

JEWISH ★ SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

No 67 Spring 2014 £2

- REFUGEE WOMEN
- DEFEATING UKIP
- UNITING JEWS + ROMA
- GAZA TESTING GROUND

We want REFUGE
... not DETENTION
We want asylum
... not torture
ALL AFRICAN WOMEN'S GROUP

- Post-USSR Jews
- Eugenics today
- The Ruby Kid interview
- Jews + football

EDITORIAL

JEWISH SOCIALIST

NO 67 SPRING 2014

Many of you will have signed the *Jewish Socialist* document commemorating the 75th anniversary of Kristallnacht and warning of how apposite it is today. That event was the final warning to many Jews that they needed to leave Germany, and perhaps the first perception of the urgency of refugees' status. Today, as then, refugees have to convince their chosen country of refuge of the urgency – nowadays defined as authenticity – of their claim.

People's attitude to refugees is one of the criteria by which voters choose or reject aspiring MPs and governments. It is also a test of our humanity. One recent case in the UK concerned an appeal against refusal of refugee status to a woman who fled her country after "punishment" for her political activities. She is now HIV positive and suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. Why was she refused asylum? She gave two different accounts of her experiences while being screened for entry to the UK. The Government did not dispute that she was suffering from severe mental problems; they said these problems meant she could not distinguish truth from fiction, and that her account could therefore not be believed. So she should be returned to a country where women, mental patients and HIV sufferers are all subjected to constant discrimination – a country where there is only one mental hospital and only 50% of HIV patients receive regular medication.

What happened to compassion, charity, good will? Where is humanity in all of this? The government at the time of Kristallnacht agreed to the Kindertransport project as a sop to these ideals: children only were permitted to come to Britain, though it was clear that many would never see their parents again. Present-day policy follows on logically from this: admit refugees only after strenuous efforts to exclude them by rigorous testing. If they cannot be put on the next plane back, make their

lives as hard as possible while they wait for their cases to be heard... and appealed... and appealed... for years on end.

So we have asylum seekers, many of whom are unwilling to reapply because, after having been refused, they are likely to be dispersed outside London pending a rehearing. The effect is that many refugees, particularly single women, are living in limbo on the streets of London, unwilling to leave their compatriots and support systems for an unknown city. Only a third of the 18,000 people who claimed asylum in 2010 were women, yet 74% of these women were turned down. Refused – a report on research by the charity Women for Refugee Women (www.refugeewomen.co.uk) explores the experiences of 72 women who have sought asylum in the UK. Many say they have been treated even more badly here than in the countries they fled.

Two petitions have been circulating from change.org. One demands the closing of Yarl's Wood detention centre, where such women are often imprisoned without charge or release date. The second, demanding action to prevent and punish Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), obtained nearly 250,000 signatures in two weeks. As a result, the Education Secretary has agreed to write to all primary and secondary headteachers in England about FGM. Having achieved its aim, this petition has now been taken down.

It is interesting – and heartening – that the condition of immigrant women is finally being exposed to the public, with much support being given to both these campaigns.

APOLOGY

Due to a combination of different circumstances, we have suffered severe delays in producing this issue of *Jewish Socialist*. Thank you for your patience, and we hope you find it worth the wait. With best wishes from the Editorial Committee.

CONTENTS

NEWS

- 3 Garment workers rise; Bengali solidarity; *Daily Mail* abuse, Barney Lewis obituary
- 4 Brigadistas return; Bedouin rights

FEATURES

- 5 **Faraging for votes among the discontented**
Don Flynn analyses UKIP's appeal and how the left can challenge it
- 8 **We must stop research on genes and IQ**
Dave King takes issue with the propagators of modern-day eugenics
- 10 **Voice of the city**
Mike Gerber interviews hip-hop/spoken word artist, **The Ruby Kid**
- 14 **75 years after Kristallnacht – minorities in danger**
A statement plus first-hand testimony
- 16 **Solidarity in Budapest**
Margaret Greenfields describes a powerful example Jewish-Roma collaboration in Hungary
- 18 **Bringing home the lessons of Auschwitz**
Ruth Mostyn-Dignan and **Gabriel Neophytou** describe their personal experience of a Holocaust education project

20 Asymmetric warfare

Colin Green investigates how and why Israel is using Gaza as a testing ground

24 Well pitched

David Rosenberg visits an exhibition about Jews and football in Britain

REVIEWS

- 27 Jewish identity in Postcommunist Russia and Ukraine
- 29 Stranger in a Borrowed Land
- 30 Anarchists Against the Wall

REGULARS

- 3 Wisewords
- 23 What's new on the left
- 31 Dybbuk's diary

Editorial committee: Julia Bard, Judith Cravitz, Simon Lynn and David Rosenberg.

Cover photo: Demo at Kalyx Supports Harmondsworth Detainees, Capital House, Chapel St, London.
Photo: Peter Marshall from his London Diary series,
<http://mylondondiary.co.uk/>

The struggle continues

Reports that garment workers in Bangladesh have won a 77% pay increase should bring at least one cheer from supportive organisations, such as the Jewish Socialists' Group who hosted Amirul Haque Amin, president of the Dhaka-based National Garment Workers' Federation, at a JSG public meeting last year.

The wage hike came several months after 1,100 people, mostly women garment workers, perished when the eight-storey Rana Plaza block collapsed. But the pay rise – like the interim emergency money given by Primark to bereaved families and survivors from the disaster – still leaves its recipients trapped in poverty.

