two men and severely injuring over 100 people. Four months later there were anti-Jewish pogroms in Oran. The police did little to intervene. In January 1898 the Dreyfus Affair divided France and fuelled antisemitic riots in Algiers. In May that year, Edouard Drumont, author of *La France Juive*, was one of four antisemitic deputies elected in Algeria.

In the First World War at least 2,000 Algerian Jews died for France on various fronts. The Algerian Jews organised both religious and secular institutions. A 1931 social survey found them in a variety of occupations, from day labourers (1,172) and ordinary workers (18,032) through skilled trades and salaried commercial employees to the professions, and 7,987 employers.

Antagonism began to come from more than one direction. In Constantine, on 5th August 1934, a rumour that Jews had defiled a mosque led thousands of Muslims to attack Jews, killing 25. The police did nothing to stop them. Besides worsening social conditions, and jealousy of Jews' status, external influences were at work. Nazi propaganda was reaching the Maghreb as well as the Middle East. The French newspapers presented the Constantine pogrom as an expression of centuries-old hatred between Muslims and Jews. Algerian Jews denied these claims. Maurice Violette, a governor of Algeria, told the French senate in 1935: 'If there is antisemitism in Algeria, you can be sure that it is the Europeans who activate it.'

In the autumn of 1938 a former Communist turned Fascist, Jacques Doriot, toured Algeria and convened a congress of his Parti Populaire Français (PPF), saying: 'We have launched the mot d'ordre of abrogation of the Crémieux decree because the mass of Jews are making a bloc with the parties of the left, imperilling the sovereignty of the colonial French, the men of Empire.' Doriot solicited funds and weapons from fascist Italy.

FROM THE FALL TO RESISTANCE

After France's surrender on 22nd June 1940, its northern half fell under Nazi occupation. Marshall Pétain's government at Vichy retained control of the south and overseas territories, including the colony of Algeria and protectorates in Morocco and Tunis. Pétain's government adopted the Statut des Juifs in October 1940, aimed at removing Jews from public life and employment. On 7th October 1940 the Crémieux Decree was abolished. Ten months later Xavier Vallat, a member of Action Française, appointed head of the Commissariat-General for Jewish Questions, arrived in Algiers. A delegation of wounded and decorated Jewish ex-servicemen appealed to him as an old soldier to mitigate the

antisemitic policies. To no avail.

On 15th September 1941 it was announced that anti-Jewish legislation would be applied as strictly in North Africa as in metropolitan France. This was hard to enforce in Morocco and Tunisia, which were only protectorates and had fewer colonists. Morocco's King Mohammed V declared that the country's Jews were his subjects and not subject to French law.

General Weygand, the Vichy regime's Delegate-General to the North African colonies, signed an order excluding Jewish pupils from schools. Some teachers taught Jewish pupils at home. There was even an underground university running courses until the authorities suppressed it. Some Jewish pupils were accepted at Muslim schools.

Whatever Muslim resentment existed towards Jews, the French measures failed to impress politically educated Arabs. Ferhat Abbas, who had once hoped Muslims could obtain equality as French citizens, took abolition of the Crémieux Decree as confirming Algerians must seek their own freedom. He said: 'That which you do to the Jews of Algeria, so perfectly assimilated to French civilisation, is of your own initiative and not that of the enemy who never sought the abrogation of the Crémieux decree. Your racism goes in all directions. Today it is exercised against the Jews. It is exercised every day against the Arabs.'

According to José Aboulker, a leader of Jewish resistance: 'They didn't take part in the war. It wasn't their war. With the Jews, they were perfectly all right. Not only did they refuse to participate in the anti-Jewish abuse the Germans and the Vichy government tried to push them into, while the colonists were fighting over the Jewish possessions, they even resisted the temptation to buy them at low price and make huge profits. The instructions were given in the mosques: the Jews are going through hard times, they are our brothers.'

The French authorities blamed Arab disaffection on Jewish incitement. In fact, apart from a few Communists and individuals who identified with Arab nationalism, most Jews in Algeria remained French patriots, despite everything they had suffered. But that did not mean they would not fight back.

In October 1940 a group of young Jews who had been demobilised from the French forces acquired a 4.5-ton cutter, intending to make for Gibraltar and enlist with the Free French. Their plan was discovered and the French Admiralty seized their boat. Dr Raphael Aboulker, a surgeon and son of a leading Jewish family, persuaded them they would be needed in Algeria. This group would play their part in the 1942 rising.

Raphael and Maurice Aboulker were members of a Jewish aid committee, formed to help those ousted from their jobs or professions. The committee organised its own schools and services. A former boxer, Geo Gras, provided premises for a gymnasium, where a self-defence group was set up, enlisting about 250 Jewish youths. From training as defence squads, they turned to modest resistance. V for victory signs and anti-Vichy posters appeared on walls. Radio news from London was transcribed into clandestine leaflets. There were acts of sabotage on the docks.

In Oran, Roger Carcassonne, in trouble in his army unit for distributing De Gaulle's 1940 call for resistance, was demobbed in August. He headed for England via Gibraltar, together with his brother

Pierre, but the Vichy police and navy had the coast well guarded. So, like the young Algiers men, the brothers formed an underground group. In March 1941, a friend introduced Carcassonne to Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie, a military intelligence officer and former royalist who had become anti-Nazi and wanted to organise resistance. Then in August, Roger Carcassonne met his cousin, 20-year-old medical student José Aboulker, in Algiers. The pair agreed to keep in touch and turn from propaganda to preparing armed struggle.

Carcassonne diverted funds from his company to the Résistance. José Aboulker made contact with Roger Maria of the underground Communist Party of Algeria. Many of its members were in Saharan concentration camps. The party secretary, Kadour Belkaim, had died in a dungeon in July 1940. Though worried at first that young Aboulker's plan might prove a risky undertaking, the party promised 60 combatants.

Bernard Karsenty, born in 1920 in Oran, was a soldier in Marseilles when France surrendered. Heeding De Gaulle's appeal in 1940, he returned to Algeria in November 1941, hoping to reach Gibraltar from there. Instead, he joined the Résistance network formed by Carcassonne and José Aboulker.



Allied troops moving forward in Algeria

UNCLE SAM ENTERS THE WAR

The United States, not yet at war when France fell, recognised the Vichy regime as France's legitimate government. When, in December 1941, the Free French navy seized the islands of St Pierre and Miquelon, off Newfoundland, from Vichy control, the US state department wanted Canada to restore the Vichyites. There was a public outcry and the US backed off, but still would not trust De Gaulle.

Robert Murphy, the US Consul General in Algiers, negotiated with the antisemitic governor Weygand, and agreed that US goods could be shipped to the Vichy French in Algeria through the British naval blockade. Murphy complained the British press was 'waging a campaign' against US relations with Vichy France.

After the United States entered the war and accepted British plans to invade north-west Africa, Murphy was instructed to meet some different French people. Lieutenant Colonel Germain Jousse was gathering intelligence and arms to assist an Allied invasion. His Committee of Five, formed in 1941 to support resistance, included d'Astier de la Vigerie, who was in touch with the Jewish resisters.

On the night of 22nd October 1942 the conspirators met at a farmhouse west of Cherchell on the coast. Bernard Karsenty was responsible for security. The group were joined by General Charles

General Weygand, the Vichy regime's Delegate-General to the North African colonies.



CHARLIE
POTTINS
Investigates the
history of
Algeria's Jews
and discovers an
untold story of
their role in the
Resistance

Mast, commander of the garrison in Algiers. Eisenhower's deputy, General Mark Clark, came ashore by kayak from the British submarine Seraph, bringing with him a US carbine that was handed to Bernard Kansenty, with promises of more weapons to come. Resisters went down to the beach on several nights, but the supplies never arrived.

RISE UP ON SATURDAY NIGHT

Algiers resisters had been meeting at a store owned by the Calvet brothers. It stood on a corner between two streets so people could enter by one entrance and leave by another, confusing surveillance. Guy Calvet-Cohen, a former police officer, was a leading member of their conspiracy.

However, on the night of 7th-8th November the Aboulker family home at 26 rue Michelet was to be the headquarters for the rising. An American technician had installed a radio transmitter. Colette Aboulker, the daughter of the house, her room lined with maps, was like a "guardian angel".

The plan was for 800 volunteers to set off in groups to take control over strategic buildings, neutralise port defences and paralyse communications. These volunteers would be facing altogether 11,000 Vichy troops, 2,000 members of the Service d'Ordre Légionnaire militia and several hundred of Doriot's PPF fascists.

Colonel Jousse had provided the rebels with VP (civil militia) armbands to confuse the opposition. José Aboulker had obtained blank order forms signed by General Mast, on which he typed letters authorising them to take over buildings. Some old buses would take the rebels to action. By zero hour fewer than 600 volunteers had showed up. Many melted away as they realised that neither the numbers nor the promised weapons had arrived. In the end, about 377 rebels went into action, including 200 Jewish volunteers. Among others who distinguished themselves that night were a detachment of pupils from the Lycée Ben Haknoun, led by a cadet called Pauphilet.

Despite setbacks, the operation proceeded largely according to plan. Paul Ruff and 15 men took over the central telephone exchange. Maurice Hayom, a young lawyer, led the group which took the Palais d'Eté, seat of the Governor General. José Aboulker, with his 20 men, took over the central police station.

By 3 o'clock on Sunday morning Algiers was largely in the hands of the insurgents. Outside the head post office a Vichy unit under white flag approached Lieutenant Jean Dreyfus, and argued about who should surrender to whom. As Dreyfus returned to his side, a Vichy sniper shot him in the back. The man responsible was decorated with the Croix de Guerre. At the central police station, Guy Pilafort, a Free French captain with José Aboulker's group, was gunned down from a passing car by a Vichy colonel.

The Allied forces were delayed. General Mast had promised his forces would not fight back, but his command did not extend to Oran or the navy. Two British destroyers trying to enter Algiers harbour with US rangers came under heavy fire. Along the coast several US units had landed on the wrong beaches. Colonel Jousse and General Mast met the US 34th Infantry Division, urging them to hasten

into the city before Vichy forces regained control.

General Henri Giraud was picked up from Toulon by the British submarine HMS Seraph, disguised as a US vessel, and taken to Gibraltar to meet General Eisenhower, who wanted him to assume command of French forces in Algeria. Giraud stalled, waiting to see what would happen. By the time he flew into Algiers on 9th November someone else was in charge.

Students from the Ben Aknoun lycée had surrounded the Villa des Olives and captured General Alphonse Juin, commander in chief of French forces in north Africa. With him was Admiral François Darlan, the number two in the Vichy regime, who was in Algiers to visit his son in hospital.

Murphy brought a message from President Roosevelt, inviting General Juin to order surrender and come over to the Allies. Juin said the message should go to Darlan. Darlan asked permission to send a message to Marshall Pétain, care of Admiral Leclerc. The message ordered Vichy forces to resist and to alert the Germans. It was intercepted by the Résistance, but Murphy gave him another go. Vichy naval forces received the order to attack US commandos landing in the harbour. Vichy gendarmerie recaptured the villa, freeing Juin and Darlan. It was another two days before Darlan was persuaded to negotiate a surrender – one which let him become governor of Algeria.

Darlan was not the only prize visitor taken that night. Millionaire industrialist Charles Bedaux, who had introduced the Duke and Duchess of Windsor to Hitler, was in Algiers to supervise construction of a trans-Saharan pipeline for the Germans. After capturing Bedaux, Guy Calvet had all his business papers collected and photographed. The documents disappeared. The US agents who came to take American citizen Bedaux, back to the United States admitted that they had the originals but insisted Calvet also hand over his copies. Bedaux committed suicide in prison in Miami while awaiting a grand jury investigation.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE

Algeria had changed hands but the anti-Jewish laws remained in place. On 15th November Giraud ordered conscription of Jewish youths but only to labour battalions, so they could not bear arms. Jewish children remained forbidden to attend schools, and professionals were not allowed to practise. Over 1,000 Jews were in camps, along with Spanish republicans, Algerian nationalists, International Brigaders and Communists. At Hadjerat M'Gull there were 170 prisoners who had suffered forced labour, hunger, disease, torture and murder. Two of the nine prisoners killed there were Jews, one a young refugee from Germany. His parents, who were in London, committed suicide.

At Djelfa, on an empty plateau 1,100 metres above sea level, under a blazing sun by day and freezing at night, were 4,000 internees, mostly former International Brigaders. Living in tents until huts could be built, most slept in their work clothes because they had nothing else to wear. Insects swarmed around the open latrines, prisoners suffered chronic diarrhoea through lack of hygiene and many had ulcers on their arms and legs. The prisoners were so hungry that they caught rats to

eat but were punished if they were caught lighting a fire for heat or cooking. Commandant Caboche ordered machine guns to be trained on the road after 8th November, to hold up American liberators. He need not have worried. They did not come.

On the afternoon of 24th December 1942, a 20-year old, Fernand Bonnier de La Chapelle, entered Darlan's headquarters in Algiers and shot the Admiral dead. The young man was executed by firing squad two days later. General Giraud, who took over Darlan's position as commissioner, had Résistance members, including José Aboulker and his father, rounded up and thrown into the Saharan camps.

Arthur Roseborough, the head of the US intelligence army, the Office of Strategic Services, in Algiers, went to see Murphy, begging him to help get them released. "American honour is at stake," he said. "Art, old fellow," Murphy replied, "if you have nothing better to do in Africa than to worry about those Jews and communists who helped us, why don't you just go home?"

Giraud claimed the "conspirators" had planned to assassinate Murphy too. Fortunately, Colette Aboulker had escaped. She managed to contact Murphy, who did nothing, but she also spoke to British journalists in Algiers. Churchill had already written privately to Roosevelt on 9th December voicing disquiet that fascist organisations remained active in Algeria while Allied sympathisers were imprisoned.

Prisoners in the Sahara camps begged to be freed to join Allied forces. In March 1943 a Red Cross officer came to Djerba, and later US Quakers brought used clothing, rice, sugar and condensed milk. In April 1943 a British officer, Major Brister, was able to get internees released for the Pioneer Corps, among them 65 Jewish internees. Eventually, as a result of international concern and the replacement of Giraud's regime by De Gaulle's Free French, steps were taken to close the camps and release the prisoners, and the anti-Jewish measures were gradually phased out.

Unlike their fellow Jews who rose up six months

later in Warsaw, those who acted in Algiers were not choosing a martyr's death over extermination. They fought alongside non-Jewish allies in the name of France and freedom. But by helping the Allies they stopped the Nazi genocide spreading and helped to hasten its end.

North Africa was not directly mentioned at the Nazis' Wannsee conference in January 1942 but the figure of 700,000 Jews to be deported from "France, unoccupied territory" indicates that the Jews of the Maghreb were to be included. Theodore Dannecker, head of the Gestapo's anti-Jewish section in Paris, planned to deport the Algerian Jews to Auschwitz but was thwarted by shortage of transport.

In July 1942, a month after Rommel's tanks entered the Libyan port of Tobruk and threatened Egypt, SS-Stapartenführer Walter Rauff, inventor of the mobile gas chamber for killing Jews and Partisans on the eastern front, arrived in north Africa, entrusted with a similar mission.

When the Nazis were forced back to Tunisia, Rauff's Einsatzkommando concentrated its work there. Some 2,500 Tunisian Jews died in slave camps, mainly from typhoid, while the Nazis plundered the Jews of Djerba island and other communities. Had the Nazis not been driven back from the gates of the Middle East and the Maghreb they could have finished what they started.

In the 1950s and 1960s Jews in Algeria found themselves caught between French settler intransigence and the Algerian independence struggle. The Front de Libération Nationale urged Jews to throw in their lot with fellow Algerians. But indiscriminate terror attacks and the adoption of Islam as part of national identity did not encourage confidence. Israeli agents coming to assist Jewish security may have had the opposite effect, particularly when some sided with the French settlers' Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS). The great majority of Algerian Jews left the country, ending centuries of history, to try their chances in France or Israel. Some fared better than others. But the real loss was to Algeria.



José Aboulker, one of the leaders of the Algerian Jewish resistance.

What became of the resisters?

Freed from captivity, José Aboulker went to London to join the Free French. In October 1943 he was despatched secretly into occupied France, to organise medical services for the Résistance. Later, representing the Algerian Résistance in De Gaulle's Provisional Consultative Assembly, he proposed changing the electoral law in Algeria to allow the election of Muslim deputies for the first time.

Thousands of Muslims fought in de Gaulle's forces and took part in the liberation of France. On 8th May 1945, as Europe celebrated victory over Hitler, Arabs who arrived with their own banners at demonstrations in Setif, Algeria, were fired on by French

gendarmes. Riots followed, in which settlers were killed; French forces retaliated by killing thousands of people. In France, José Aboulker, who had joined the Communist Party, described these events and told the French National Assembly that Algerians wanted independence. He resumed his medical studies and became a professor of neurosurgery.

Colette Aboulker, having worked in a military hospital in Algiers, was awarded the Croix de Guerre for her wartime activities. She gained an international reputation in psychology and alternative medicine. Married to a scientist, she had two sons, one a professor at the Sorbonne. She

died in 2003 in Jerusalem.

Robert D Murphy held various diplomatic postings after the war, and was President Eisenhower's personal representative during the 1958 Lebanon Crisis. After a stint at the State Department in 1959, Murphy was an adviser to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. In 2006, he was featured on a United States postage stamp.

Walter Rauff the Nazi responsible for killing 100,000 people, escaped justice after the war, and served various governments, including the Syrian secret police and, it is said, MI6 and Mossad. He worked for Pinochet's secret police, DINA, in Chile, and died there peacefully in 1984.

VIOLATING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Israeli military law breaches international conventions in its treatment of young Palestinians, a new report reveals

In September this year there were 189 Palestinian children in Israeli detention. A year earlier, nine British lawyers visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel to monitor the treatment of Palestinian children under Israeli military law. They published their findings in June in a report entitled *Children in Military Custody – A report on the treatment of Palestinian children under Israeli military law*.

"Many of its conclusions give serious cause for concern," said Sir Stephen Sedley, recently retired Lord Justice of Appeal, at the London launch of the report. "Where Israeli children, who include those living in the settlements, benefit from a juvenile justice regime which by and large meets all the standards we in this country would expect, Palestinian children are arrested at gunpoint and put through a system laid down not by civilian law but by military orders."

The other lawyers involved were Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC, Frances Oldham QC, Marianna Hildyard QC, Judy Khan QC, Jayne Harrill, Jude Lanchin, Greg Davies and Marc Mason. The group was brought together solely for the visit and to produce the report. Its members were selected for their knowledge of human rights law, criminal law and child welfare, and for their experience of socio-legal research. The project was independent and funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which provided diplomatic support.

The terms of reference were to evaluate Israeli military law and practice as they affect Palestinian children in the West Bank in relation to international law.

Delegates met with the former Chief Justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, senior military judges and prosecutors, Israeli government departments, NGOs, lawyers, former child prisoners and former Israeli soldiers, to assess each stage in the process: arrest, interrogation, bail hearings and plea bargains, trial, sentencing, detention and complaints. The delegation also had an unscheduled meeting with Israeli settlers in Hebron, which is not covered in the report.

They looked at differences between the treatment of Israeli children and Palestinian children, and considered whether there is any justification for this in the light of international law. In the view of the delegation, Israel's domestic juvenile justice system conforms substantially to the standards required by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As the occupying power, Israel carries its international

human rights obligations with it, and, under international law, no state is entitled to discriminate between those over whom it exercises penal jurisdiction on the basis of their race or nationality. Unequal or differential justice is not justice.

However, when the delegation met with Israeli government agencies, their stance was that the Convention has no application beyond Israel's own borders. The report counters this by saying: "it is factually and legally unreal to suggest that children who are arrested by the Israeli Defence Force, interrogated by either the Israeli police or the Israeli Security Agency, held in Israeli prisons and judged by Israeli military courts, are not within the jurisdiction of the State of Israel... The occurrence of hostilities or physical conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories does not alter or dilute Israel's consequent obligations."

The delegation heard conflicting accounts of how Palestinian children are treated by Israeli forces. "The first account, provided to us by Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, UN agencies, lawyers, former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian children whom we met, is that those who have been identified as offenders or suspects are arrested by soldiers, usually in nighttime raids on their homes[,] are blindfolded, and, with their wrists painfully bound behind them, are then transported to interrogation centres, sometimes face down on the floor of military vehicles. The majority are verbally and/or physically abused and, without being informed of their right to silence or the right to see a lawyer, are sometimes held in solitary confinement, pressured to incriminate themselves and others, and are often made to sign statements which they cannot read because they are written in Hebrew. Interrogations are not, save on rare occasions, audio-visually recorded, and those tapes that do exist are almost impossible to obtain by defence lawyers representing the children. After several months on remand, almost always in custody, often in primitive conditions, with limited or no education and extremely restricted access to family, the children are in most cases advised by their lawyer that their best hope is a plea bargain which will reduce the overall time spent in custody whether they are convicted or acquitted. In this process, every year hundreds of Palestinian children are traumatised, sometimes irreversibly, are denied part of their schooling, and then live at on-going risk of much harsher punishment if they are arrested again.

IT IS FACTUALLY AND LEGALLY UNREAL TO SUGGEST THAT CHILDREN WHO ARE ARRESTED BY THE ISRAELI DEFENCE FORCE, INTERROGATED BY EITHER THE ISRAELI POLICE OR THE ISRAELI SECURITY AGENCY, HELD IN ISRAELI PRISONS AND JUDGED BY ISRAELI MILITARY COURTS, ARE NOT WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

To read the full report visit: www.childreninmilitarycustody.org



Delegation visiting a Palestinian family in the West Bank

"The second account was provided to us by the Israeli Government departments, military judges and prosecutors. This account, which varied between the different departments, is that, once the child has been brought into custody, he or she is informed prior to interrogation of his or her right to silence and to counsel. Children are treated appropriately throughout this process, violence and threats are forbidden, and if shown to have occurred will result in the exclusion of any consequent confession. Some departments reported that protection against ill-treatment and coercion is secured through the use of audio-visual recording of interrogations. Any complaint of violation of these norms, if raised by the defence at trial, is inquired into by the military judge, who has access to the live recordings of the interviews and may reject a case based on prosecutorial misconduct."

While the report reflects both of these accounts, it emphasises that "there are no sufficient procedural or practical reasons why identical safeguards as those accorded by Israeli law to Israeli children should not be accorded, albeit by military law, to Palestinian children, and powerful reasons of international law why they should be. We say 'albeit by military law' because we recognise that to extend the corpus of Israeli law to the Occupied Palestinian Territories would push occupation towards annexation."

The delegation was encouraged to find that, without waiting for a change in military orders, military judges and prosecutors aimed not to give custodial sentences for children of 14 or under, and also to treat all under-18s as juveniles as is the case in Israel, even though, until Military Order 1676 was passed in September 2011, 16 and 17-year-old Palestinians were treated as adults in the military courts. "It is a positive development that Military Order 1676 has now formally addressed the difference in the age of majority; however, there is room, in our view, for the order to go further and reform sentencing powers in cases where under-18s may still be given the same sentences as adults," says the report.

The delegation met Palestinian children who stated forcefully that their complaints of mistreatment were not heard. The report says: "No Legal Frontiers [an Israeli campaign group] found no evidence to support the assertion that cases against children can be discharged as a result of procedural improprieties. The military judges nevertheless stated that they do take note of serious procedural improprieties and may as a result discharge the case against a child... We are troubled by the differences between the responses we received from departments of the Israeli Government and the military to some of the issues we raised. Such inconsistencies emphasise the clear need for a comprehensive and independent monitoring and investigative system."

Although the delegates' role is not to adjudicate between the two radically different accounts of Israeli practice that they received, the report concludes that "within them are certain undisputed facts which compel us to conclude that Israel is in breach of articles 2 (discrimination), 3 (child's best interests), 37(b) (premature resort to detention), (c) (non-separation from adults) and (d) (prompt access to lawyers) and 40 (use of shackles) of the UNCRC". Additionally, the report finds that transportation of child prisoners into Israel breaches Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and failure to translate Military Order 1676 from Hebrew into Arabic violates Article 65 of the same Convention.

If the manner of arrest and detention resembles significantly how it was described by the UN, by Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, by former Israeli soldiers and by Palestinian children, Israel will also be in breach of the prohibition on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in Article 37(a) of the UNCRC. Delegate Jayne Harrill told Jewish Socialist: "The view of the delegation is that holding children routinely and for substantial periods in solitary confinement would, if it occurred, be capable of amounting to torture in breach not only of Article 37(a) but also of other well-known international instruments."

Forty recommendations in the report refer to

specific areas of potential improvement covering arrest, interrogation, bail hearings, plea bargains, trial, sentencing, detention, complaints and monitoring. A general recommendation is that military law and public administration should deal with Palestinian children on an equal footing with Israeli children.

Several developments have taken place since the report was issued. On 27th June a motion signed by 72 MPs was tabled in the UK Parliament citing the report and urging the Foreign Secretary to set out proposals for persuading Israel to comply with international law in its treatment of Palestinian children. A full response was still awaited at the time of writing.

In July, Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories condemned Israel's use of solitary confinement against Palestinian children and urged Israel to treat detainees in accordance with international human rights laws.

On 1st August Israel's Military Order 1685 came

into effect. This reduces the period within which detainees must be brought before a military court judge for the first time from eight to four days, and applies to adults and children as young as 12. But, as Jayne Harrill points out, the maximum detention period for Israeli children is 12 to 24 hours: "No explanation has been given as to why more favourable time limits apply to Israeli children, including children living in settlements in the West Bank. The delegation recommends the maximum period of detention before production at court should be reduced in line with Israeli youth law."

And on 26th August, *Breaking the Silence*, an organisation of former Israeli soldiers who have served in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, released *Children and Youth: Soldiers' Testimonies 2005-2011*. Containing nearly 50 testimonies, it describes experiences of Palestinian children living under military occupation from the soldiers' perspective.

As we go to press, none of the 40 recommendations made by the Children in Military Custody report have been implemented.

ORDEAL AT THE BORDER

Jayne Harrill, one of the lawyers involved in the Children in Military Custody investigation, describes unnerving experiences at Qalandia checkpoint

I had been in Israel and the West Bank as part of a delegation of lawyers looking into the rights of Palestinian children in the Israeli military courts. It was Sunday 18th September; the delegation had ended the day before, so I was taking the opportunity to meet up with friends in Ramallah. I had been back and forth through checkpoints all week in the delegation minibus and not experienced any problems other than queues of traffic. I caught the number 18 bus to Ramallah and was enjoying my own company; it had been an intense week of meetings.

On my way back to East Jerusalem that evening, Issam dropped me off at Qalandia checkpoint, the main access point from Ramallah to East Jerusalem. He asked if I had been through alone before. I said not. He looked worried and apologised that he could

not come with me (his West Bank ID card does not permit access) and made me promise I would text him as soon as I got through to the other side. I like to think I am not easily scared but his concern unnerved me. We said our goodbyes and I made my way on foot to the checkpoint.

It was beginning to get dark and I found myself in a huge hangar type building with no obvious route to the checkpoint. Men were slumped on benches scattered around the building; they seemed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. There was no lighting, I could not see where I was supposed to go and did not feel safe. I remembered I had been told of the lawless buffer zone between the checkpoint and Ramallah, which is notorious for drug dealing, I felt decidedly unsafe. A Palestinian man in a suit with a briefcase entered the hangar. He disappeared

through a narrow fenced channel that was not obvious in the gloom, and I immediately followed him. I was in a narrow corridor with high metal railings on both sides; there was a security turnstile at the end, and I followed him through. It reminded me of a film I'd seen of the procession of animals being led to slaughter at an abattoir.

Eventually I came out into an area that was effectively a large metal cage with about 20 people waiting. There was



a further turnstile at the end and, although we could not see what awaited us beyond, I assumed it was the checkpoint. I joined the end of the queue. At each stage of the process I could not see what was beyond the next turnstile and I recall thinking that those who had designed this system had definitely done their psychological research.

There was a deafening announcement through speakers, the turnstile clanked and three people were allowed through. We waited; the sound of a woman wailing in distress came from the checkpoint area. This continued for some time and I asked if anyone in the queue spoke English. A woman explained that the woman had been scared and said something to the soldiers that they did not like. The wailing carried on relentlessly, at this stage the others in the queue became visibly agitated, their fear was palpable. Several women in the queue started to weep silently. I heard slapping noises from the checkpoint then silence. I have no idea what happened to the woman. The queue had grown, nothing was moving.

Eventually the turnstile started clanking into action and it was my turn, I went through and placed my bag on the security belt ahead of me, walked through an airport type metal detector and came to a

window. A soldier pointed at a device where I placed my passport; she was not much older than my 15-year-old daughter. I waited, received no communication, eye contact or instruction and was unsure what to do next. A glass barrier prevented me from being able to communicate with her. I was helped by a Palestinian man behind me. He said "Go, go." I asked him for reassurance that this would be ok; there was no indication from the soldier what I should do. I grabbed my bag from the conveyor belt, passed through two more metal turnstiles as quickly as possible without breaking into a run and raising suspicion (suspicion of what? I hadn't done anything) and into East Jerusalem. I was extremely relieved to see the bus waiting, and texted Issam to tell him that I was through.

The intimidating and dehumanising process had taken two and three-quarter hours. I was too stunned to take in the journey back to central Jerusalem and was relieved to get back to my hotel. Palestinians from East Jerusalem who work in Ramallah are subjected to this experience on a daily basis.

Jayne Harrill specialises in cases involving children and has extensive experience of representing children in public law proceedings.

FROM WHERE I'M STANDING

Palestinian-Israeli political activist **ASMA AGHBARIEH-ZAHALKA** is the first Arab woman to head a party's candidate list (The Workers' Party) to the Knesset. Recently she started writing an occasional series of blogs about her experiences with her ID card. Translated by **SOL SALBE**

Eid al-Adha, Feast of the Sacrifice, and I do not know who sacrifices more, the slaughterer or the slaughtered. I can tell that those who cannot afford to slaughter are better off than the one being slaughtered but worse off than their more prosperous cousins. But for richer or poorer, on the day when they are all spruced up and in their glamorous best, in the eyes of their country they are as invisible as air. Not even one lousy greeting in the press. [Israeli newspapers carry pages upon pages of holiday greetings from companies and institutions on the eve of Jewish holidays.]

My young Adam, wearing his holiday best, is slouching in front of the TV, which is tuned to Hop, the Israeli pre-school channel, as is his normal custom. And the channel also follows its custom by maintaining regular programming. I'm not one of those celebrating, but it does seem odd that the kid has just about memorised the songs associated with Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, Passover and God knows what, but his own Feast of the Sacrifice is not represented. His primary identity, expressed through his clothes on this special day, is completely absent. And I wonder what he is supposed to make of that.

And before I delve into it any deeper and get myself into trouble, I cut off that train of thought, pick up the phone to call the Safari Park information hotline, and lo and behold something wonderful – there's a recorded message: "The Safari Management

sends its best wishes to the Muslim community on the occasion of Eid al-Adha." It was so simple, so easy that one just cannot understand why this is so impossible to replicate in the bleak reality of our lives.

A friend joins me and, together with the kids, we made a beeline for the Safari Park. As one of my friends remarked, anyone who didn't make the pilgrimage to Mecca for the holiday, made the pilgrimage to the Safari Park instead. Indeed, it seemed as if half the Arabs were there. And they all looked bright and beautiful and sparkling in their holiday best. Taking a break from the humdrum routines of life.

And on the way out we were all jammed together in the human traffic: Arabs and Jews, Muslims and Christians, women and men, as well as those who do not like to be defined by their nationality, religion, race or gender. We were stuck together among the ostriches and rhinos, zebras and gazelles. And the human traffic jam remained all plugged up, but nobody squabbled. The tranquillity of those who have no desire to rush back to the hustle and bustle of ordinary life.

And outside, the giant banner greeting the revellers, continued to flutter: "The Safari Park Management offers its best wishes to the Muslim community on the occasion of Eid al-Adha."

So simple, so easy.

PUNISHED for CROSSING

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF A ZIONIST

Antony Lerman
Pluto Press, £20

Of all Jewish critics of Israel and Zionism, the Jewish establishment reserves particular venom for Antony Lerman. His CV helps explain why. He would seem to be "born in the purple" as a leading institutional intellectual of Anglo-Jewry. From his promising start as an Israel-trained leader of a Zionist youth organisation, he duly emigrated to Israel, served in the Israeli army and returned to Britain to serve as an increasingly senior figure in prestigious Anglo-Jewish think tanks, journals and institutions.

A former editor of the Jewish Quarterly, from 1999 to 2006 he was Chief Executive of what is now the Rothschild Foundation Europe, and from then to 2009 was Director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR). He has also been a writer and analyst on the question of antisemitism for a range of establishment organisations, from the Runnymede Trust to the Imperial War Museum.

So what's not to like? In a nutshell, criticism of Israel. His insistence on distinguishing between anti-Zionism and antisemitism was bad enough. What put him further beyond the pale was his claim that, for many Jews rooting out actual and alleged antisemitism, and blind loyalty to the Israeli state, replaced religion and culture at the heart of Jewish identity. He could hardly be dismissed as not knowing what he was talking about. So he had to go, pursued by a *cherem* reminiscent of Spinoza's excommunication.

But as his account of his "personal and political journey" makes clear, the starting point was not a concern for the plight of the Palestinians, about whom he admits to an initial ignorance and lack of interest as great as that of most mainline Zionists. Rather it was the growing awareness of the gap between Israel's rough reality and the idealised socialist-Zionist vision on which he had been raised and which he had transmitted to others as an activist in the British branch of the youth movement, Habonim.

True, when retained to write a history of the movement on his return to Britain, his researches began to reveal to him something of the colonialist mentality behind even "socialist" Zionism. He quotes an emissary from Palestine in the 1930s on the need to "drain the Arab social swamp" so that the Jewish National Home should be free from bad influences emanating from an unhealthy society in its midst.