The minimum wage in the country's 3,500 factories, where

4 million workers toil for marathon hours, last rose in 2010, and high inflation in recent years has eroded the value of the extra money. The new rate of £42 a month still falls well below what workers need to meet essential costs for food, housing, health care and education for children. So their struggle to survive goes on, malnourished, sharing one slum area room with their families – often including dependent relatives – and sharing washing facilities with numerous other workers and their kids.

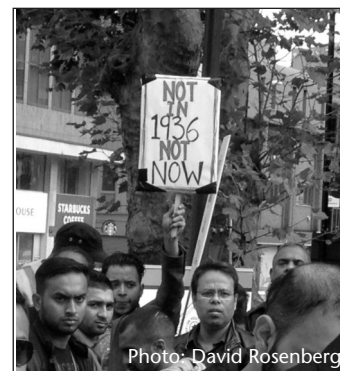
In contrast, Primark and the rest of Britain's high street fashion retailers pledge to ensure a living wage but continue to pile up their profits, while passing the pay buck to the Bangladeshi government.

Garment workers' recent protests signal their commitment to a sustained fight, angered not only by the pittance they earn for gruelling sweatshop labour, but also by the uncaring UK chains that exploit them.

The families whose breadwinners died at Rana Plaza, and the injured employees, must hang on in further anguish for the longterm compensation that may offer hope for the future. Well over a year since the Tazreen factory blaze killed 117 workers, the victims' families must also wait for the redress that should have arrived some time ago.

The silver lining on the industry's dark cloud emerged with over 100 brands signing a legally binding safety accord. But only Westminster legislation can force British companies to keep their promises on decent pay.

Paul Collins



A young Bangladeshi Eastender makes a powerful historical connection at an anti-EDL protest last September. Mobilisations by the local community supported by wider anti-fascist forces have prevented the English Defence League from physically invading Tower Hamlets on three occasions. But now Tower Hamlets is faced with UKIP threatening to stand candidates there and stoke up tensions where the EDL failed.

See Don Flynn's article on how the left can defeat UKIP on p5.

Barney Lewis 1918-2013

Barney Lewis, a longstanding *Jewish Socialist* subscriber, died on 15th December. He was born in 1918 and brought up in Bethnal Green, east London. His mother, Rebecca, and father, Samuel, came to England from Poland to live and work among *landslays* in the sweatshops – places of struggle, poverty and opportunity. They married in 1905.

Barney was the fourth of five brothers. They lived in two rooms, with an adjacent scullery and toilet. His mother died when he was 10, leaving his father – a highly skilled woodcarver – plus aunts Fanny and Becky, and his own self-sufficiency, as his primary carers.

He attended meetings at the Workers Circle, joined the Young Communist League and, although afraid of being beaten up by Mosley's blackshirts, was given the job of protecting a speaker's pitch during the Battle of Cable Street.

Barney would speak affectionately of the influence of the great debates that he and his father and brothers would have about the socialist movement, the work of William Morris, Bundism, Zionism, Marxism, the working class struggle, and so on.

After six years in the army, including a posting in Haifa, Barney returned to his career – hairdressing – and taught at the London College of Fashion. He was dedicated to his trade union, USDAW, the TUC, the Wages Council, Advisory Committees, and his political work as an active member of the Communist Party until 1991.

In his 70s, Barney and his wife Hilda (who died in 1998) played an energetic role in the pensioners' movement, in a partnership reminiscent of their earlier work together in squatting campaigns in 1946 when they were pressing the then London County Council to provide accommodation for the homeless.

Besides a life in politics, Barney enjoyed pottery, painting and the cinema. He leaves a son, Sam, an extended family appreciative of his good company and argument, and many friends and comrades.

Richard Knight



Now you see it, now you don't

The bodies that see themselves as the vanguard of "defence" work in the Jewish community, such as the Board of Deputies (BoD) and the Community Security Trust (CST), have acquired a bit of a reputation for spotting antisemitism everywhere, and are usually very quick to tar any leftwingers criticising Israeli policy as being motivated by antisemitism. But what happens when a loyal, upstanding friend of Israel makes an appalling statement about a

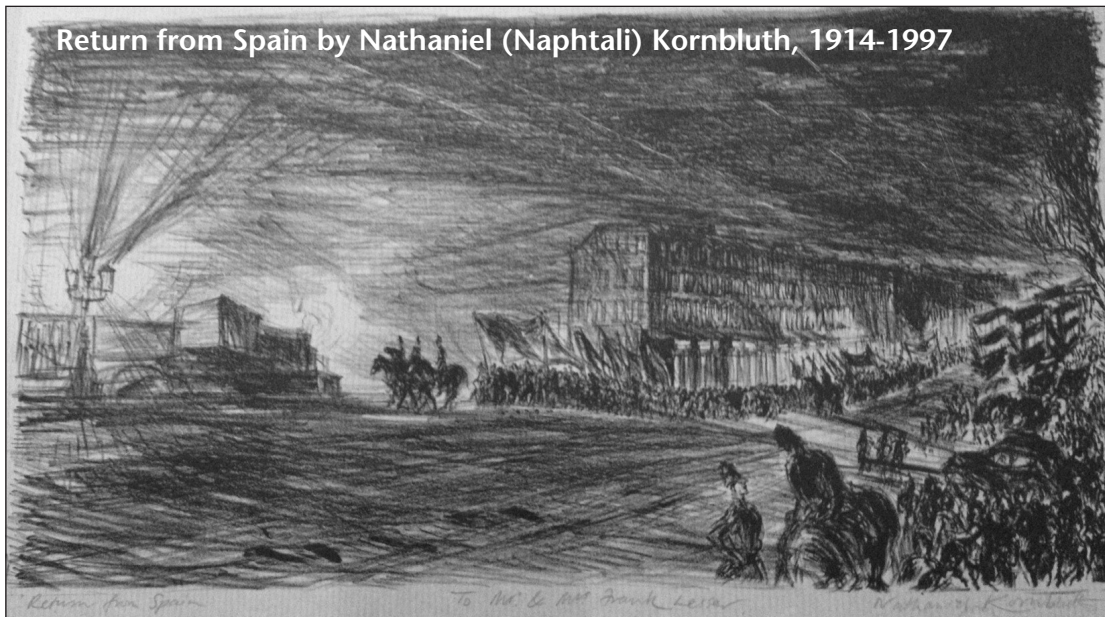
Jewish refugee from Nazi occupation, denouncing him as a "Marxist" and "the man who hated Britain", for having the temerity to criticise British nationalism? It was the Israel-supporting *Daily Mail* abusing Ralph Miliband. That was the newspaper that gave a massive boost to the fascist Oswald Mosley in the mid-1930s and supported Hitler right through that decade. Not a peep from the BoD or the CST. Maybe they didn't read the papers that day.

WISEWORDS ISAAC ROSENBERG (1890-1918)

The son of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, Isaac Rosenberg was seven years old when his family settled in the East End, having lived earlier in Bristol. After becoming an apprentice engraver at 14, he won a place at the prestigious Slade School of Art. He criticised "patriotic" arguments for the First World War but, out of work and needing to support his mother, he enlisted in 1915. He wrote anti-war poetry from the front but died at the Somme on 1st April 1918. This is from *Break of Day in the Trenches*

The darkness crumbles away
It is the same old druid Time as ever,
Only a live thing leaps my hand,
A queer sardonic rat,
As I pull the parapet's poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies,
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.

Return from Spain by Nathaniel (Naphtali) Kornbluth, 1914-1997



December 2013 marked the 75th anniversary of the return of the surviving British members of the International Brigades. Arriving at Victoria Station, they were then guests at a dinner in their honour at the Cooperative Society Building in Aldgate. Artist Nathaniel Kornbluth captured the moment of their return in an evocative etching.

Born to immigrant Jewish parents in the East End of London, as a child he would ride around on his bike or in a tram sketching everything that caught his eye. He was especially drawn to old architectural subjects in Spitalfields and Hackney, scenes of canals, docks and old Georgian buildings. The area's dark, jumbled buildings and crazy jagged skyline, often associated with ugliness and squalor, were an inspiration to him.

At *kheder* he was caught surreptitiously sketching his teacher, who confiscated the portrait. It turned out that

it hung in Rabbi Green's home for years afterwards.

He reluctantly went into his father's business at the age of 15, but detested it and could think of nothing but drawing. Nevertheless, he became a successful manufacturer and menswear wholesaler.

Kornbluth went to evening art classes where he was advised to take up etching. He perfected the copperplate technique and went on to study lithography and life drawing. This picture shows his sympathy for the Spanish Republican cause, and the drama of the volunteers' return by night.

It was Kornbluth's custom to make prints of his etchings to present to friends. In this tradition he signed this one for my father who had been a *brigadista*. His etchings are on permanent display in the Royal Academy, British Museum, the Guildhall and other art galleries and libraries worldwide.

Judith Cravitz

Stop clearing the Bedouin

Monday 15th July 2013 was a Day of Rage or Anger Strike in Israel-Palestine. For the first time, Palestinians from many different places and occupations joined to protest against the Israeli government's Prager-Begin plan – officially known as the Bill on the Arrangement of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev – which aims to evict Bedouin residents of so-called “unrecognised” villages in the Naqab (Negev) desert region of southern Israel, and relocate them into government-planned townships.

There are some 200,000 Bedouin citizens of Israel in the Negev. About half live in government-planned townships, which were first built in the late 1960s and every year sit at the bottom of all socio-economic indicators in Israel, and in 11 newly-recognised villages. The other half live in 35 “unrecognised” villages, which the state deems illegal, denying them water, electricity, paved roads, schools and other services. An estimated 50,000-60,000 structures in these villages are threatened with demolition.

The Bedouin of the Negev are citizens of Israel and therefore should be afforded all the rights due to citizens. Most of these villages have existed on their lands since before Israel was established, while others developed when the Israeli military government forcibly relocated Bedouin residents from their lands in the 1950s. This plan violates the constitutional rights of the Negev Bedouin to property, dignity, equality, adequate housing, and freedom to choose

their own residence. It constitutes ethnic cleansing.

Israelis perpetuate three widespread myths about the Bedouin: that the Bedouin are “taking over the Negev”; that they never owned the land; and that the government's plan will benefit the Bedouin. The Bedouin are laying claim to only 5.4% of the Negev. While many Bedouin do not have western-type proofs of ownership, their meticulous land ownership system was honoured by the Ottomans and the British and recognised by the pre-state Zionist movement.

Many argue that Israel must concentrate the Bedouin to provide them with water, electricity, jobs and training. But in the Negev there are smaller and more far-flung Jewish communities receiving services. The state would not tell them, “We are going to move you for your own good.” Furthermore, government statistics show that poverty and unemployment are four times higher in townships than in recognised villages. Recognising the 35 “unrecognised” villages is simply better policy than transfer of the population to the townships.