Only after he was driven by growing disillusionment to search more deeply and network more widely did he become more aware of the truth of the Nakba and the ongoing institutional discrimination against Palestinians. He came to see this as inherent in the political Zionist project, to the point where he now stands for a bi-national state.

For a time, he thought he could still retain his research position within official Jewish structures by concentrating on the prospects for rebuilding Jewish life in Europe, which he saw as opening up after the changes of the 1990s. But here too he came up against the Zionist and Israeli view that sees no future or value in Diaspora life outside of a relationship of uncritical identification with Israel.

One of the most revealing and also

depressing passages in the book details the almost Masonic intrigues by which the campaign for Lerman's removal from JPR was conducted. "I saw emails," says Lerman "...hinting at the existence of a concerted campaign to force me either to toe the 'communal line' or risk becoming so ostracised that my position at JPR would cease to be tenable."

In July 2006, after Lerman expressed heretical thoughts at a public discussion on antisemitism, Stephen Pollard, then writing for the Daily Mail, sent a distorted account of Lerman's thought-crime to Jeremy Newmark, executive editor of the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC). Newmark forwarded Pollard's comments to key members of the JLC, an unelected self-appointed body of *makher*s whose chief qualification would seem to be their wealth and the size of their contributions to "community" and Zionist causes.

A similar "disgusted of Hendon" *kvetch* was sent out by leading Reform Rabbi Sidney Brichto to a bizarrely selective list, including such worthies as Melanie Phillips, Daniel Finkelstein, Vernon Bogdanor and Lord Kalms. The recently founded Independent Jewish Voices was the cause of the outrage, with approving quotation of Mad Mel's description of its signatories, and especially Lerman, as "Jews for Genocide".

Across the water Peter Beinart has described how the rightward shift of US Jewish leaders has turned off an increasing number of younger Jews from any Jewish identification. Whether there is or ought to be an indefinite future for a secular Jewish identity is certainly debatable but political Zionism will bear a large share of the blame for its actual marginalisation.

Stephen Marks

TONY LERMAN spoke to JEWISH SOCIALIST



JS: Who is the book written for?

I had various readerships in mind: people who had a similar youth movement background, and also the wider Jewish community; I wanted them to know about the way I was treated. I also had in mind people not necessarily in the Jewish community who would like to develop some understanding of the conflict and what it was to be a Jew in my position. I hoped that supporters of the Palestinians would find this interesting because it is a story they are not familiar with. It wasn't to humanise Zionism but to humanise the experience of someone having gone through it.

JS: The Zionist youth movement was itself a dissident movement in Anglo-Jewry in the 1960s and '70s. Did your experience within it then incline you to becoming a political dissident later?

Socialism was key to Habonim. It was on the left but it was part the community. There were people who shaped Habonim in the 1930s who were still around and supporting it, as were people in the wider Zionist movement, so I didn't have a sense of being a dissident, apart from describing people as "armchair Zionists". Though the movement was quite counter-cultural.

JS: How did your work within the community make you reassess your views on Zionism?

It made me more aware of what Zionism was doing to Jewish life. I worked for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, the research arm of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), and spent quite a lot of time in the late 1980s and 1990s in the world of international Jewish politics. I learned a lot about people's attitudes to Israel, Zionism, and the future of Jewish

THE RUBICON

life – much of which I found extremely distasteful. Some of the campaigns the WJC were heading were not wrong – like pursuing Waldheim. He needed to be exposed. But the way they did it, their motivations, and their treatment of fellow Jews who saw things differently, were sickening.

When I first worked for the IJA I was told: ideological discussions in the Jewish world were over. Zionism had won. In the 1980s, Zionism did seem to be dominant. But I gradually saw that there were very different strains of it and came across more and more people who were questioning it.

JS: In the book you talk about the Younger Generation Group that you set up at the IJA. How did that group influence you?

While I was at the IJA I organised a series of Younger Generation meetings, which were incredibly stimulating. It started partly because of internal issues at the Institute of Jewish Affairs in relation to the directorship of Stephen Roth. I and my colleague Michael May decided we needed to carve out a constituency of support for exploring issues which Roth wasn't interested in having discussed in the Institute's research papers and conferences. There was a lot of interest. About 80 people came to the two preliminary meetings demonstrating that there were indeed more ideological arguments to be had in the Jewish world.

I was hearing things I hadn't been aware of before – new ideas that I found difficult to assimilate – and not just from the left. I hardly made any contribution at all. It took me a long time to absorb things and articulate my own feelings but the discussions had a big impact on me.

At that time I knew very little about the Jewish Socialists' Group. I wasn't hostile, but I wasn't on the same wavelength. I was open to its ideas because of the row that had resulted from publishing David Rosenberg's article in the *Jewish Quarterly* when I was editor. The Younger Generation Group made me sit with people like you and others saying things that would have been anathema to me 10 years earlier. That opened my mind to the fact that there is more to the Jewish world than I had imbibed growing up in Habonim.

JS: It is hard to imagine Jewish people with such differing and challenging ideas from left and right listening to each other today. Why is that?

The forces on both sides feel there is now much more at stake existentially. People did talk about a threat to Israel then, but that sense of Israel and Jewry being in danger wasn't around in the same way then because the dissenting forces on the left were more fragmented then. Also, the rhetoric that the Jewish right uses to defend Israel and the status quo in the Jewish community is much sharper now. So it is harder to have dialogue.

JS: Can you identify the tipping point after which you no longer considered yourself a Zionist?

There wasn't just one tipping point. Even after I was

aware of the realities, I was only able to release myself from the Zionist label when I left JPR (previously IJA) for the first time in 1999, when I went to run Jacob Rothschild's foundation. As Director of JPR I had to keep my thoughts to myself on these things. During those years I was mainly involved in issues of antisemitism rather than Zionism. But I was self-censoring. One of the reasons why I left is because I realised I needed to speak freely.

I came across well-meaning liberal Zionists and socialist Zionists, but there was a big gap between what they wanted and what I could see the Palestinians needed and deserved and was their right.

In the grant-making foundation supporting Jewish life in Europe that Jacob Rothschild asked me to set up, he gave me a wonderful opportunity. The programmes I introduced – supporting academic Jewish studies, culture, heritage – were all about strengthening Diaspora Jewish life, not prioritising Zionist organisations.

This idea that the Diaspora was doomed and Zionism the only story was clearly wrong. People spoke about Eastern European Jewish communities as "the remnants of the Holocaust", but then you would go to a small town in Ukraine and see a Jewish kindergarten. The front line of Jewishness, Judaism and Jewish culture seemed to be there in Eastern Europe much more than in Israel. That struggle, that movement, excited me and made me feel there is a real – not just a theoretical – alternative to Zionism.

JS: Rethinking the role of diaspora made you question received wisdoms about Zionism. But where did Palestinians enter the picture?

Talking to Palestinians and hearing their stories opened up a whole new world to me. Even while I was developing a critical view of Zionism I still had a fear of the "other". Finally encountering Palestinians helped me over that because I could see their humanity. The difficulty is getting people in the Jewish community just to consider the idea of Palestinian rights and the flaws in the way Israel was founded. It has become a bit easier to make people listen, because there is greater doubt; but turning that doubt into something more is incredibly difficult. In some ways that's a mystery, given all that we know today. But so many people have so much invested emotionally in Israel. For them, Israel stands for something secure, something positive about being a Jew.

JS: The Jewish establishment and pro-Israel advocacy groups seem very worried about young people becoming more questioning.

They see students as impressionable and they think that if they get drawn into pro-Palestinian politics, that will affect the fundamental base of the Jewish

ZIONISM

KARL LEWKOWICZ celebrates a long life spent courageously fighting for a better world

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF A ZIONIST

A Personal and Political Journey

ANTONY LERMAN

An honest and moving account – Rabbi David I. Goldberg

community. Campus antisemitism is an ongoing issue and is used to strengthen Jewish identity. To a certain degree you have to respect what students are saying about this. I'm sure there may be some intimidation, some antisemitism. But a lot of what goes on is part of the rough and tumble of student politics. It is being made into something much more serious than it is. It is also related to BDS (Boycott Divestment and Sanctions) because that is such a big issue in pro-Palestinian activism and the Jewish establishment is so wound up about it being a danger. They see the campus as the front line.

JS: When powerful forces in the community sought to undermine you for speaking your mind, were you the victim of a changing establishment?
I was a victim because there was a significant change, not necessarily in the underlying power structures, but in the public face of leadership in the early 1990s. It had become more open, more ready to listen to new things. For years the community had turned its face against research on itself, saying, "Keep it quiet – if you tell people we are shrinking in size, we lose our power." But when JPR began profiling the Jewish population in the mid-1990s, that changed. Those leaders who were inclined to wind people up about antisemitism were pushed into the background.

Jews had begun to feel more comfortable in Britain's multicultural society, but that shifted very rapidly after 2000 with the Second Intifada, the Durban UN antiracism conference, and 9/11. The leaders pushed into the background came to the fore again – people like Trevor Chinn and Gerald Ronson, who were, and still are, in positions of power. They wanted a more centralised Jewish community and new people came forward schooled in the same way of thinking.

After the rise of Jeremy Newmark (CEO of the Jewish Leadership Council) and Jon Benjamin (at the Board of Deputies), community professionals generally did the bidding of those who asserted that we were facing threats we had never faced before, whether or not they believed that themselves. I was a victim of a hardening leadership which said: "You're either with us or against us. We have to circle the wagons. This is the world we know. We know they hate us. It's always been like that." They turned against multiculturalism. You can see it in what Jonathan Sacks wrote, and in the rise of someone like Stanley Kalms in the community, who had a strongly anti-Islamic approach. Also, younger people – in business, in law – were convinced by the idea that we are facing unique threats today.

It hit me personally, but I was also just a symbol. It was what I represented as someone at the heart of the Jewish community. JPR was my creation; I went to work for the Rothschilds – the ultimate establishment. Therefore I was seen as a unique threat. I attracted opprobrium that people like the Jewish Socialists' Group had also suffered, but they were easier to marginalise than somebody on the inside.

JS: When you were attacked, you were accused of saying that Israel's actions were responsible for antisemitism. Was that your position?

There are various levels of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of my views about the

relationship between antisemitism and Israel's actions. You only have to mention Israel as having any influence on levels of antisemitism to some pro-Israel advocates and they accuse you of wanting to destroy Israel and being antisemitic yourself.

Even well-intentioned people are going to be suspicious and think your views are tantamount to saying that Israel is causing antisemitism. Of course it is not deliberately going out to create antisemitism, although in Zionist history, and even among Zionists today, there is a view that says: "We want just a little bit of antisemitism because that will encourage Jews to come, as long as Jews don't get harmed."

The Community Security Trust acknowledges the connection between Israel's actions and antisemitism very openly in its reports. It is really a no-brainer to make that link and to say that, if Israel's actions have this impact on us regardless of whether or not we are pro-Israel, we should be able to influence this, to speak out, and have a dialogue with people in Israel about this. I tried to bring this into discussion in the Jewish community in my last period at JPR, but it was very difficult.

If you take the view that everything Israel does is right, then you just have to grin and bear it. But Mick Davis of the United Joint Israel Appeal has said that Israel's actions are not in Israel's interest, nor in the interest of Jews. It's having a negative impact on European Jewish life, on Jewish life in this country. You don't have to go very far into soft Zionism to find people who question the way Israel exploits antisemitism, though they wouldn't necessarily buy my argument that Israel is its own worst enemy in terms of its security by not integrating into the Middle East.

JS: How have your views on Jewish cultural identity changed from when you were a young Zionist, and how do you see the future?

I was totally sold on Ivrit (modern Hebrew). I wanted to speak Ivrit better than Israelis – to integrate into their society. I came up against a wall of rejection, as though the Israelis were saying, "You will never really be like us, you are still English." That was a shock. I went through being called a *yored* (emigrant from Israel), and I felt guilty for years afterwards – made worse because it was kibbutz guilt. Some still feel this today. Realising that I could be Jewish in a different way helped me over that. The Jewish Socialists' Group always argued that there is a value in diaspora life and I have been wondering whether my ideas now on diaspora and Israel have a relationship to Bundist aims. A lot of Jewish academics are talking about diaspora as being a value in itself and being self-sustaining. I like to think that what we are talking about now in terms of diaspora will be the argument that wins out.

When I was trying to persuade my trustees on the Rothschild Foundation of the value of supporting Jewish life in Eastern Europe, they asked what future there was for Jews there. I said, "Who can tell what the future will be? Let's just support people now if they are doing good things, reviving culture and developing Judaism." I see a major divide in the Jewish world. The forces of the Jewish right may win out in the end, but it is worthwhile continuing the struggle to support the things that you think are good.

LOU KENTON

dedicated to defeating fascism

Lou Kenton, who died on 17th September 2012 aged 104, was the oldest surviving British member of the International Brigades. Seventy-five years earlier in 1937 he had felt compelled to help fight against the fascists in the Spanish Civil War, volunteering to join the International Brigades in support of the Spanish Republic alongside thousands of people from around the world. Prior to this he had been at the heart of protests against the British Union of Fascists at their violent rally in Olympia in 1934, and played a considerable role in the battle of Cable Street, helping to prevent Oswald Mosley and the BUF from marching through London's mainly Jewish East End in October 1936. This determination to resist fascism and antisemitism in all its guises was the seam that ran throughout his life.

Born in Stepney on 1st September 1908, he was the oldest of nine children, only six of whom survived. His Jewish parents had fled from the Ukraine to escape the Czarist pogroms and, like so many other Jewish immigrants at the time, the family settled in the poor East End of London.

Lou's father, a tailor, died of tuberculosis when Lou was very young, and at 14 years old he got a job in a paper factory in London. Here he experienced direct antisemitism for the first time and was not inclined to tolerate it: "Jews were constantly being attacked," he said. "On my first day at the factory, I was involved in seven fights. Jews were constantly being attacked. I reacted very badly to being called a Jew bastard."

Such formative experiences led him to join the Communist Party in 1929, which in turn inspired him to take up sports and opened his mind to another world of writing poetry and reading books. As a Fleet Street printer he played a big part in convening his trades union anti-fascist activities, founding and editing *The Anti-Fascist Printer*.

In 1933 he married Jewish-Austrian refugee Lilian Artner and soon became secretary of the local Communist Party branch. It was in this capacity that he was able to deploy party members so effectively in October 1936 to help frustrate Mosley's determined efforts to march his fascists through the East End.

As he recalled, "I had a motorbike at the time and was able to whizz around the periphery of the crowd, going from section to section to warn them what was going on. We had a number of people watching the Fascists and quickly telling the crowd what was happening. We were able to get word to the majority of the crowd in Commercial Road, which was some way from Cable Street, of what was happening."

Many of the protestors resisting the fascists that day felt that the civil war raging in Spain was a continuation of the same battle they had just fought, and that they had no option but to join the fight in support of the Republic. After attending an anti-fascist meeting, Lou, Lilian and their friend

Ben Glazer came to a momentous decision: "One evening myself and Lilian and my dear friend Ben Glazer walked along the Embankment. We walked – stopped at many coffee stalls – talking, wondering what it would be like in Spain. We didn't finally decide until we reached a coffee stall at Westminster Bridge, opposite the House of Commons. I think we had already decided to go, but didn't say so in as many words. I think we were deeply fearful in our hearts, but none of us wanted to show our fears. What would it be like? Would we ever come back? What if we were captured? And when we decided – how we embraced! Lilian kissed us both. We linked arms and walked almost cheerfully down Whitehall to the all-night Lyons Corner House just off Trafalgar Square for more coffee and eggs and bacon. From there we decided that tomorrow morning we would go and volunteer."

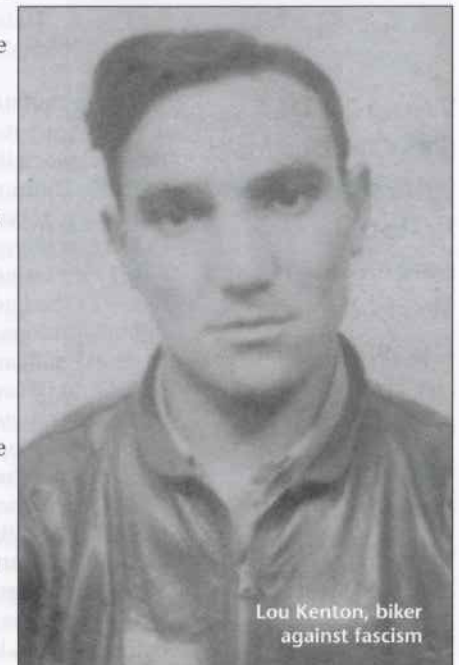
Lilian went first, volunteering as a nurse, followed by Lou a few weeks later, who rode through France to get there on his motorbike. Lou was part of the Republican fight against Franco's fascists for nearly two years as a dispatch rider, communicating messages and supplies between the battle fronts on his motorbike, or driving an ambulance. He was showered with affection wherever he went: "The first time I arrived in this little village, the people embraced me and took me into their homes and gave me food. When I got back to the hospital, they said, 'Don't ever do that again – they have got no food.' ... I lived on grapes growing by the roadside, for days on end."