The Bedouin have received support from Rabbis for Human Rights, whose spokesperson Rabbi Arik Ascherman, says: “There is plenty of goodwill among the Bedouin and a solution could be reached if everybody was put in one room to talk to each other.”

In December 2013, the Israeli government shelved a plan to forcibly relocate tens of thousands of Bedouin Arabs from their ancestral lands.

FARAGING FOR VOTES AMONG THE DISCONTENTED

UK POLITICS

No one is proclaiming it out loud, but the whispering that goes on around the Westminster village suggests that they've already decided who is going to win the Euro-elections in May: UKIP. The key officials of the three main parties have all privately conceded that the right wing xenophobic party will be the biggest winner in the 2014 European Parliamentary poll.

Some of the lack of urgency about this outcome is precisely because each of the mainstream party outfits can see either some positive advantage coming from it or at least a clear way to make the best of a bad job. Labour rejoices in the fact that voter defection to UKIP will hurt the Tories more than it hurts them. The Lib Dems hope that the enthusiasm for anti-European policies will turn into bitterness some time before the really important general election in May 2015, when errant voters realise just what a nutty bunch Mr Farage and his followers really are. Even in Tory ranks, there is no shortages of dissidents who hope that Cameron will be punished for clinging on to the coalition and keeping them out of the ministerial posts they crave. A big vote for UKIP will give them the chance to say, "We told you so."

But outside the gilded ranks of mainstream insiders – also known as the real world – the prospect of seeing the largest share of the popular vote going to right-wing hardliners is not viewed with such equanimity. There are many dangers, and it is important that socialists do some hard thinking about what is in prospect in the event that UKIP win the majority share of the vote they crave.

What does UKIP represent as a political formation at this moment? We must not make the mistake of seeing the party as coming from the fascist tradition, which is more clearly the case with the BNP and its Hitler-birthday celebrating cadre. The more explicitly authoritarian political project has floundered since the 2010 election, due partly to the success of fragments of the left to mount a challenge to the Griffin party's strategy of forging a populist image for itself, but also, more crucially in the long run, from the fact that the prospect of a revived corporate state lacks any significant backing from within the forces of capital.

UKIP is addressing different needs, which have grown out of the sense of crisis that the British (more properly, English) ruling elite feel in relation to the bonds they have with ordinary citizens: the symptoms of the erosion of trust between – and the imagery in this case is quite appropriate – the "man in the pub" and the chaps who go along to Westminster to represent him; the decline in membership of all the main parties; the high levels of abstentionism on polling days; the scandals over cash-for-questions and expense account fiddling; as well as the growing sense that the Westminster parties are all the same – have contributed to a growing instability of parliamentary government, where elections produce less decisive results and weaker, coalition-style administrations.

UKIP's response draws energy from the disillusionment with the parties and their personalities, but goes further to critique the type of society the UK has become. The mix of themes that form the UKIP world view will be familiar to anyone who has ever watched its leader, Nigel Farage, appear on the BBC's Question Time. Brussels Eurocrats calling the shots; liberal political correctness crowding the political and business agenda with talk of rights for women, ethnic minorities and gays; the displacement of the sort of views held by chaps in the golf club bar as the lodestone for the direction governments ought to be taking the country – all this peppers the narrative of a personality (politician is not the right word for Farage) who wants to restore the ancient order of British democracy, rather than overthrow it.

This has implications for the way the left should confront UKIP's challenge. The party is not fielding squads of street fighters out to kick their way to power in the manner of the Italian fascists or the German Brownshirts, but works instead through the media and right-wing networks that extend into the Conservative party to increase the sense that the old parties have got it all wrong. They claim to believe they have a strategy that will allow them to progress to power by winning arguments and displacing the old parties. Whilst many of the naive people who have been drawn into its orbit might believe this to be a plausible objective, the more realistic prospect is that UKIP activism will impact on the established order of British politics, pushing it even further to the right, but keeping the system firmly on its parliamentary foundations.

The business of electoral arithmetic imposes itself here, which will be preoccupying the thinking of the party managers as we move closer to the general election scheduled for May 2015. There are 108 marginal constituencies across the country, where the issue of who governs the country will be decided. In each one, the incumbent holds the seat

The Left knows how to respond to movements that are clearly fascist, but how should it confront a populist party that exploits racism but presents itself as pro-democracy and anti-establishment? DON FLYNN offers an approach



UK POLITICS



with a majority of 6% or less. One blogger on the ConservativeHome website argues that UKIP will have a major say in 53 of these seats, based on its share of vote in the 2010 general election.

All but five of these battleground seats are straight fights between Labour and the Tories, with an exact split – 24 each – between the two, in terms of the number of MPs they currently have. The two largest parties will be tempted to deal with the matter by competing for the voters who went with UKIP in 2010.

Modern election campaigning is not inclined to leave the outcomes of such important battles to the chance that party machines at the local level are well-oiled and capable of getting their messages across alone. If a close campaign means that the leaders will be going all out to win the favours of the people of Fluffborough Central, then you can be sure that will be reflected in the key statements going out in the daily media briefings and the political broadcasts. By these means, the tone and content of the entire national campaign becomes dragged on to the terrain of the anti-immigrant, xenophobic hard right.