Speaking very movingly at Lou's funeral, his son John Kenton told of how, during his time in Spain, his father used his signature whistle to "pass safe from 'friendly fire' through the front lines with a bag full of letters from home and dispatches for the command. With his Cuban comrade Manuel he would use the same whistle whilst carrying the wounded to their ambulance or lorry."

John told how his father brought the same whistle back to the family for his sister and himself to "bring us in for supper, or gather us up from countless demonstrations. Thus we could wander and yet we were never lost in a crowd."

Having survived Spain, Lou was badly injured in a bombing raid in the Second World War and was hospitalised for two years. After the war he continued to work as an organiser for the Communist Party and, with his second wife Rafa, he helped organise trips to Eastern European communist countries. From this grew a thriving

KARL LEWKOWICZ
celebrates a long life spent courageously fighting for a better world



Lou Kenton, biker against fascism

business called Progressive Tours, which for many years was the main company to take people to socialist countries, particularly Czechoslovakia.

With the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, Lou and Rafa closed the business in disgust and resigned from the CP to join the Labour Party. Lou worked at the Financial Times until late into his 70s – and late in his long and eventful life he discovered a surprising gift as a potter, making beautiful and ornate commemorative pottery for organisations such as unions.

In 2009 Lou was one of the seven surviving British International Brigade veterans awarded Spanish citizenship by the then Spanish

Ambassador, who gave a heartfelt speech of gratitude on behalf of the Spanish people. When he turned 100, Lou received a video message from Tony Blair congratulating him for his part in fighting fascism at Cable Street and in Spain, and Ed Miliband sent a personal message of condolence from the Labour Party conference to Lou's funeral.

I first met Lou and Rafa in 2005 and was deeply moved by their humour and warmth, and their enduring vision of a better world. Lou Kenton is an inspiring example of how to live one's life if we are to find that better world.

Lou Kenton is survived by his wife Rafa and their children Judy and John.

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

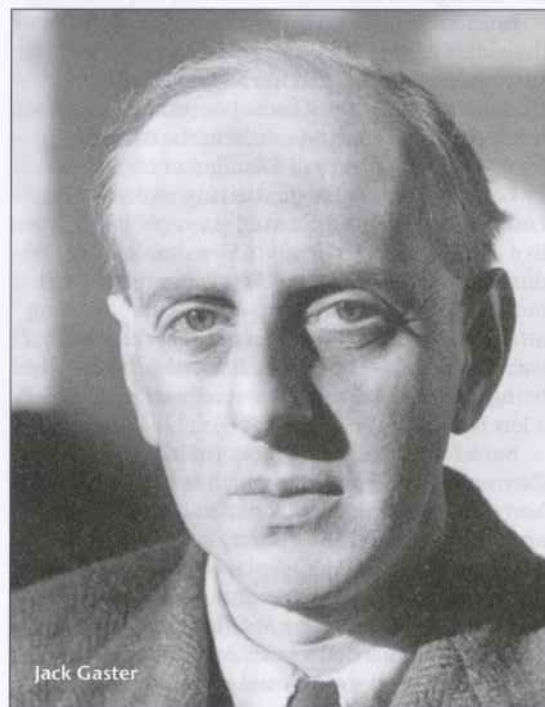
When **LYDIA SYSON** began to research her fictional romance, *A World Between Us*, which draws on the experiences of a courageous generation of anti-fascist activists, she stumbled across some more familiar figures

My grandfather, Jack Gaster, came into politics as a street-corner speaker. He said he was a romantic socialist before he was a scientific one. As for my grandmother, Moira, poetry was as important as politics. In fact, she once advised me to learn as many poems as possible off by heart in case I ever found myself locked up with nothing to read – as she had, after Spanish Civil War demonstrations.

The significance of my family history in relation to *A World Between Us*, a political romance for teenagers, dawned on me gradually. It took me by surprise. Nobody in my family fought or nursed or wrote despatches in Spain. At first I didn't make the connection. Then I suddenly found myself in tears in the British Library, as I encountered my grandparents and great aunts on the pages of Leila Berg's autobiography, *Flickerbook*. Frozen herself by the experience of one boyfriend after another dying in Spain, Leila Berg is distressingly harsh about Moira, whom she portrays as icily superior as she breaks the news of a brigadier's death to his mother. Later I check the dates. Teddy Cross – now just another name on a list – was killed at Gandesa in April 1938, during the devastating Aragon offensive. The Republican army was in retreat. Hitler had just invaded Austria.

I wonder that it didn't occur to Berg that Moira might have been as frozen by events as she was herself. I wonder how it felt to have recruited young men of unparalleled passion and commitment, only to learn months later that they are dead, missing, or incarcerated in a fascist prison. To realise, as Camus put it later, that you could be right and still be beaten, that force could overcome spirit and that courage isn't always enough.

I look at a photograph of my grandmother on her wedding day, six months later. It's not long since Munich; the International Brigades are being withdrawn and the Battle of the Ebro is all but lost. Dark eyed and barely smiling, she looks as if she could be attending a funeral. Her mother had refused to come; it was bad enough that her two daughters were both Communists, without Moira



Jack Gaster

marrying another, and worse still, a penniless Jewish lawyer, who spent most of his time working for no pay, campaigning, organising rent strikes, defending other activists, and standing up against antisemitism in courtrooms and police stations. And Jack's parents could hardly be there either: his father, Moses Gaster, was the former Haham at Bevis Marks synagogue, his mother the only child of Michael Friedlander, an early principal of Jews' College.

None of this is in my book, yet perhaps it's all there in the shadows. Researching *A World Between Us* has been a kind of exorcism and excavation. In a sideways fashion, it's allowed me to mourn my own beloved grandparents, while writing a tribute to a whole generation of anti-fascists.

At 14, my teenage daughter was as swept away by stories of the Spanish Civil War in the books of Jessica and Nancy Mitford as I had been at her age. But for most of her friends, the International



Brigades meant nothing. The more I read, the less I could understand how today's teenagers could possibly study the causes of the Second World War without a grasp of Spain's war, and Britain's part in it. I gave my daughter

Orwell, with a few caveats, and thought about an alternative approach to the subject. Could I capture the passionate politics of the anti-fascist movement in the 1930s in a way that captured the hearts of a young adult readership?

I'd become fascinated by the history of medicine while writing a book about an 18th-century sex therapist, Dr James Graham, and, as I was thinking about a medical role for my heroine, this seemed a good place to start. I soon discovered that significant advances had been made in treating the war-wounded in Spain. The moment I read about new techniques of blood collection and frontline transfusions, my plot began to write itself. Throughout Republican Spain, villagers and citizens, nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers and volunteers all rolled up their sleeves to give their blood for the cause of democracy and progress. It struck me as an incredibly powerful image.

My opening chapter came to me just as quickly. I remembered my grandfather telling me about the Battle of Cable Street. There, as elsewhere, he was under strict instructions not to get "knocked off" by the police, so that he'd be free to bail out and represent other anti-fascists later. I imagined a young nurse swept away by *The Internationale* for the first time. Leila Berg describes the wild exultation of singing on a march to an Aid Spain meeting at the Albert Hall: "...have you ever seen ten thousand people standing and singing? Like a field of corn dividing in the wind. And every now and then a child sitting on someone's shoulder ... like a lark rising up from the corn." The cry at Cable Street and Gardiner's Corner was taken from the streets of Madrid: ¡No pasarán! They shall not pass! What clearer way to show why so many East Enders and others from Britain felt compelled to go to Spain?

There's a liberation in writing fiction. Though I was always determined to structure my plot on a framework of fact, I took a scattergun approach to my research. I immersed myself in old journals and new history books, memoirs, poems, novels and letters. I went for walks and remembered others I'd taken in Spain in the past. I followed clues, watched films and newsreels, stared at old photographs, pamphlets and maps, and listened to music. Participants' accounts were always at the heart of it. I hope I'll be forgiven for all my plunderings of image and incident and emotion.

Nothing spoke to me more strongly than the disembodied voices I heard at the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive. Most of these interviews were recorded several decades ago, when a revival

of interest in the experiences of International Brigaders accompanied the return of democracy to Spain. Here I met and was moved by East Enders like Lou Kenton (see page 17) and Charlie Goodman, and medics such as Patience Darton, Joan Purser and Reg Saxton. It's also where I made myself listen to my grandfather's voice for the first time since his death. And where I first felt the bitter frustration of not having known enough to ask him the right questions when he was alive.

Some parts of my novel needed no looking up. I knew exactly what song Felix should learn on her way to Spain because its words have been in my head since childhood. (I'm the man, the very fat man...) But when her brother Neville mocked her with the words, "She'll be joining the Left Book Club" next, I had no idea that my great aunt Sheila (Lynd) had been a Left Book Club organiser: I'd associated her with patchwork quilts and beehives, not politics. Neither was I aware of the part played by another Neville in trying to stop East End Jews from demonstrating against Mosley's blackshirts: Jack's oldest brother-in-law was Neville Laski, leader of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

When my publisher, Hot Key, told me of their plan to produce an enhanced eBook edition of *A World Between Us*, with extra background material instantly accessible to readers, I had the perfect excuse to delve deeper. As I began to explore a long line of romantics, rebels and wordsmiths in my family history, other aspects of my novel took on new significance.

Where had Moses Gaster stood on resisting fascism? I discover a reference to the efforts of his eldest daughter (Sissy Laski) and her husband to stop him from presiding at a Workers Circle protest meeting about Hitler in April 1933. Moses wrote in his diary of the Board of Deputies' reaction to the call for a boycott of German goods: "The courage of the Jews is to hide themselves behind the skirts of the clergy: I prefer standing under the flag of labour. At any rate that is unfurled in the air and can be seen."

A few months later his youngest daughter, Lulu, was arrested after throwing a brick through the window of the German Embassy.

Before I started writing *A World Between Us*, I knew that my grandfather had been a communist councillor for Mile End on the London County Council. I didn't know that his grandmother-in-law, N F Dryhurst, had been among the founders of Whitechapel's Freedom Press, and taught at the anarchist school run by Louise Michel, heroine of the Paris Commune. Michel gave her name to two Battalions of French-speaking volunteers in the International Brigades. Last week I picked up the autobiography of the political cartoonist David Low – deflator of dictators and underminer of the non-intervention policy on Spain. Low's warm description of his friendship with my other great grandfather, Robert Lynd, essayist and Irish Nationalist, reminded me of my gentle, soft spoken grandmother: we used to tease her about her hatred of saying "no". Except when it came to war and injustice, of course.

Left: Maire Lynd

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Councillor M. H. DAVIS, L.C.C.,
The Rev. M. L. PERLZWEIG,
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In the Chair—Mr. P. HOROWITZ,
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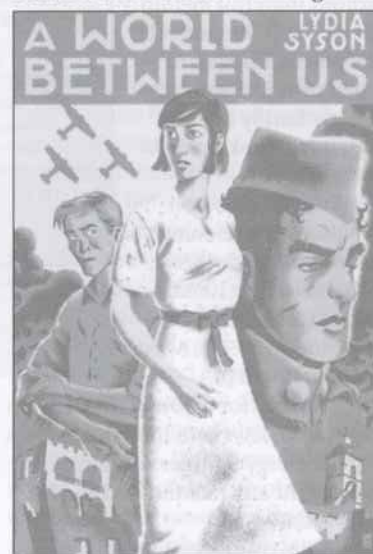
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Drawn to SPAIN

A WORLD BETWEEN US
Lydia Syson
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£6.99

There is no shortage of adventure stories involving love triangles aimed at the teenage book market, but how many of them open with a chance encounter between a trainee nurse and a young communist protester at Gardiners' Corner in London's East End on the day of the battle of Cable Street?

The noisy, dirty, volatile East End of the 1930s is a far cry from the much more sedate surroundings of Sydenham in Kent where nurse Felicity (Felix) Rose's family live. She finds her new temporary home a little scary yet so absorbing and exciting. She could have taken a different route back to her nurses' residence on that fateful day in October 1936 but her curiosity, and the spirited singing she could hear, drew her into the protesting crowds. When Nat Kaplan, a young Jewish Communist is collapsing, bloodied, from a truncheon blow inflicted by a mounted policeman, the crowds spot Felix's nurse's uniform among them and push her towards Nat,



hoping that she can assist their badly wounded comrade.

He is more than grateful for her help, and quite taken with her. And she is drawn to him. Over a coffee after the battle, though, his chat-up lines reveal that his heart has already been captured, not by another

young woman, but by a political vision he has absorbed through his involvement in the Young Communist League. Between explanations of what the YCL gets up to, he tells Felix that soon he is going to Spain. She knows little of Spain, so he begins to explain about the civil war raging there and how people from different countries are volunteering to come to the aid of the Republic. "I've had it with demonstrations and petitions," he tells her. "It's not enough any more."

Back in Sydenham, away from the maelstrom of the East End and bruising fights against fascists, Felix's family show little interest. Her brother Neville can't see what Spain possibly has to do with "us" and doesn't think politics is something that females ought to bother themselves with in any case. Neville's best friend George, a racing correspondent on a newspaper, shows more interest, though initially he also expresses it in patronising tones: "Don't tell me you got caught up

in that demonstration." He has an ulterior motive though for trying to connect with any subject on Felix's mind, because he wants Felix. He is waiting for the right opportunity in the near future to put to her what he considers the most important question: not whether Britain's non-intervention policy with regard to Spain can be justified, but whether she will agree to marry him.

It's a dramatic and breathtaking opening, and the book doesn't let up from there. Neville and George cook up a plot to whisk Felix off to Paris and provide a romantic backdrop for George to make his intentions clear to her, but before he gets the chance, Felix takes advantage of fortuitous circumstances to find the recruiting office of the International Brigade in Paris and she blags her way to Spain in pursuit of Nat. When George eventually finds out that this is where she has mysteriously disappeared to, he finds a way to follow her, persuading his editor to send him to report from Spain.

The love triangle insinuates itself in snatched moments within a beautifully written but fast moving narrative which tells the day-to-day story of the Spanish Civil War in intimate detail, through the eyes of a nurse, a fighter and a journalist. The war is not romanticised – far from it. Each of the characters faces acute moral dilemmas and endures times of utter hopelessness.

In secondary schools today, young people encounter the Second World War and the Holocaust, and it's right that they should. I am sure that they learn something of the unsatisfactory peace arrangements at the end of the First World War. And that it led to such strong German resentment and partly enabled an ultra-nationalist leader to emerge who could persuade the German people to unleash a terrifying new war. But the Spanish prelude – so crucial, and so prescient of what fascism would mean for ordinary people – struggles to be acknowledged, dwarfed by the enormity of the destruction between 1939 and 1945 and the industrialised slaughter of millions, which the perpetrators attempted to justify by spurious biological claims. Yet in Spain they are still unearthing mass graves and other secrets from Franco's time.

This book opens a door for young people to that obscured history in a way that is emotionally powerful, exciting and accessible. If it motivates them to ask more questions about the events in Spain, where the scars are still very near the surface, and if it encourages them to be aware of political events going on in the world of 2012 beyond the bubble of their own lives today, it will be a great achievement. And if you are still wondering what to buy a teenager you know for Chanukah or Christmas, I would suggest you look no further.

David Rosenberg

BLOCKED FROM THE STREETS OF SOUTH LONDON



In the mid-1930s fascists were celebrating their advances in capital cities across Europe, but here in Britain they suffered a crushing blow at the Battle of Cable Street in London's East End in October 1936. Improvised barricades, and a sea of people united in their determination to prevent fascism making inroads into their communities, kept Oswald Mosley and his jackbooted, uniformed followers out. Their march had to be completely abandoned.

They found it hard to recover from this blow to their egos, self-confidence, and unwarranted sense of invincibility. In the months afterwards, the British Union of Fascists (BUF) temporarily recruited hundreds of young men – police records estimate about 2,000 – relishing the opportunity to engage in street fights, but they were not serious about fascism and soon got bored. Meanwhile, their cadre of higher calibre doctrinal fascists was greatly diminished as in-fighting, public wrangling, denunciations and resignations took their toll. The authorities' tolerance of Mosley's party was wearing thin too, as the police, and government advisers, finally began to see his antics as a public nuisance.

No doubt the government had a much wider anti-democratic agenda than undermining fascists when it began to implement the Public Order Act from January 1937. Leading anti-fascist bodies – the Jewish People's Council and the National Council of Civil Liberties among them – called this Act

unnecessary and argued instead for a Racial Incitement Act. But the Public Order Act certainly affected the fascists adversely. Inflated police powers to ban demonstrations and injunctions against wearing political uniforms seriously impeded a party that regarded the streets as a principal arena for self-expression and enjoyed its reputation of being a private army.

Back in 1936, when 100,000 East Enders – Jewish and non-Jewish – petitioned Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, not to allow Mosley's movement to invade, intimidate and threaten their communities, he refused in the name of "democracy". His callous disregard for the feelings of communities that had suffered a reign of terror over several weeks actually rebounded. With the government unwilling to ban Mosley's march, the people banned it themselves through sheer force of numbers, mocking Mosley's claim to have a serious base of support in the area. But the fascists refused to accept defeat.