The tone of UKIP's anti-immigrant rhetoric often seems slippery enough to wriggle free of the accusation of out-and-out racism. The party stormed into a position which threatened both Conservative and Liberal Democratic hopes of winning the famous Eastleigh by-election last February, with claims that millions of Romanians and Bulgarians were planning to come to the UK with the lifting of the restrictions on them taking employment here in January 2014. On the face of it, this was an immigration scare story par excellence. But Farage has a few more tricks in his bag, which are intended to counter the view that his party is out-and-out racist. Part of its claim to have an alternative to the European Union lies with efforts to project the idea that the Commonwealth represents an alternative bloc for trade and commerce. A Farage article on UKIP's website entitled, "Why the Commonwealth matters more now than ever", tells us that it is a "club" of nations "where all member states share not only a common history forged by war and peace in the 19th and 20th centuries but also common values and practices that set us apart from the rest of the world."

Canny enough to show that his chums are not just the Aussies and the Canadians, Farage alights on India as the exemplar of the country sharing this common history and values, praising its position, saying that as "the 7th largest nation in the world with a population of over 1.2 billion people, as of 2009 [it] enjoyed just a 2% share of global GDP by market exchange rates yet with economic growth hitting almost 7% annually this will have risen to 13% by 2050, second only to China and USA."

Most surprising of all, to some at least, was his response to the "Go Home" poster vans unleashed by the UK Border Force on the people of six London boroughs in the summer of 2013 (all chosen it seems to patrol streets with the highest proportion of UKIP voters in the capital city). Farage condemned the initiative as "nasty" and Big Brother-like, and implied that his party would never stoop so low.

But this clever feint towards liberal distaste enabled him to make another point: that the real problem with the message on the vans was misguided because the problem had less to do with

"illegal" migration, which took place on a negligible scale anyway, and side-stepped the really important issue that the UK was about to grant the right of legal migration to 28 million Bulgarian and Romanian nationals.

Chameleon-like UKIP is able to switch its message hither and thither; sometimes appearing as the real champions of a Britain at ease in the multicultural Commonwealth club, but then switching to ram home a statement, which again draws on the sense of threat that can only come from having to deal with foreigners. It puts itself in a position where it can draw in Bangladeshis and Nepalīs as people who belong in its big tent (as it was able to do in Eastleigh and in some west London constituencies) but only to turn them against Romanians and Poles.

How does the left deal with UKIP's role as such a surprise package, weaving ways of looking at the political world that promise a "return" to the stability and certainties that supposedly existed when the right type of people were running the show? Insistence on a No Platform approach will be difficult to maintain when, unlike the case of the BNP, the accused can claim that they represent a view of the world as likely to be held by Asian shopkeepers as the solicitors and estate agents who make up the scrimmage pack of the local rugby team. Those UKIP candidates who slip out of what will be the tight leash of the Farageite party managers and stray on to the terrain of unabashed xenophobia will deserve to be given a tough time on the hustings, but more will be needed.

The immediate prospect for a challenge to UKIP will have to involve solid work to challenge the party's record in the areas where they have won elections and can be represented as political insiders, rather than the rebels they claim to be. The work of VoteWatch Europe (www.VoteWatch.eu) allows people to check the record of UKIP's 11 representatives in the European Parliament and to challenge the image they project for themselves as doughty fighters for the little person.

But, more generally, the left has to consider where it stands in relation to the populist critique of the establishment that UKIP represents. It carries power because elements of it are so obviously correct – parliamentary democracy *has* reached its limit as providing a means in which power can be possessed and exercised by ordinary citizens – but its remedies are so obviously way off.

The best way for the left to challenge UKIP will be for it to show that its own analysis of what is wrong with how the world is set up today is not only much more profound, but explains far better the predicament of people trying to live on their wages. Most importantly, we need to convey the obvious fact that the aspirations of the socialist left go far beyond simply wanting to manage the system, and are instead aiming to bring about its fundamental transformation.

UKIP's chameleon-like nature takes it beyond a place where it can be fenced in and reduced by militant anti-fascist campaigning. It exists because the *ancien regime* in the UK is in such a deep state of crisis, extending from the economic crisis to the way the ruling elites have governed us in the conditions of parliamentary democracy. Tackling UKIP means nothing less than coming up with a rigorously democratic and socialist response to the totality of that crisis, and doing it soon.

WE MUST STOP RESEARCH ON GENES AND IQ

SCIENCE

Early in 2013, Chinese and American scientists announced plans to reveal the results of research identifying specific genes that influence IQ. In October 2013 a row broke out in the UK media about a leaked document from a Department for Education adviser, Dominic Cumming, endorsing this kind of research as a basis for shaping UK education policy. In the same month, Robert Plomin, the scientist at the centre of this research, published a book advocating using the results of "IQ gene" testing to tailor children's education to their genetic makeup.

This research is the culmination of a right-wing racist and eugenic agenda that stretches back 100 years. If the scientists identify such genes, the first inevitable use of this information will be attempts to show that certain racial groups are genetically inferior to others. Other consequences will be the use of genetic tests to stream children for education from birth, and the presentations of Steven Hsu, who started the Chinese project, include plans for a eugenic breeding scheme using embryo selection to improve the overall IQ of the population.

Robert Plomin, has been attempting to find "IQ genes" since the 1970s. Up till now it has been extremely difficult to identify any such genes, partly because, as I will show, the science is very questionable. However, Plomin has now linked up with the world's leading genome sequencing factory, BGI, based in Shenzhen, China, and plans to sequence the genomes of over 2,000 people who have very high IQs.

The eugenic agenda driving this research (which has no medical benefit) has always sought evidence of racial differences in IQ and has always tried to influence social policy with these claims.

THE POLITICAL SCIENCE

Historically, research into genetics and IQ is inextricably linked to racism and eugenics. The development of the IQ test was carried out by American eugenicists in the first part of the 20th century, for the purpose of first identifying and then sterilising people of low intelligence, who were thought to be unfit to breed. From its beginning, IQ testing was used to stigmatise and exclude certain ethnic groups in the USA, particularly African Americans, but also immigrants from eastern and southern Europe.

Eugenicists have always tended to emphasise the role of genes in determining human characteristics – genetic determinism. This has underpinned their arguments that society must be protected by preventing the birth of people with "bad genes", who will always behave badly and be a burden on society. This emphasis upon genes has tended to align eugenics with the general right-wing political belief that some people are inherently doomed to a subordinate position in

society, and right-wing American organisations have always claimed that science shows that black people are genetically inferior in intelligence.

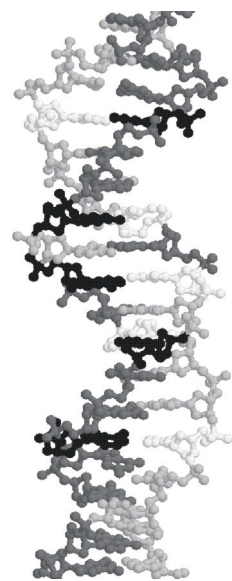
In 1969, Harvard psychologist Arthur Jensen published a notorious article in *Harvard Education Review* entitled "How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement?". This argued that African Americans' lower IQ scores were due not to racism and poverty but to genetic causes, and it was therefore a waste of public funds to try to improve their academic achievement through educational programmes targeted at those communities. Jensen, like many other IQ researchers, was a member of the American Eugenics Society (AES) as well as its British counterpart, and received funding from the far-right Pioneer Fund, which also funded a variety of American extremist organisations. Other IQ researchers, such as British psychologist Raymond Cattell, were closely associated with the ultra-right eugenicist journal *Mankind Quarterly*.

No one disputes the historical associations of IQ testing and behavioural genetics with eugenics, racism and right-wing politics. The question is whether the field has now repudiated these associations, and whether Robert Plomin, as its acknowledged leading representative, and his colleagues, have done so. Sadly, they have not.

In the 1990s these claims about the genetic inferiority of African Americans resurfaced in the best-selling book, *The Bell Curve*, which again created a national furore in the US. Robert Plomin was a key signatory to a statement drafted by Pioneer Fund grant recipient Linda Gottfredson defending the science behind *The Bell Curve*. Although this statement did not openly endorse claims about African Americans' supposed genetic inferiority, and many IQ researchers vehemently deny that they are racist, the statement was also signed by a number of self-proclaimed scientific racists, such as Philippe Rushton and Richard Lynn. (Lynn, based at the Ulster Institute of Social Research was a major source for *The Bell Curve*. He has claimed that black Africans have an IQ of only 70 and has argued for the break up of the USA, with predominantly white states in the north-west and north-east seceding from the union because the black populations in the rest of the USA are holding them back.)

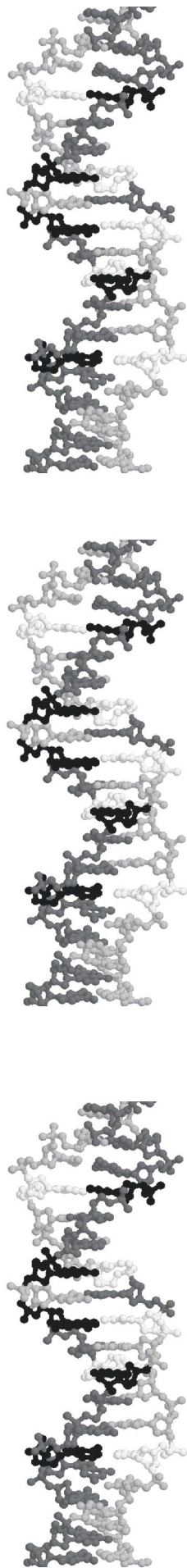
Plomin has published two papers in the AES journal *Social Biology*, and has spoken at meetings of the British Eugenics Society (renamed the Galton Institute in 1989). In the 1960s, these societies attempted to reconstitute themselves as ostensibly purely academic institutions, devoted to the study of, rather than advocacy for, eugenics. It was clear, though, that the Eugenics Societies' fundamental nature had not changed when the 1999 annual conference of the Galton Institute was addressed by Jensen and Gayle Whitney, a former President of the Behavior Genetics Association, who was removed

DAVID KING
reports on
sinister
developments
in genetics and
argues for an
end to funding
for science
whose agenda
is irrevocably
tainted



For further information and to get involved in campaigns on this issue, email david.king@hgalert.org

SCIENCE



from the post following racist remarks about African Americans and his writing of a supportive foreword to a book by David Duke, former leader of the Ku Klux Klan. The conference was disrupted by the anti-racist group People Against Eugenics.

Robert Plomin is based at the Maudsley psychiatric hospital in south London, which has contributed many members to the British Eugenics Society, including its secretary for 20 years, Dr C P Blacker. Amongst these were Hans Eysenck, another Pioneer Fund grant recipient, whose views on genetics, race and IQ strongly influenced those of his student, Arthur Jensen, and Elliott Slater, who studied with Ernst Rudin, the architect of the Nazi eugenics programme.