Despite a massive setback at Cable Street, Mosley's party still had a target to aim for in East London: the local elections in March 1937. Their newspaper, The Blackshirt, confidently predicted success at the polls: "Great Election Rallies. Mosley Opens the East London Campaign. The March to Victory Begins." They concentrated on three key districts where they convinced themselves they would be unassailable: Bethnal Green, Limehouse and Shoreditch. They stood two candidates in each.

A year after his humiliation at the Battle of Cable Street, Oswald Mosley planned to march thousands of fascists through London's streets again. **DAVID ROSENBERG** describes the Battle of Bermondsey.

A WORLD
BETWEEN US
Juda Syon
Hot Key Banks,
£8.99

High profile party ideologues such as Alexander Raven-Thomson, William Joyce and Ann Brock-Griggs, were paired with well known local activists such as Mick Clarke, Bill Bailey and Charles Wegg-Prosser, but they failed to win a single seat. Far from being unassailable, their highest vote was 23%. At least three out of every four voters there totally rejected the fascists. Mosley knew who to blame: "The Jew is a wily politician and replied by plumping solidly for Labour candidates whom he considered in those constituencies to be most likely to defeat the Blackshirt." These districts, though, stood beyond Stepney where most Jewish voters were concentrated, so the Jewish vote could not have been significant. As a back-up argument, Mosley mused: "...the Englishman does not take readily to new movements".

Privately, though, Mosley knew that his great crusade in East London, from autumn 1934, when Bow Branch was established, was now over. But he wouldn't give up. In July 1937 the BUF declared that it would march through Limehouse – but it was banned. It marched instead from Kentish Town in north London to Trafalgar Square. When the fascists applied for permission for a fifth anniversary march through the East End in October 1937, they were stymied again by a ban after local organisations successfully lobbied Sir John Simon's successor, Samuel Hoare.

Nevertheless Mosley's party approached the autumn in upbeat mood and belligerent tone. Resignations forced Mosley to appoint a new editor for the Blackshirt newspaper. He chose A K Chesterton, cousin of the renowned writer G K Chesterton. A K's editorial of 11th September 1937 proclaimed: "Autumn, no less than spring is a season of National Socialist re-birth ... the workers of our cause ... are preparing to launch the most intensive propaganda campaign in the five vigorous years of National Socialist history in Britain." Highlighting the "great anniversary march of October 3rd", he promised "a huge propaganda invasion of areas still unconquered".

A week later he thundered: "No Jew-red mob has the power to daunt us. No corrupt press has power to weaken or intimidate us. On October 3rd we shall march again – and again secure the victory." As if to underline what it believed were the mighty forces opposing it, that copy of The Blackshirt carried an advert for the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, declaring: "Every British Union member should possess a copy. It reveals the whole plan for Jewish world domination."

Denied access to the East End, the fascists announced plans to march through South East London starting near Parliament Square, crossing Westminster Bridge, heading up New Kent Road and Tower Bridge Road, through Tooley Street and Dockhead, ending in an open-air rally in West Lane, Bermondsey.

Once the march had been announced, local anti-fascists began building their opposition. The Communist Party (CP) proposed a counter-march and protest on the day. The CP's strong

commitment to anti-fascism had helped it grow substantially in London through the mid-'30s and it was gaining increased support among workers organised in trade unions, including dockworkers on both sides of the river. The Independent Labour Party (which had seceded from the more moderate Labour Party mainstream), and Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Trades Council supported the CP's call. Through the Trades Council, 60 local trade unions endorsed the campaign.

Ben Smith, Labour MP for nearby Rotherhithe argued that "Bermondsey wants its rest on Sunday the same as any other borough. Everyone knows this procession is ... sheer provocation."

The Trades Council strongly condemned Mosley's proposal to march to West Lane in the heart of Bermondsey, stating: "Mosley has no branch in Bermondsey – he represents no mass movement ... This spot as all London knows is surrounded by the new flats erected by the Labour Council, standing as a monument to Labour's magnificent record of social progress in the borough. It was as if he came to demolish these buildings brick by brick before the very eyes of the people who put them up."

The Trades Council pre-empted those who would defend Mosley's right to free movement and speech. "No people have insisted more strongly on free speech and free demonstration than the people of Bermondsey ... freedom to discuss the way they shall be governed, freedom to agitate for a better life. But they do not stand for the free speech to those who openly declare their intention of destroying the liberties our fathers have won after generations of struggle."

Local Alderman Harry Balman claimed that "the whole of Bermondsey is furious at the proposed march and everything will be done to prevent its taking place. The citizens, particularly the dockers along the riverside at Rotherhithe who represent 70 per cent of the population, will be organised against Mosley." The dockers were, of course, male but, taking their families into account, this figure was plausible.

A delegation of respected local figures lobbied the Home Office seeking a ban – as the East London mayors had done a year earlier – but despite subsequent bans having been imposed in East London, the Home Secretary refused to stop fascists marching through south-east London where very few Jews would suffer threats and intimidation.

Local politicians called a meeting in Bermondsey Town Hall to formulate a strong, united response. All condemned Mosley's plan to invade the area – but they were divided over methods. London's Labour Party executive believed the best response the local community could make would be to boycott the march: to let it pass, ignored, through empty streets. The left-leaning News Chronicle also argued: "The best rule with regard to fascism is to avoid it like the Black Death, and like the Black Death, it may never be heard of again." Local churchman Revd Leslie Davidson

condemned the march as "a deliberate attempt to make Bermondsey a cockpit of disorder", but also advised a policy of merely "watching Mosley come and watching Mosley go".

Mayor Gibson told the meeting that the Home Office said it was possible to ban the march but not a meeting, and it was reluctant to interfere with free speech. Mayor Gibson advanced the London Labour Party policy but felt ambivalent about it. He tentatively asked the meeting, "Can it be done?" only to be met with a resounding "No!" from the majority seeking a more militant response. Ben Smith MP argued that the procession was going to happen in any case. "If we leave the route empty we will have achieved our object. We can have unity for a boycott but not for force." The audience were unconvinced.

While the debates continued, Mosley himself appeared the following night a couple of miles further south, at a rally on Peckham Triangle. He was introducing Olive Hawks, newly appointed fascist candidate for the parliamentary seat of Peckham, to a crowd of 5,000 supporters and opponents. Her speech was drowned out by boos and catcalls and the less than politically correct call from one opponent that she should stay in and do the washing.

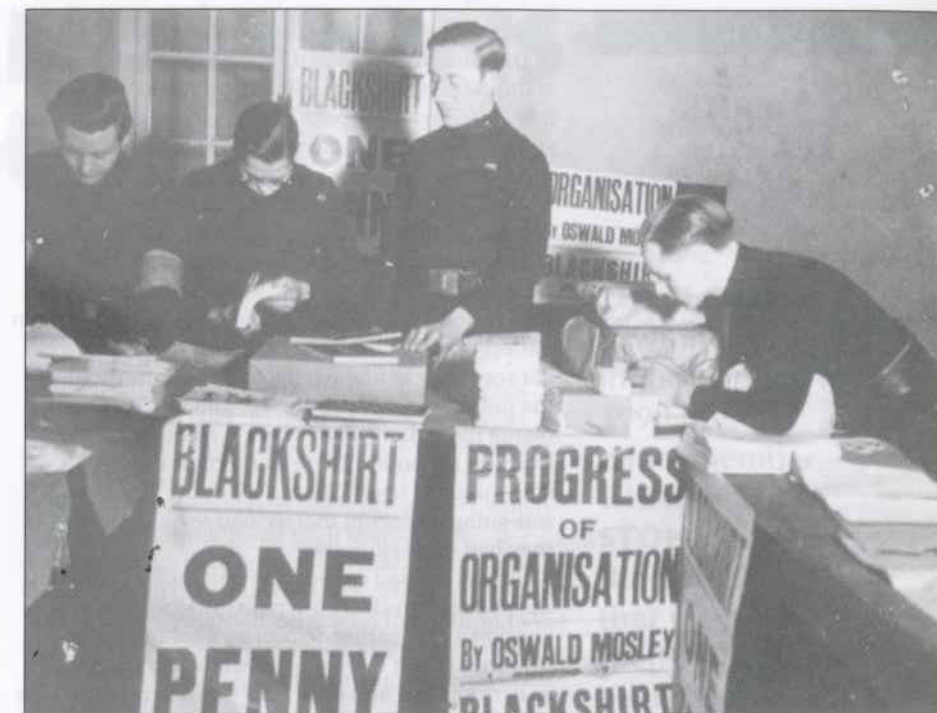
Tension mounted over the next 10 days. Several local Labour Party branches openly broke with the London Labour Party Executive, and declared their support for a counter-protest. Many rank and file Labour members were more inclined to follow their trade union's advice to support a demonstration rather than passively ignoring and boycotting Mosley's march. Councillor Styles, Labour leader of Southwark Borough Council, exonerated anti-fascists from any fallout that might follow a militant protest: "To march into a Labour stronghold, as the fascists are doing, is provocative ... there is bound to be trouble. What happens will be the fault of the Home Sec for not banning the march."

The infighting among those opposing Mosley's planned invasion was not lost on the fascists. The Blackshirt of 25th September said of the proposed march, "...if the extraordinary significance of this event be questioned one only has to point to the mighty chattering of teeth among our opponents whose nerves seem affected to screaming point."

Just a day before the march The Blackshirt of 2nd October gave its front page to Mosley's anniversary message, with its typically florid prose: "Five years on the march ... five years of advance in the face of money power, press power, party power and Jewish power ... during which the flame of the faith has grown within us until the blaze of our belief and of our determination lights the dark places of our land and summons our people as a beacon of hope and of rebirth."

The bigger bombshell was dropped casually in a small column inside the paper. The route for the march had been altered: it would start and finish at the same point but would now include Marshalsea Road, Long Lane, and Abbey Street. Fascists bussed into the area might not have known the full significance of this change, but local anti-fascists knew that this new route would take it through estates at the heart of working class Bermondsey.

Fascists may claim that they got the trains running on time, but Mosley arrived 40 minutes



late for the start of the march, while his supporters waited near Millbank. Banned from wearing a political uniform, Mosley wore a grey jacket over his black shirt. Some 2,000-4,000 marchers formed up three abreast in a procession about a mile long, convoyed by 30 mounted police at the front and busloads of foot police bringing up the rear. The Daily Mirror remarked, "There was one policeman for every fascist marcher."

Their opponents were getting ready too. In Bermondsey, thousands of anti-fascists gathered. Taking a lead from the Cable Street protest a year earlier, they made their own barricades. In Long Lane, the Daily Worker reported, protesters entered a nearby factory and obtained a huge water tank, which became the centre of a barricade 30 feet wide. The News Chronicle wrote: "Iron ovens, cisterns and wheelbarrows were chained together and strung across roads." And the Daily Herald described how "Barricades of costers' barrows, fences with barbed wire, with red flags flying at the top, were flung up at incredible speed; when police tore them down, others were erected a few yards further on".

Several newspapers showed empathy with the anti-fascists, prompted perhaps by the police's rough handling of reporters despite them showing press passes. There was fierce fighting with the police. The Daily Herald said: "Mounted and foot police, with lashing batons, swept again and again into the crowds of anti-fascist demonstrators ... Missiles were hurled from roofs: eggs, stones and fireworks were flung at the marchers and at police horses." The News Chronicle described how "Mounted police charged down Staple Street into the crowd in Long Lane ... One man who was being taken away by the police after being struck on the head with a baton was rescued by a crowd of about 40 dockers."

In personal testimony, F C Langston, National President of the Amalgamated Society of Leather workers, described how "a man was dragged from the pavement by five policemen who were all busy punching him. I saw him knocked finally to the ground. While he was in a half-rising position I saw

ACCORDING TO THE DAILY WORKER, THE LAST THING MOSLEY AND HIS FOLLOWERS HEARD AS THEY SLOPED OFF AT THE END OF THEIR MEETING "WERE THE STRAINS OF THE RED FLAG AND THE INTERNATIONALE."

another constable dash up and strike him violently in the face. My son called 'shame' when a constable standing close by immediately punched him in the face. My son struck back but was immediately seized by at least six constables and unmercifully pummelled."

Harold Smith, a young office worker who had come over the water from Highbury, north London, got involved in the fighting in Long Lane. He recounted: "I never saw the fascists and we ended up fighting with the police ... we saw five policemen battering this anti-fascist on the pavement ... we got some bricks and paving and ... threw them at the police. They promptly ran, and frankly I can't blame them. Long Lane was a series of guerrilla warfares for hours. There was a rumour that someone had been killed ... We didn't know what was going on except that we had to be there and they had to be stopped."

Just as massed crowds and barricades prevented the police from clearing a path for Mosley in east London a year earlier, so Mosley's columns were prevented from marching down their chosen route in Bermondsey and were forced to divert around the rim of the borough they were planning to invade. When they tried to return to their planned path they faced further disruptions. The Daily Worker reported that, as they reached Jamaica Road, they "met another barricade of human bodies, of men, women and children from the great flats that Labour has built in Bermondsey." Banners hanging from these flats proclaimed: "Socialism builds, fascism destroys. Bermondsey against fascism."

Mosley never reached the Mill Pool in West Lane where he planned an open-air rally to celebrate the victory of these troops and spread his message to wider numbers of sympathisers in the local area. His column was turned aside to Southwark Park Road where police cordoned off a wide area of side streets. No one but his own followers who had marched with him was allowed within hearing distance. According to the Daily Worker, the last thing Mosley and his followers heard as they sloped off at the end of their meeting "were the strains of the Red Flag and the Internationale."

A year earlier, in the East End, after police had ordered Mosley to disperse westwards, the anti-fascists marched to Victoria Park Square and occupied a platform that the fascists had been protecting for their leader. In a similar manner in Bermondsey, victorious anti-fascists conducted a meeting at the Mill Pool in West Lane. It passed a resolution calling on local MPs and councillors to take immediate steps to ensure that all fascist organisations be disbanded and their principal members arrested for incitement. Ted Bramley, speaking for the Communist Party, said: "The 100 per cent cockney borough of Bermondsey has given the same answer to Mosley as the Jewish lads and girls did in Stepney just 12 months ago. Not only has today forged the unity of the labour movement in Bermondsey but it has forged unity between the Jewish and cockney workers that Mosley has tried so hard to divide."

Several East End Jews were among the 111 people arrested, a fact noted by magistrate Bernard Campion, who judged many of the cases at Tower Bridge Police Court. He remarked: "It is extraordinary how many of the population of

Whitechapel and the East End seemed to choose Bermondsey for a Sunday afternoon walk." Campion gained a reputation for being extremely harsh on the demonstrators, declaring early on that, "The only way to teach these people is to punish and to punish vigorously." Fewer people were arrested at Cable Street, and although many received harsh fines, very few received custodial sentences. In at least 23 cases arising out of the Bermondsey clash custodial sentences were imposed. A former docks group union secretary, 60-year-old Frederick Thompson, received a three-month sentence after being identified at the centre of a violent crowd, and John Henry Morton received five months for assault and three months for insulting behaviour after he tried to rescue another man who had been arrested. Twenty-three-year-old Betsy Malone of Great Ormond Street was treated more lightly. She was fined £1 after taking a running kick at a policeman and telling him to arrest one of his own size!

The Blackshirt newspaper put the best gloss it could on the events of a frustrating day, even claiming it as a victory, saying that they did pass despite the "violence of the apes". Referring elsewhere to those it believed had masterminded the counter-protest, The Blackshirt said: "Who are these people? We know and the Home Secretary knows as well as we."

Bermondsey represented the last of the major street confrontations between fascists and anti-fascists in 1930s London. For the rest of 1937 and through 1938 the Communist Party became increasingly entangled in work around Spain. Mosley's movement was in decline and struggled to maintain its impact, but in Spain the tide was turning strongly in Franco's favour. The traditional May Day march to Hyde Park in 1938 was bigger than usual as it was declared a "Spain Day". Mosley tried a spoiler by returning to Bermondsey on May Day that year, knowing that local opposition would be tiny because Labour Party and Communist Party activists and trade unionists would be mobilising for "Spain Day". Mosley successfully addressed thousands of BUF members and supporters, including local enthusiasts, on that occasion. But he also knew he could only do that because those who would strenuously oppose him were otherwise engaged. The fascists failed to build any permanent base there. They opened a bookshop in Peckham, but soon afterwards its window was smashed and many books were stolen.

Mosley's party briefly revived in the run-up to war in 1939. Six weeks before war broke out, the BUF held a rally in Earls Court where Mosley addressed at least 20,000 supporters, telling them famously that "a million Britons shall not die in your Jews quarrel", but they represented middle England, not London's working class. The "people's victories" in the East End in 1936 and in Bermondsey in 1937 helped to prevent Mosley from consolidating the populist movement he had tried to build among London's poor, disadvantaged, and disempowered. His nemesis, the communist movement, continued to grow through the war, and a radical, reforming, Labour government just after the war brought real material gains for working class Londoners, proving, as Bermondsey's banners proclaimed, that while fascism destroys, socialism builds.