The samples that Robert Plomin supplied for sequencing in China largely come from students from a summer school for gifted mathematicians at Vanderbilt University and students in China's elite mathematics and science academies. The collaboration of Plomin with China is very worrying. In 1995 the Chinese government introduced a Eugenics Law, similar to US and German eugenic legislation of the 1920s and '30s, which now applies to 1.2 billion people. After some Western protest, the name of the law was changed to Maternal and Infant Healthcare Law. This requires couples planning to marry to undergo health checks for hereditary diseases and to be sterilised if these are present and they still wish to marry. If a genetic disease is detected during pregnancy, abortion is effectively mandatory.

Whilst implementation of premarital sterilisation appears to have been abandoned in 2003, the coercive abortion articles are still in force. It should be noted that Chinese eugenics does not appear to have the overtly racist character of 20th century Western eugenics, and the justification given for the measures was that China is still a developing country with poor rural healthcare systems to deal with the needs of disabled children. The collaboration between BGI and Robert Plomin is an example of China's drive to overtake the West in fields like biotechnology, and it seems that China wishes to exploit its abundant human resources to create a high IQ/high tech elite, which will enable it to succeed in its competition with the West. Dominic Cummings clearly favours this strategy for Britain; of course, this is precisely what all the European countries were trying to achieve in the heyday of eugenics – to overcome their imperialist competitors by improving the “national stock”.

Ironically, such elitist strategies, which typically are attractive to right-wing governments such as the current British government, are likely to fail even in their own terms. More egalitarian countries are not only happier (as the book *The Spirit Level* demonstrated), they also have higher average IQs.

FACTS ABOUT GENETICS AND IQ

The relationship between genes and intelligence is very complex and we cannot do it full justice here. A fundamental question is whether IQ tests really measure intelligence. There is little agreement about whether “intelligence” is a single mental capacity or is composed of multiple types of mental capacity. IQ testers insist that there is a mental property, denoted *g* (for general intelligence or general cognitive ability), and this is what is measured by IQ tests.

However, they find it difficult to agree even amongst themselves on exactly what IQ tests measure, and some have resorted to the position that they measure “the ability to score highly on IQ tests”. Whatever they measure, it is clearly true that IQ scores correlate strongly with academic success and also with career success as measured by a person's salary.

The question of whether IQ differences are primarily due to genetic or environmental causes has been studied extensively, mainly using twins or adopted children. These studies have tended to show that 50% - 80% of the variation in IQ scores in a population is due to genetic differences. There are huge methodological issues with these studies, which we cannot discuss here. Many critics have argued that the claims for such high “heritability” of IQ are unreliable, and that the studies systematically underestimate environmental factors. Whatever the truth, it is inherently implausible that the genetic contribution to IQ variation is nil, and that we are truly all the same blank slates at birth. Human bodies vary genetically in many characteristics, and IQ is a measure of some function of our brains, which grow through the expression of our genes. The current consensus in biology and medicine is that human characteristics are the result of the interaction of genes with environmental influences.

There is a strong scientific critique of genetic determinism, which emphasises the complexity of genes and biology and the openness of organisms to environmental influences (in the case of humans this includes poverty and discrimination). Liberals, with their predisposition to argue for social equality and to believe in people's ability to improve their lives if social forces like racism did not get in the way, have subscribed very strongly to this critique. We belong to this camp, but should not allow this belief to degenerate into a self-righteous and simplistic denial of any possible role of genes in influencing IQ, or a resulting complacency about “IQ genes” research, on the basis that it is “impossible that such genes could ever be found”. Just because the views of right-wing eugenicists are immoral and unacceptable does not mean that “IQ genes” can never be found. From existing evidence it seems possible that hundreds of genes, each with a small influence on IQ might exist.

The question of what causes group differences in IQ scores is the politically most explosive. What cannot be denied is that significant differences between the IQ scores of ethnic groups do exist: in the USA there is a persistent gap between the IQ scores of white people of European origin and African-Americans. Those who believe that IQ is largely genetic, such as Arthur Jensen and the authors of *The Bell Curve*, Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, tend to argue that this group difference is also largely due to genes. Critics respond that the data can be interpreted very differently, and that the methodology of group comparisons cannot adequately take into account the effects of poverty and the history of oppression of African-Americans. It is also often argued that IQ tests are culturally biased and do not adequately measure non-white people's real intelligence. Liberals have repeatedly suggested that IQ researchers' belief in the genetic inferiority of African-Americans is simply an example of racism, a charge that most IQ researchers hotly deny.

WHAT IF GENES INFLUENCING IQ ARE FOUND?

It's important to realise that there is no medical benefit from this research, since the focus is on gene variants that lead to very high IQ. However, once such genes are identified it will be a relatively simple matter to compare the frequency of "high IQ variants" in different populations and there are undoubtedly geneticists who would be willing and interested to do this. Amongst the hundreds of variants, each with a small effect, there are bound to be some that occur at different frequency in different populations. The results of such research, however equivocal and unclear, would be cherry-picked by racists to support their claims about the inferiority of black people. That alone is sufficient reason to avoid publishing research of this kind.

Another harmful consequence is likely to be the use of "IQ gene" markers to stream children in education from birth, both through private efforts and, in some countries (possibly including China), through state-controlled programmes. The finding of "IQ genes" would be likely to push education policy in the direction of greater selection and reduce public funding for programmes to address underachievement in underprivileged groups, as Arthur Jensen, the doyen of IQ research, advocated. Robert Plomin suggests that genetic tests of young children could identify those in need of extra educational support but, given the history of this field, it is far more likely that such tests would be used to allocate more resources to those judged more able to exploit them.