RECOMMENDATIONS UNRESOLVED

As men grow older they are increasingly likely to say how much they feel they have become like their fathers. With me it's more my grandfather that I identify with as I look at the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry 14 years on.

I was an NHS GP like my father before me. He was the generation of doctors that never stopped being doctors. Utterly loyal to his patients, and a first class diagnostician, he was still practising when he stumbled into my arms, at the age of 80, having just suffered the first of a series of strokes.

I like to think that I inherited his nose for diagnoses. However I know how rusty a doctor can become after one year away, and now it's 20 years since I practised. But his loyalty to the people for whom he was responsible is an attitude I have carried during those 20 years.

I quit at 54½ following the advice of Virginia Bottomley, then Tory Secretary of State for Health. She had said that it's GPs who must prevent heart attacks. We laughed: did she have no idea what her government's policies on homelessness, on unemployment and on cigarette smoking were doing to create heart attacks?

I took her advice, though, and left. And I've had no heart attack, so maybe she was right... On second thoughts, no. She couldn't have been more wrong. Her attempts to destroy the NHS felt terrible at the time. The current attacks on the NHS, however, feel even more terrifying.

The grandfather I identify with is my father's father. He had been what is now called an "unaccompanied child refugee". Like so many others in the 1880s, he was sent to walk across Russia, from Vilnius to Odessa in the south, to get a ship to America. Odessa was within the Pale, and may have been safer than the Baltic seaports for Jewish boys escaping the Czar's military conscription. He was 16 years old and his brother was 14. The brother got to America. My grandfather got off the ship in America – except it was Cardiff.

His name was Chaim Press. but he changed it to Hyman Silverstone, thinking that that made him sound like an English gentleman – such was his ignorance. Where he was not ignorant though, was in the Torah. He was a *melamed*, a learned scholar. I was 15 when he died so I can remember hearing him *leyn* (pray) – in particular the Seder service, with three different chants for the three kinds of text.

My time as a panel member of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry dragged me into an agenda which some believe I am crazy to still pursue. In truth I don't so much pursue as am pursued by it. It won't let me go.

Like Sir William Macpherson, the Inquiry judge, I feel that it is the most important thing I've done in my life. Yes, I started developing positive contacts between British Muslims and British Jews 25 years ago with Hugo Gryn and Greville Janner. Yes, as a GP in Notting Hill and Paddington, I had called in

the District Auditor to investigate Shirley Porter's Westminster City Council in its policy of boarding up homes to keep out homeless people. The council's aim was to sell off whole blocks of flats two years or so later. To me that seemed morally and financially wrong. Over the next 10 years I was proved right.

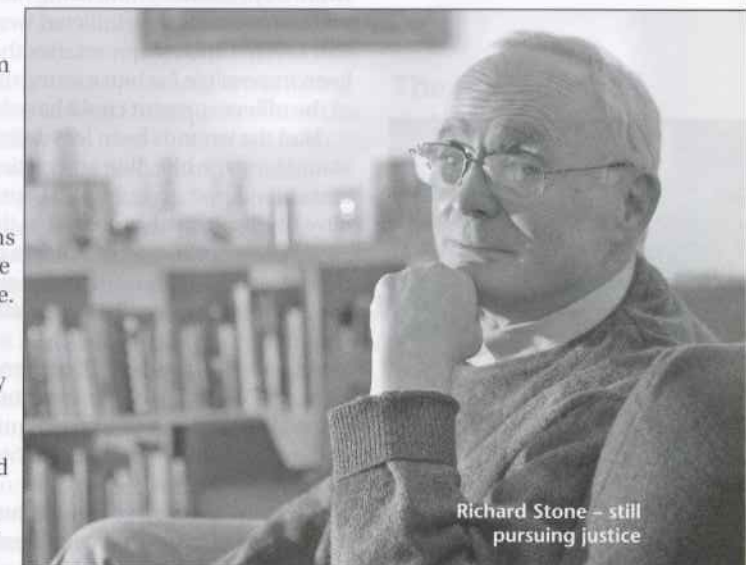
But it was the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry which held me and wouldn't let go. It dramatically exposed unacceptable abuse of discretion by police officers given power by the state. Sixty-one Metropolitan Police officers, from the bottom to the very top of the hierarchy, failed to try hard enough to find the killers of Stephen Lawrence because his family were black.

I find it odd that most people involved in government inquiries do not stay with the agendas they have set. I took it for granted that I would do all I could to get the 70 recommendations implemented. With 60 recommendations from the NHS David Bennett Inquiry, and 22 more from the Runnymede Islamophobia Commission, I have more than enough recommendations to last me a whole lifetime and more. Yet it has always been the Lawrence Inquiry that dug its tentacles deep into my brain and my heart.

In 2009, when the 10th anniversary of the Lawrence Inquiry loomed, I asked who was planning to do an independent review. No one was. So I found money for the Runnymede Trust to analyse police data on the implementing of the Inquiry recommendations. That left me free to go round listening and talking to relevant people. In sociological terms, Runnymede did the quantitative survey and I took on the qualitative. My report was launched alongside the Runnymede report by the Justice, Home, and Communities Secretaries at their Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Conference 10 Years On. This was in February 2009.

Both reports reached similar conclusions. Large amounts of time and effort had gone into improving professionalism in all areas of policing. There are many examples of major improvement. Of particular interest to me, as the only medically qualified member of the Inquiry, was First Aid,

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry ended in 1999 but, as panel member **RICHARD STONE** explains, the questions that were raised then still beg to be answered.



Richard Stone – still pursuing justice

nowadays upgraded to Emergency Life Support (ELS). The First Aid story typifies the police reaction to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

Five police officers were in a position to give First Aid to Stephen as he lay in a pool of blood, unconscious, on a pavement in Eltham, south-east London. None of them did any resuscitation at all.

Stephen's mother, Doreen Lawrence, was convinced that was because "they didn't want to get their hands dirty with a Black man's blood". These words were a terrible indictment with which we would have to confront each of the five when they appeared before the Inquiry. But the Inquiry couldn't even get as far as asking about possible motives. To the basic preliminary question "What does the ABC of First Aid stand for?", none could get past "airway" and "breathing" to tell us that C was for "circulation". Yet they had all learnt First Aid and had had recent refresher courses.

Their First Aid knowledge and skills went no further than how to dial 999 for an ambulance. They had no ability to do First Aid on any human being of any background. Yet I know (and they now know too!) that a frontline police officer has a much greater capacity to save human life than I ever did in 20 years as a GP.

When information about Stephen's wounds came out during the inquest, it was clear that no amount of First Aid could have saved his life. Five teenage white boys attacked him, using racist language. The two stab wounds they inflicted were so deep, and had severed such major arteries that it would have been impossible for him to survive. However, none of the officers present could have known that.

Had the wounds been less definitely fatal, then staunching the bleeding and raising the legs to divert extra blood to the head could have kept his brain alive until paramedics arrived in the ambulance.

Cross-examination of officers and First Aid trainers led to a unanimous conclusion that First Aid courses were looked on as little more than an easy day out.

As part of my independent review, I went to Hendon Police College to see modern ELS training. I also visited police stations to quiz officers, as we had quizzed the five who failed Stephen Lawrence in 1993.

ELS training is so good now, and done with such commitment by the police officers I sat in with, that I have decided that when I have a heart attack I want it to be on a pavement in London so that I can have a Metropolitan Police officer to keep my brain alive until the ambulance arrives.

In comparison with this good news story, and others in the wider field, Runnymede highlighted two problem areas, both of which impact most negatively on black people: disparities in Stop and Search, and disparities in employment. The same massive time and effort has gone into these as in the other areas of policing, yet the police's own statistics demonstrate little or no improvement in these in 10 years. Why?

In 2008 you were seven to eight times more likely to be stopped by police if you were black than if you were white. Ten years before it was four to six times more likely. In 2012 the disparity is even worse: today a black person is 12 times more likely to be stopped by police than a white person.

I still hear stories from young men of being



stopped by police officers for no other reason than they are black. "Dr Stone," one boy asked me, "why do police waste time on me? Some of them know me, 'cos they've stopped me before, and they know I've never been in trouble. They should be looking for criminals, not wasting time with me. It's a crime isn't it, wasting police time?"

Figures for retention and progression of Black and Minority Ethnic officers are abysmal. Those for recruitment of police officers, I was told, were 12% "overall" for black recruitment compared to 2% 10 years ago.

When Runnymede's researcher, Nicola Rollock, burrowed into the figures, she found that the increase was distorted by the inclusion of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Special Constables. The 2% in 1998 was solely full police constables: it did not include (voluntary) Specials; and PCSOs had not yet been invented. Yet Specials and PCSOs were lumped in with full warranted constables in the 2008 figures.

Comparing like for like, the percentage increase of black constables had risen from 2% to only 4%. That is 3% less than the 7% target set by the Home Secretary in 1999 for recruitment, and 10% less than the figure used to boast a success, which turns out not to be nearly as good as made out. To put it kindly, this is massaging of statistics.

In retention of black officers, Runnymede reported that police data show a slipping back. Promotion of black officers was largely stuck at the bottleneck of Superintendent. Ten years on I expected to find a wave of middle rank black officers at the "glass ceiling" of Chief Superintendent, and a reasonable number above that, at the levels of Commander or more senior Association of Chief Police Officer (ACPO). The numbers at ACPO level had not increased anywhere in the country.

The recent decision to drop Recruitment Retention and Progression (RRP) targets for Black and Minority Ethnic officers altogether is an admission of failure. ACPO officers and government Ministers should not abandon the agenda set by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry when they find they are caught having failed to fulfil the targets that would have given them pride in doing a job properly. A professional response would be a vigorous renewal of leadership from the top to achieve the positive outcomes in Stop and Search, and in RRP, which modern policing has been capable of in all the other areas.

What has all this got to do with my grandfather? Well, I mentioned that he was a *melamed*. He had the Torah as his basic text, which was immutable. I

look on the report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in a similar way. It is my immutable text. I cannot change it.

There are oddities in the Stephen Lawrence story, just as scholars find oddities in the Torah. Like the scholars, I turn to related texts to seek clarification. My grandfather, and no doubt his grandfather before him, delved into the Mishna to sort out these problems. So, in a vaguely parallel way, when reading the report I may bump up against yet another oddity. I then turn for help to the pages on pages of transcripts of the proceedings of the Inquiry. The transcripts act as something approaching a *Mishna* for students of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

As scholars create catalogues so I have had to create an index of the transcripts, which is absent from The National Archive (the *Genizah*?) where the originals of the transcripts ended up.

BODY POLITIC

In March this year "Mery", an engineering student, I went to a public hospital in San Salvador, to seek help after taking medication to induce an abortion when she was eight weeks pregnant. The medical staff called the police, who handcuffed the distressed 27-year-old to the bed while she was still receiving emergency medical care. Mery's mental health deteriorated; she had a nervous breakdown and was taken to another hospital. On 28th August she went to trial and was sentenced to two years in prison for abortion; there, six days later, she attempted suicide by cutting her wrists with a rusty nail. She was transferred to a psychiatric unit where she remains in a serious condition, shackled and under 24-hour guard. The authorities are denying her access to legal assistance and specialised medical treatment, and she is taunted by the guards, who call her a "murderer", and threaten to send her back to prison.

El Salvador has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. Mery is among hundreds of women in prison for abortion-related crimes, after undergoing a clandestine abortion or suffering a miscarriage or stillbirth. At least 24 women have been sentenced to 30 years or more for murder. Over the last two decades, reproductive rights in Central America have taken a step backwards, due to the resurgence of religious fundamentalism and the influence of the Catholic Church and right-wing Evangelical groups on legislative changes. Morena Herrera – a Salvadoran expert on reproductive rights, who campaigns for the release of these women and for the decriminalisation of abortion – says the criminalisation of abortion is due to "a lack of political commitment to the health and lives of women and to the pressures of the church

I find myself fashioning arguments for and against, for example, various reasons why the transcripts of the Inquiry were not made available until six years after the end of the Inquiry. People will be able to read my explanations for these oddities that I have explored in my forthcoming book, *Hidden Stories of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*.

I fancy a final parallel between me and my grandfather. Readers will make their own judgments on the conspiracy theories and other conclusions I draw. Tot up those for and against each, and we have majority and minority rulings. Didn't I hear something about majority and minority rulings at *kheder* (Hebrew classes) all those years ago?

Dr Richard Stone was one of three members of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, who were Advisers to the judge, Sir William Macpherson. He was listed as Chair of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality.

Hidden stories of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry will be published by the Policy Press in February 2013.

The reproductive rights of women in Central America are increasingly threatened by a resurgence of religious fundamentalism, with devastating consequences, according to the Central America Women's Network

hierarchy". She adds: "the government is not taking responsibility for the serious consequences that this legislation is causing".

Abortion is criminalised throughout Central America. El Salvador and Nicaragua have the most stringent bans, which allow for no exception in cases of rape, incest, threat to the mother's health or severe foetal abnormality – not even to save the life of a pregnant woman. These regressive laws, introduced in 1998 and 2006 respectively, removed previous exceptions for emergency and therapeutic abortion and established the inviolable right to life from conception in the constitutions. Honduras and Guatemala have similar legislation, though emergency abortion – to save a woman's life – is permitted. Those who procure a termination, and medical professionals who conduct an abortion, allow one to happen or provide medical care which causes a miscarriage, even unintentionally, face long prison sentences. This criminalisation is causing widespread human rights violations and reflects systemic discrimination against women in the region.

It is accepted that the criminalisation of abortion does not prevent abortions. Abortion rates are higher in countries with restrictive laws. Such legislation results in unsafe, illegal abortions – including self-abortion and surgery conducted by non-professionals – which may take place under insanitary conditions and often result in complications and death.

Globally, at least 49,000 women die every year as a result of unsafe abortions. It is the single highest cause of maternal death in countries where abortion is criminalised, with up to 16% of maternal deaths linked to complications arising from illegal abortions. While accurate data about clandestine

This article was co-written by Virginia Lopez Calvo, Vicki Knox and Amanda Hernandez of the Central America Women's Network www.cawn.org

abortion is, by its nature, difficult to obtain, the World Health Organization estimates that just over a million unsafe abortions are carried out in Central America each year. However, women's organisations in both El Salvador and Nicaragua report that, since the criminalisation of abortion, their health ministries have withheld information about the exact number and cause of maternal deaths resulting from unsafe abortion and deny requests for this material. In Nicaragua, the incidence of adolescent maternal mortality increased by 24% in the year after criminalisation, with consumption of poison being the main cause – either intending suicide or a self-abortion.

Women and girls are forced to continue with pregnancies which endanger their lives or health, where the foetus has terminal defects, or which result from rape or incest. They have been left to die from ectopic pregnancy, which is usually not viable as the embryo implants outside the uterine cavity. Deaths also occur during obstetric emergencies and through the denial of life-saving treatment during pregnancy, which might provoke a miscarriage. Medical professionals are obliged to report suspected abortions to the police. This breaches patient confidentiality and generates fear in women, who may be reluctant to seek medical help during or after an obstetric emergency, miscarriage or illicit abortion in case they are accused of procuring an abortion. It increases the risk of adverse outcomes, including maternal deaths.

In El Salvador, where hundreds of women have been imprisoned for abortion or after suffering a

miscarriage or stillbirth, young, poor women have been disproportionately affected. They come under immediate suspicion when they lose a baby.

From the 1950s and throughout the civil wars, the Catholic Church in Central America expounded liberation theology and a role that promoted social justice and defended human rights. Liberation theology called on the Church to act to serve the poor and oppressed, and to struggle for liberation from unjust economic, political or social conditions. Family planning was generally accepted as an essential part of relief from poverty and inequality, despite a tendency for silence on abortion, and liberation theology has led to today's reproductive rights movement among Catholic feminists.

Oscar Romero joined a long line of Salvadoran priests who spoke out against social injustice, poverty, assassinations and US military aid. As in El Salvador, Juan Gerardi and other Guatemalan Catholic bishops were outspoken during the civil war and were integral to the peace process, publishing the report Guatemala: Nunca Más (Guatemala: Never Again), which detailed state involvement in 90% of human rights

violations during the conflict. The civil wars also marked the start of the rise of evangelism in the region. Evangelists had strong links with the contras in Guatemala, El Salvador and on the Nicaragua-Honduras border. These right-wing links are so strong that some commentators have framed their presence as a political rather than religious mission.

Both Gerardi and Romero were among many clerics who were assassinated during the civil wars. Though their deaths are accepted as political murders, amid their opposition to government brutality and repression, they can now also be seen as symbolically killing off the Catholic Church as an engine for social justice and protector of human rights in Central America.

In the mid-1990s, the Catholic Church in Central America regressed to a more conservative role. Under John Paul II's papacy, the Vatican reacted to the rise of liberation theology – viewed as a Marxist movement in opposition to the hierarchy of the Church – with the appointment of conservative clerics. This was most marked in El Salvador, where Fernando Sáenz Lacalle, former military chaplain and a member of the Catholic fundamentalist group Opus Dei, became the new Archbishop of San Salvador. This influenced both government and Church policies on social issues, in particular those which affect women. Though not pro-choice, the Catholic Church had peacefully co-existed with provisions for therapeutic abortion in the region. The change of El Salvador's abortion law in 1998 was a direct result of the determination of people such as Lacalle to get a personhood clause (legally defining the word "person" to include every human being from the moment of conception) into the constitution and the provision for therapeutic abortion off the statute books. Luisa Cabal, the Centre for Reproductive Rights' legal consultant for Latin America, has said that the legislation was a result of "the church's role in pushing for a conservative agenda".

In Nicaragua, an alliance between the Catholics and Evangelicals pushed for the absolute prohibition of abortion before the 2006 elections. Eager to be elected, Daniel Ortega – a proponent of abortion rights during the 1980s – struck a deal with the churches in order to secure their support in the elections. The law – among the most restrictive in the world, criminalising both the termination of pregnancy to save a woman's life and the administration to a pregnant woman of any medical care which could trigger a miscarriage – was signed in the presence of religious leaders from both the Catholic and Evangelical churches. The law has been stringently applied, with several cases raising international concern, and illustrated the influence of religion on Nicaragua's politics. For example, last year the Nicaraguan government took custody of a 12-year-old girl, pregnant after being raped by her stepfather, to prevent an abortion and force continued pregnancy, despite serious health risks. At a news conference to address the child's welfare after she had been hospitalised, a Catholic priest and an Evangelical Christian reverend appeared with Nicaragua's health minister, who commented that she was receiving medical care and spiritual guidance.

Religious groups have also significantly



influenced the development of restrictive legislation in Honduras, whose current Health Minister is a member of Opus Dei. In 2009, a law was passed which criminalised the sale, distribution and use of emergency contraception, and imposed equal sanctions as for obtaining or performing an abortion. This legislation was derived from the erroneous claim by local religious groups that the morning-after pill – a high dose of oral contraceptive – was actually a method of early abortion.

As well as holding political sway, both the Catholic and Evangelical churches have significant influence over public opinion on reproductive rights. This compounds the existing structural barriers of lack of knowledge about family planning and sexual health, difficulty in accessing modern contraception, geographical isolation and widespread poverty. In the absence of public facilities, these religious groups have embedded themselves deeply into society, offering education, basic health and social cohesion to meet the needs of the poorest and most marginalised. Their propaganda is successful due to the strong relations of trust they build with people by assisting the most vulnerable and filling the gaps left by the state in the provision of social and economic needs. By contrast, there is a general lack of trust in the state and its institutions throughout the region.

In addition to both churches preaching against the use of contraceptives, they run well-funded campaigns against abortion, which involve misinformation and propaganda. Church groups have published misinformation in Guatemalan newspapers, claiming that oral contraceptive pills are the same as abortion – which many women continue to believe. Moreover, DVDs of evangelical music, which are played on public buses in Nicaragua, are interspersed with anti-abortion propaganda, featuring photos of stillborn babies presented as aborted fetuses. There is something chilling about deliberately taking advantage of women who have already been denied their right to accurate information about family planning and reproductive health – especially when this misinformation comes from institutions which claim the word "truth".

Many religious groups in Central America have expressed their opposition to international

agreements on the protection of women's reproductive rights. But there are religious organisations whose vision is a commitment to such rights, which reject the criminalisation of abortion, such as *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir* (Catholics for Choice). Together with other groups campaigning for reproductive rights in the region, much of their work centres around public understanding and awareness, with the objective of moving away from the churches' black-and-white views on abortion. By presenting situations where therapeutic abortion could be considered – such as a 12-year-old girl pregnant as a result of incest, and a pregnant woman in need of life-saving cancer treatment – they have generated better-informed debate and have made a significant impact on public opinion in the region.

The churches' stance has effectively put them in direct ideological opposition to women's groups which champion reproductive rights. This creates great challenges for these groups to make substantial progress on the most basic rights for women. It is compounded by the complexity of the situation of women in Central America, which is marked by high levels of poverty and inequality. Though feminist organisations have levelled criticism at the religious stance on reproductive rights, this has tended to focus on the churches' determination to influence the political process and misinform the public. Across the region, feminist groups have integrated calls for a secular state and the separation of Church and state into their campaigning on reproductive rights.

Above all, their work aims to foster the understanding that abortion is a public health problem, which affects the region's poorest women most severely. Access to reproductive healthcare is internationally recognised as being critical to advancing women's human rights and promoting development. Lack of this healthcare affects women's equality with men, hampering access to work and education, perpetuating socio-economic and educational disadvantage, increasing gender inequalities and feminising poverty. It shapes a society which is inherently unfair and unequal.

Ultimately, the decisions women make about their bodies should be their own, not forced on them by religious groups.

MICHAEL SHAPE and his cousin Beatrice made an unexpected discovery when they went on a historical walk of the East End

**VICTOR S
SCHONFELD**
welcomes the
ruling of a
Cologne court
that circumcision
is an assault on
a child

TIME TO END THIS ANCIENT PRACTICE

The Cologne court which ruled, recently, that circumcision is an assault on a child, was right. It is an amputation of a healthy, sensitive body part that is performed without specific medical need, and without the patient's consent. Elected leaders of conscience should not support a custom that so obviously infringes principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Germany's parliament is now considering a law to protect the right of parents to give their sons a religious circumcision. This is wrong. I say this as a Jewish parent from a proud rabbinic lineage, with relatives killed in the Holocaust; I say this as the maker of *It's a Boy!* – the Channel 4 TV documentary that first broke the taboo on showing the hidden toll of circumcision some years ago. It demonstrated how a rite ingrained in Jewish and Muslim culture, and said to be divinely commanded, regularly results in acute suffering, injuries, mutilation and deaths.

The film triggered a furore in Britain by chronicling the near death of a baby circumcised by a mohel, and I hoped this would start a phasing-out of the custom. Instead, at pulpits across the UK, rabbis denounced "that film made by a self-hating Jew", and urged parents to ignore it.

Change in the community could not come on the strength of information alone; I saw that government involvement would be needed. It was especially disappointing because my Jewishness prizes dissent and open debate.

Now my 12-year-old daughter is looking forward to her batmitzvah, and she hears that Israel's Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger has declared circumcision is "the root of the Jewish soul". "An amputation done with no pain control?" she says. "Done outside of hospitals, by people who are not doctors? A religious ritual only for boys? How can this be the root of the Jewish soul in 2012?"

Sadly, I explain that there is enforced ignorance, as was the case when our family was pressured into having her older brother circumcised as an infant. Only after we witnessed his agony did we realise we'd been bullied into betraying our protective roles. I explain that injuries and near-deaths are hushed up, though each day hundreds of such incidents occur globally among those who practice the rite (as research by the British organisation NORM-UK reveals). I explain that fatalities are rarely spoken of, though each day brings three or four more deaths around the world. And the lost children have sometimes been erased from Jewish family trees, as my film attests. That can be comprehended perhaps as a legacy of the Talmud, which instructs that a mother may cease offering babies for circumcision after three of her offspring have died from it.

I recall the TV documentary I made against corporal punishment of children, and how I applauded countries like Germany and Israel,

which were among the first to outlaw such punishment. It appears to me wholly contradictory that those countries protect a tradition that routinely inflicts greater suffering and harm. And none should take a lead from America, where it's still legal for parents to hit children, where paediatricians profit from a sideline in circumcisions of boys of all backgrounds. The American Academy of Paediatrics, the profession's trade organisation, has issued yet another equivocal statement recently, about a practice that is a money-spinner for some of its members.

In Israel, some young adults now choose to be tattooed with the Auschwitz numbers of their forebears. A moving tribute. But if a religious leader decided it was God's commandment that babies be tattooed, we'd halt that everywhere. Religious Jews manage without animal sacrifices, without polygamy, without a range of practices that enlightened rabbis found reasons to dispense with over the centuries.

Ironically, there was a time in Germany, long before the Nazi era, when some rabbinic leaders advocated abandoning circumcision; they termed it barbarism. Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism, refused to have his son circumcised.

Given present knowledge of the pain and complications caused, the alternative law now



called for by 50 independent-minded German MPs is appropriate. Circumcision would only ever be permitted by qualified doctors, in hospitals, using effective anaesthesia, after both parents have been fully apprised of the risks, and when the child is at least 14 years old and able to give informed consent. I think about this positively: for my daughter's generation and those following, shouldn't Jewish and Muslim identities embrace children's rights? Nonviolent welcoming ceremonies would be equally meaningful for baby girls and boys. A small but growing number of rabbis in America have been pioneering brit shalom ceremonies. These celebrate the perfection present at the birth of all children. That's the true praise for "a Creator", after all, rather than "corrective surgery" for every newborn boy.

My message to the German parliament is simple: please don't undo the opportunity for change created by your courageous Cologne judge. Jewish and Muslim children deserve protection from a hurtful, dangerous custom that's overdue for replacement. If it takes a court in 21st-century Germany to help us move beyond circumcision, I welcome that.

Upstairs from Freedom

Lewis (Leibisch) Levin was a brother of my great-grandmother Mikhlya. He was born in 1861 in Streshin, a little village on the River Dniepr, in what is now south east Belarus. In the early 1900s he came to London accompanied by his three children from his first wife, who had died a few years previously, and his second wife with her own daughter. They found somewhere to live in the heart of the East End, where tens of thousands of East European Jews had settled over the previous 20 years or so.

My own grandmother – Lewis' niece – came to London soon after that, aged about 18, and stayed with the Levins, probably helping to look after the children. Within a couple of years there were two more boys, and they moved from one home to another, always along Whitechapel High Street and Mile End Road, presumably to accommodate the expanding family. In every document, and in various trade directories, Lewis is a "Paper Bag Maker", even sometimes a "Master Paper Bag Maker". His children – my young uncles and aunts – were all roped in to work in his paper bag factory, which was mostly located on the kitchen table.

We knew that he had died in 1927, aged 67, and that he was probably living on his own by this stage. His second wife had died when the boys were very young, his older children had all left home for marriage, America, or the Russian Revolution, and the younger boys didn't see their futures in paper bags and left home to work elsewhere and put themselves through night school.

The figure of Lewis has long fascinated me, and a few months ago I ordered a copy of his death certificate to see if it could offer up anything new about him. And so it did: "of 84B Whitechapel High Street" – his address at the time he died.

The next time I was in the area I looked for the building. Next to the Whitechapel Library and Art Gallery I found number 82; a few doors down was number 87. The two or three buildings in between did not appear to be numbered, but I assumed 84B

would be one of them and duly took a photo as evidence.

My cousin Beatrice, Lewis's great granddaughter, is currently in London – her mother, Alice, Lewis's grand-daughter, now aged 101, is unwell, and Beatrice has come from the US to be closer to her. Yesterday afternoon Beatrice and I went on a "Musical Walk round the Jewish East End", organised by the Jewish Music Institute and led by historian David Rosenberg.

Beatrice's grandfather, Sam, had been involved in the Workers' Circle, a friendly society established to further the interests of working-class East European Jews from the 1910s onwards; and her mother Alice was active in the Yiddish theatre movement from the 1930s. The Workers' Circle and Yiddish theatre both featured in David's walk.

The group met outside Whitechapel Art Gallery, and David led us off down a narrow passage between two of the neighbouring buildings – Angel Alley. On the right, a notice was pinned to a door: "This is NOT 84B, it's 84A. 84B is opposite!" You can hear the exasperation in the printed words. You can probably also hear my involuntary intake of breath, for 84B turns out to be the premises of Freedom Press, the long-established anarchist publishers and booksellers.

David was going to tell us about some of the radical figures and groups that flourished in the area 100 years ago, but Beatrice and I were just standing there, minds racing, staring at the building.

After the walk, we grabbed David for a chat over lunch, then made our way back to see if Freedom bookshop at 84B was still open. It was. We explained why we had come, and asked the lady in the shop if she knew how the building was being used in 1927. She kindly went off to find a book containing a history of the organisation and its premises, which told us that there had been a printing press occupying the ground floor at least before 1942.

"Would you like to see

upstairs?" I had to ask her to repeat the question, partly because I don't hear very well, but mainly because I couldn't believe what I had heard. Upstairs? Lewis must have lived upstairs, 85 years ago. We took a deep breath and followed her up. The staircase, banisters, walls, and some of the doors, looked as though nothing had been done to them in 100 years or more.

She took us into one of the rooms and we discussed the layout. The room we were standing in had a structural beam across the middle, and we reckoned it had probably originally been two rooms. On the landing was a blanked-off door, which confirmed this.

So we sat, and stood, in one half of the room, looking out to the brick wall opposite (the Art Gallery building), and tried to imagine a bed, a chair, and a table. Where was the sink? There probably wasn't one; he'd have had to bring water in from the bathroom. Was there even a bathroom? How did he cook? Did he cook?

But it was the stairs that got to me. He must have gone up and down these stairs every day for months, maybe two or three years. And here we were, treading the same steps, holding on to the same worn banisters, knocking on doors – his door, maybe – to feel the wood.

He fell ill here and died at the London Jewish Hospital down the road in Stepney Green. I've just looked at the death certificate again. He died on 20th October 1927. Just 85 years and one day before we came to visit him.



**MICHAEL
SHADE** and his
cousin Beatrice
made an
unexpected
discovery when
they went on a
historical walk
of the East End



This first appeared on
Michael Shade's blog:
[http://twentyone-
seven.blogspot.co.uk](http://twentyone-seven.blogspot.co.uk)

It's a Boy! is on release as
video-on-demand via
[www.realeyz.tv/en/its-a-
boy.html](http://www.realeyz.tv/en/its-a-boy.html)

Filmmaker Victor
Schonfeld's other
documentaries include
Loving Smacks, *Shattered
Dreams: Picking Up the
Pieces* and *The Animals Film*.

A version of the above
article was published in
Israel's *Ha'aretz* newspaper.

Murder in a godforsaken town

A GRAIN OF TRUTH

Zygmunt Miłoszewski
Bitter Lemon Press, £8.99

Prosecutor Teodor Szacki's brilliant analytical mind hides behind a chaotic personal life. His wife has thrown him out of the family home in Warsaw, but hankering after her doesn't inhibit him from a variety of ill-judged sexual encounters in his new home, the medieval town of Sandomierz in southern Poland.

Nothing much happens in this timeless provincial setting, apart from tourism, until the body of a young woman enters the frame. She appears to have been killed by someone trained in *shekhita*, the Jewish method of slaughtering animals for meat. This incident breaks the calm surface of life in Sandomierz, and we discover undercurrents of jealousy, antagonism and antisemitism lurking below. They reach back in time, to the war years, when the city's Jews disappeared at the hands of the Nazis, and before that, to the longstanding community of Jewish people whose lives were intertwined with those of their non-Jewish neighbours.

Antisemitism has not lain dormant in the decades that have passed since then, not least thanks to the Church. The Cathedral is a landmark, both in the town and in the trajectory of the plot, and is the backdrop to intriguing clues, which may or may not lead you to the murderer. These include a painting depicting the blood libel, the mischievous myth that Jews murder Christian children to use their blood for Passover matzos.

Corruption, bad faith and weakness characterise the role of the Catholic church, as well as many of the characters, but they all have their internal contradictions, too. A streetwise city guy, with a sharp wit and a jaded view of his fellow citizens, Szacki struggles to get used to the slow pace of life in Sandomierz, with its undertow of historic antagonism and contemporary sharp practice. This detective story is predicated on the past but placed squarely in the present reality of a country which has lost not just a whole people but their culture and significance in Polish life. Electronic media are part of the story, and we are given intermittent reminders, through an unexpected lens, of what is going on in the world beyond Sandomierz, while Szacki struggles to get to the bottom of what looks like a murder with medieval motives.

A Grain of Truth has all the elements of a classic detective novel, with its hardboiled but chaotic detective casting a cynical outsider's eye over a sleepy provincial setting. Like a cross between Raymond Chandler and Midsomer Murders, it is skilfully written and constructed, and brilliantly translated, giving a multidimensional perspective on Poland, its people, and, particularly its downbeat transgressive humour.

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Spooky experiences and arcane information are woven together with the mundane preoccupations

of a newly and unwillingly single, emotionally needy middle aged man. The book has such a powerful sense of place that, even after you've lost track of the twists and turns of the plot, you are left with the feeling that you could find your way around this godforsaken town, with its past of Nazi occupation and Communist austerity, and its present of burgeoning corruption. Unlike Warsaw, where his colleagues were full of life and laughs, Prosecutor Teodor Szacki has had the misfortune to pitch up in Sandomierz where he has to work with Inspector Wilczur, who is "rather far from being likeable. He had arranged to meet him in the 'Town Hall' bar, a dreadful dive in the basement of a tenement house on the market square that stank of the cigarette smoke which had infused every bit of the décor for decades, and was full of weird customers and weird waiters. Szacki was sure that behind the sceneries there were weird cooks weirdly preparing weird meat, so he limited himself to coffee and cheesecake. The cheesecake smelt of an old sofa which everyone sits on but no one fancies cleaning..."

Knowing that the author is not Jewish, I read this book nervously, expecting to trip over mistakes or at least misinterpretations of Jewish customs, traditions and experience. But Zygmunt Miłoszewski is sure footed and nuanced in his depiction of Jewish culture and practices, and in his understanding of Jewish history and the legacy of antisemitism in Poland. He might have included more references to Jews in and from the diaspora today, rather than using Jews who have come from Israel as his detective's consultants on Jewish matters. At the same time, he doesn't shy away from challenging misuse of the Holocaust by both Poles and Israelis. Discussing antisemitism, Rabbi Zygmunt Maciejewski describes coming with a tour group to Poland to visit the concentration camps. "It's like this – when a tour group comes here from Israel to visit the camp at Majdanek, they take their own bodyguards with them to the disco. And before they get on the coach to Warsaw airport, they have to listen to a talk on how to behave in case of an anti-Semitic attack. I was brought up in Israel, and I went on one of those tours, which mainly consisted of shocking us with the Shoah. ... But not just that. It consisted to the same extent of bullshitting about omnipresent anti-Semitism, stirring up suspicions, xenophobia and the desire to retaliate. In fact, when it comes to building an identity on dead bodies, we've done better than the Poles."

As well as being an exciting, accessible and engaging read, this book takes you to new places and introduces you to new ideas. I'd never heard of Sandomierz before I read it. When I finished the book I did some research and discovered that most of the information about the town – including the blood libel painting – is true. It sounds well worth a visit.

Julia Bard

POETIC CHRONICLE of WORSENING TIMES

Raja Shehadeh's *Occupation Diaries* follows on from his earlier successful books – successful because they were so personal and based on memories and diaries recording everyday life in Palestine under occupation. As with his previous works, *A Rift in Time* and *Strangers in the House*, and most recently *Palestinian Walks*, a haunting evocation of the peaceful beauty of the West Bank gradually corroded by ugly and illegal settlements, the author has plundered his diaries to write another important book about events over the two years leading up to the failed bid for statehood to the UN in September 2011.

The opening pages describe a picnic in a well-known beauty spot in Palestine, and he uses the angry exchanges between his group, who are in modern western clothes and another party dressed in a more conservative and modest style, to show how factions are evolving in the Occupied Territories in response to threats to people's identity. On my first encounter with university students in 1987, I remember observing that the women in jeans and T-shirts were in the majority, but most now wear the hijab.

In those days, Palestine society was secular in governance and not only tolerant of religious differences in their own society but amazingly free of hatred of the occupying Israeli forces. Raja recalls the tolerant and respectful Christian tradition in which he was brought up. His father, Aziz, also a lawyer (who was murdered by a Palestinian collaborator), had been optimistic that coexistence in two separate states was possible.

Raja Shehadeh still believes that the two state solution is the only realistic option for the immediate future, with a unified regional model incorporating Israel into a confederation of surrounding Arab states the long term aim. Much of this book is devoted to descriptions of the immense and accelerating difficulties in reaching any such agreement. The reasons include the rapid expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank, the lurch towards a fascist regime inside the make-believe democracy of Israel (in truth if defined as a Jewish state then by definition an ethnocracy and in many of the settlements moving still further away from the original state towards a theocracy), and the one-sided support of the western powers for the status quo favouring Israel.

It is not only Israel as the occupier that the author condemns. He is not impressed by Fatah, which he declares is unpopular in the West Bank as well as in Gaza, and which avoids elections knowing that it would be likely to lose power. In fact, the Wikileaks revelations merely confirm the corruption and complicity of the Palestinian Authority (PA) with Israel and its western allies, led locally by the so-called mediator Tony Blair and the ridiculous peace initiative of the Quartet. He worries that the

overt blackmailing of the Palestinians with carrots such as US-AID, alongside PA security forces trained by the Americans to control dissident Palestinian voices and even torture their own people, present the biggest challenge to Palestinian society by descending to the barbaric depths and becoming a mirror image of their Israeli tormentors.

Against these fears, he also believes that Israel is on the downturn, tearing itself apart from within, overwhelmed by greed so that anti-democratic forces take over. Not allowing himself to despair, he still harks back to the days before the Oslo Accord sell-out, when there was still hope of co-operation. He still applauds the efforts of people such as Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said to bridge the gaps, quoting the former quite recently as visiting Gaza and stating, "If there is no peace for Gaza, there will be no peace."

In the light of subsequent events, his musings on the putative effect of the Arab Spring are too optimistic, as the Gaza siege is, if anything, worse since the military took control in Egypt and the jury is out on any changes in the peace treaty with Israel. The carnage in Syria has also lowered expectations of any improvement in the region.

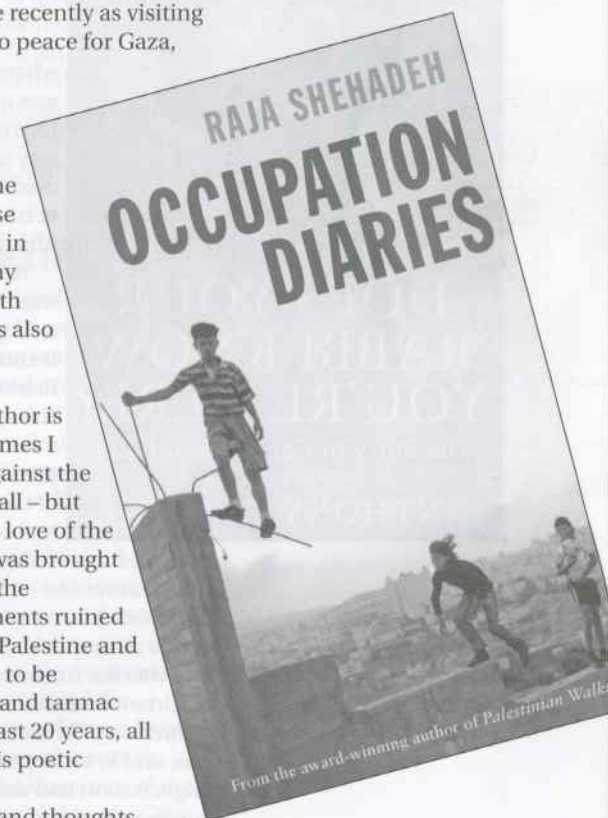
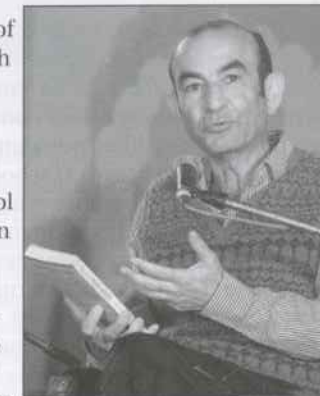
I enjoyed this book. The author is so gentle in his anger that at times I longed for a rant and a rage against the wickedness and injustice of it all – but that is not his way or style. His love of the sophisticated culture that he was brought up in, as well as the beauty of the countryside before the settlements ruined it, the evening light unique to Palestine and the wonderful wild flowers yet to be overwhelmed by the concrete and tarmac invading everything over the last 20 years, all come through powerfully in his poetic language.

Sometimes, I wished ideas and thoughts dotted about in the book could have been brought together to make more impact on the reader, but these are diaries after all, so I should not cavil about that. Anybody who is seriously interested in conflict resolution will be stimulated by this excellent read.

Colin Green

OCCUPATION DIARIES

Raja Shehadeh
Profile Books,
2012, £12.99



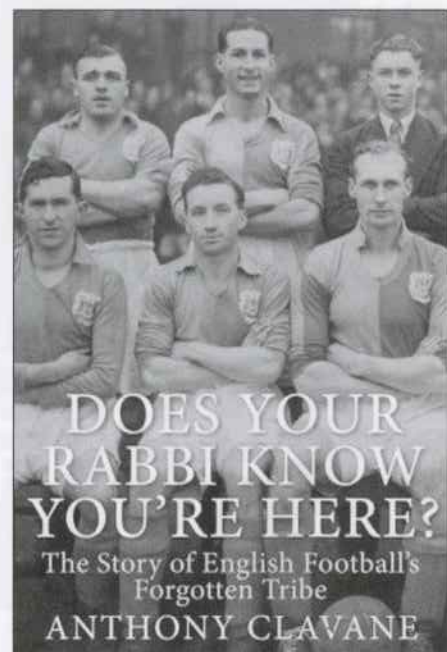
After shul

THE PRAYING BEGINS

DOES YOUR RABBI KNOW YOU'RE HERE?

The story of English football's forgotten Jewish tribe

Anthony Clavane
Quercus, £20



If James Joyce had set Ulysses in London (something of a contradiction in terms, because, for Joyce, Dublin was everything imperial London wasn't), then Leopold Bloom would have been an avid supporter of Leyton Orient. The name itself is Joycean, combining a drab London suburb with the exoticism of sunshine, minarets, limestone hills and biblical mysticism. At school I became an ardent Orient fan because everyone else supported Spurs and Arsenal. It was an incomprehensible decision, because there was never anything to boast about of a Monday morning. But it set me and a few other *nebishes* apart. Only a self-destructive, marginalised teenager would support a team that weren't even terribly bad. Orient have always exulted in mediocrity. Witness the last five years or so, when they have finished consistently in 15th or 16th place in the third division, League One.

Orient's heyday was in the early 1960s, when, aged 10, I remember well the sheer and unadulterated joy when they got themselves promoted to the first division. The Os promptly

went down the next season. But there were some good moments – beating Manchester United 1-0 and thrashing Everton 3-0. My favourite player was Eddie Lewis, at left back, because he was the player nearest to where I watched in the stands. Eddie was a “hoofer” – time and again forwards drifted past him on their way to Orient's goal. Sadly, Eddie died last year, after spending much of his career coaching in South African townships.

At that time, Orient's chairman was Harry Zussman, a cigar-toting entrepreneur. Harry, as does Orient, features prominently in *Does Your Rabbi Know You're Here?* I never met Harry, but his cousin, a ponderous man, also a Zussman, came to my shul. This was after the heady days of the 1962-'63 season, when the Os had once and for all turned their back on success. Zussman's cousin had a breathy voice, rather like a Mafioso boss, and the only thing I ever recall him saying was “Rubbish”, and “Harry's got no money left”. According to Anthony Clavane, that was the truth, because Harry lost his fortune on Orient and died in relative poverty.

Anthony Clavane's central thesis is that football was, and is, an important instrument for Anglicisation and assimilation at all levels, players, bosses and even managers. That, however, didn't apply to everyone in the community. Intellectual German Jews tended to support Arsenal without having to look over their shoulders. But, for the untermenschen from the heym, the tension for first-generation young Jews born in Britain was either to keep the faith or submerge identity on the soccer

pitch and in the stands. Orient must have been very much the exception, because they revelled in their hopelessness and were therefore typically Jewish. Mark Lazarus, no shrinking Jewish violet he, played for them later in the '60s, as did Barry Silkman. In fact, they had a manager called Jimmy Bloomfield. Surely he must have been a Blumenfeld at some point, though as far as I can make out, like George Cohen of England fame, there's no obvious Jewish ancestry. But, with a name like that, there was nowhere else to go but Orient.

At one level this book is a sheer delight, because it brought back all my Orient memories. After Orient come Spurs, since my son used to play for Awesome Lane Hotspur and we got complementary tickets on the back of that to see a few matches. Sitting in the stands, watching them play Port Vale in a cup tie with my family, we pointed out to each other that the chant Yids, Yids, Yids, wouldn't have sounded so great if we were hovering around Munich in 1938. Clavane's explanation for Tottenham's massive Jewish support is at once ingenious but halachically questionable. Since a vast proportion of the Jewish community lived in the East End between the wars, why didn't they support West Ham, rather than Tottenham? West Ham, according to Clavane, was the dockers' club, which sounds right to me, though I find it difficult to understand why anyone now supports them. It was also because “[D]riving or using combustion-engine-powered vehicles on the Sabbath was strictly forbidden, but catching the tram or train was not.” Since the public transport system was aligned from the City, directly north to White Hart Lane, most Jews took that route on the train. But, coming from a frum family, we weren't allowed to ride anything on a shabbos, even a scooter or a pair of skates. So I've no idea from where Clavane got that piece of intelligence.

Much of the antisemitism that was endemic in football at the upper echelons is graphically portrayed, but I don't have much time for the great “innovators”, the Scholars, Deins and Sugars of this world. Yes, they love football, or at least, Scholar and Dein do, but there are times when the book almost glorifies the philosemitism of Thatcher's new Toryism. Philosemitism is the other side of the coin of antisemitism, not its antonym. Clavane is also too kind to the former Spurs manager, David Pleat, who I recall not so long ago berating that rather interesting footballer, Freddie Kanoute, for opting to play an international match for Mali, thereby putting Spurs' hold on the Premiership at risk. “I don't know where Mali is,” said Pleat. “I'm going to have to ask someone.”

There's much to commend, and being a soccer fan, I lapped up the book. While Clavane is far too generous to the new machers, on the other hand Leon Greenman's poignant account of a Jewish Dutch footballer's death in Auschwitz is worth the price of the book alone. **Ralph Levinson**



THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

After decades of neglect, Jews from Arab lands are offered a day to commemorate their rich centuries-old history. The date proposed in Israel is the anniversary of the terrible pogrom on 1st-2nd June 1941 in Baghdad. The large scale exodus of Jews from Iraq was arranged 10 years later. It seems the idea came not from the Ministries of Education or Culture, but from Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon. He explains: “We will remember the 850,000 Jewish refugees who were forced to flee from Arab states ... The Palestinians are speaking about refugees at length. Then we will too.” I don't think he is asking for the Right of Return.

The idea was welcomed by Michelle Huberman of Harif, an Association of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, based in London (Save the Date, Even if You're Ashkenazi, Jerusalem Post, 19/7/12). A Committee of Baghdadi Jews in Ramat Gan, Israel, adopts a slightly different tone. In a message dated 14th September / 27th Ellul, they say, “We most sincerely thank the Israeli government for confirming our status as refugees following a rapid, 62-year-long evaluation of our documents.”

Stressing that they sought compensation for lost property and assets from the Iraqi government, not the Palestinians, the Iraqi Jews want an investigation into negotiations “in 1950 between Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri as-Said, and whether Ben-Gurion informed as-Said that he is authorized to take possession of the property and assets of Iraqi Jewry if he agreed to send them to Israel”. They also want the inquiry to ask “who ordered the bombing of the Masouda Shem-Tov synagogue in Baghdad, and if the Israeli Mossad and/or its operatives were involved.”

They conclude by wishing: “Blessings for a happy new year, a year of peace and prosperity, a year of tranquility and fertility.” Honestly, some people don't understand the meaning of gratitude!

LONG LIFE, ABBEY GEZUNT!

Lou Kenton, *oleh vesholem*, who passed away on 17th September aged 104 (see page 17), would have been delighted, had he lived a couple of weeks longer, by the news from Seville in Spain. A friend sends photos of 45 homeless families who have taken over empty luxury accommodation in the city. A few years ago East End born Lou was among International Brigade veterans awarded honorary Spanish citizenship. “Your ideals are part of the foundations of our democracy in Spain today,” Ambassador Carlos Casajuana told them.

In September 1946, Abbey Lodge, a luxury block

near Regents Park which had been used to house RAF officers, was being refurbished by the Ministry of Works for return to the private market. One evening a workman stayed behind till everyone had gone, then opened the doors, and furniture vans rolled up with squatters. At first the police did not know what to do. When they were later ordered to surround the block, they were surrounded in turn by protestors, who blocked the road to traffic. The war had left thousands of people homeless. Those who decided to help themselves to empty property had sympathy from the public, if not from politicians.

Lou Kenton, then North West London district secretary of the Communist Party, helped organise the squatting at Abbey Lodge and later assisted people to find other homes. Such actions persuaded government and local authorities to make housing a priority. Nowadays when recession and Con-Dem policies are making more people homeless, the government is not taking chances on repetition. It has made squatting a criminal offence. A young man called Alex Haigh has been sent to jail for occupying a flat without permission. The flat in Pimlico had been empty for a year. Alex, an apprentice bricklayer, had come to London seeking work. Who said the government does not learn from history, or that the law does not do irony?

KREMLIN TO GREMLINS

Who is making the *Morning Star* embarrassing *shlemazals*? Last year a couple of comrades running a bookstall at a left-wing conference opened a box of secondhand books and out popped not some Marxist classic but that infamous Czarist secret police forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. To be promptly snapped up by a wag who showed off his find to create a diverting *shande* in the conference.

On 22nd September the *Star* republished an article by Israel Shamir, claiming an “unholy alliance” of big business and media barons were behind the Pussy Riot. The editors insist they had no idea who Shamir was, but apparently they had edited out some of the worst bits. Shamir, who contrasted the treatment of the Russian punk group favourably with that of Holocaust deniers, is author of a work in Russian called “How to Break the Conspiracy of the Elders of Zion”. He is blaming “Jewish Marxists” for the removal of his article from the *Star's* website.

I would not like the *Morning Star* to return to the days of Stalinist censorship. This year it gave the commemoration of murdered Soviet Jewish writers a listing, which is more than the *Jewish Chronicle* managed. All the same, we expect more political awareness. Wake up comrades!