Given rapid progress in genetic testing and gene sequencing technology, the idea of preimplantation or prenatal genetic IQ tests is not just science-fiction. The BGI project creator, Steven Hsu openly argues for it to be used to improve the IQ of the Chinese population and provides a Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) scheme (which he wrongly labels "genetic engineering") to show how it might be done. The capability for cheap testing of many gene variants simultaneously is already here: the question is, whether the genes that are found will have enough of an effect on predicted IQ to create significant differences between different embryos. There has been a long debate on this question, but we do not know the answer. What is required is not for genetic tests to provide precise predictions of a child's IQ, which is impossible, but for tests to be able to predict sufficient variation between embryos to be interesting to parents who are highly concerned about their child's future IQ. A society in which some people were given a genetic competitive advantage at birth would be a eugenicists' dream, but a nightmare from the point of view of those who believe in equality.

SHOULD WE STOP SCIENCE?

Efforts to prevent certain research from going forward commonly meet the response that this is "anti-science", and that knowledge is intrinsically good. These views are not based on an understanding of how science works in the real world, where big science projects cost a lot of money and do not take place unless they are funded. There is never enough money to fund all

the research that scientists want to do, so governments, corporate and military funders decide the direction science will take. Science gets stopped every day. So the real question is which science do we want? And who gets to control it? It's certainly not true that all knowledge is a good thing. The knowledge that we develop reflects the agendas of those who control science and, in this case, just as with research into viruses for use in biological warfare, those agendas can be very destructive.

So this attempt to prevent research into genes and IQ is not anti-science but a perfectly legitimate and normal part of democracy. The point is to exercise our democratic rights to choose which science we want, for example by putting the money devoted to this project into research that will genuinely benefit people.

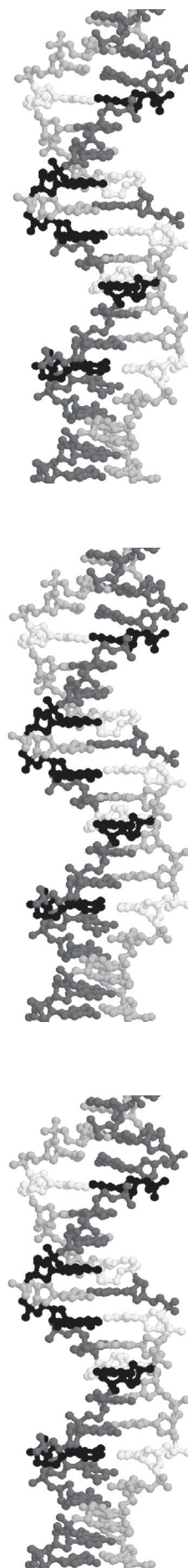
It is also often suggested that it is "impossible to stop science" and that scientific progress is "inevitable". But in 1996 a small campaign group in the UK, called The Campaign for Real Intelligence (CRIT) mounted a successful effort to prevent the UK Medical Research Council from funding Robert Plomin's "IQ gene" research. On that occasion, Plomin refused public discussion of his research saying, "I'm not worried about the ethics of what I'm doing and don't want to discuss it in a public forum. I want to get on with the science of it." This is a classic attempt by a scientist to portray his or her work as "just pure research", unconnected with the histories and social and political agendas that generate the questions underlying it. In this particular case, it is impossible to deny the connection since the work is the culmination of a century of efforts to produce scientific evidence to influence public policy in a eugenic direction. It may be possible to do research in this field without promoting that cause but, to do so, a scientist would have to rigorously dissociate him- or herself from eugenic and racist institutions and colleagues. Robert Plomin has done no such thing.

THE PAST HAS NOT GONE AWAY

The history of association between IQ testing, eugenics and racism in the USA makes it impossible to sustain the position that research into genes and IQ is "objective, pure science". The past has not gone away, and this entire research agenda is irrevocably tainted. We can rightly ask those who pursue it, "Why are you interested in proving this anyway?"

This does not mean we can ignore the possibility that some genes influencing IQ score might be identifiable, but what such findings would mean for our understanding of the brain and mind would be highly debatable. When genetic variants are found, it is always possible to find differences in the frequency of some of them between different populations. Whilst academics debated this issue, racists would trumpet the findings as proof of their theories, creating immense damage and division in society. This alone is sufficient reason for stopping such research, but the real point is that the entire research agenda should be abandoned, because it is both badly motivated and focused on the kind of "intelligence" that makes you good at mathematics, logical puzzles and genome sequencing, but "not interested in discussing" the social harm you are doing. This kind of intelligence cannot be allowed to run the world.

SCIENCE



VOICE OF THE CITY

MIKE GERBER
talks to hip-hop
artist and
spoken-word
poet, The Ruby
Kid, whose
performances
reflect his
political path
and his Jewish
migrant history

The Ruby Kid lives in a courtyard of ageing tenements in Bethnal Green, where the edgy old East End lingers on. The 26-year-old left-wing rapper is from Nottingham but Ruby (real name Daniel) feels an affinity with east London, where his father's family were garment workers, as were his mother's family on New York's Lower East Side. His stage name, The Ruby Kid, reflects both his Jewish roots (the family's original name was Rubinstein) and his socialist politics as a member of the Trotskyist group, Workers' Liberty.

Ruby's sharp, intelligent raps elevate hip hop on a par with Grandmaster Flash's *The Message*, released in 1982, with its startling lyrics evoking a black New Yorker reacting against ghetto deprivation – "Don't push me cos I'm close to the edge/I'm trying not to lose my head" – underpinned by just the insistent electro-funk beat. This transformed hip hop from joyously escapist black-American ghetto music into a protest genre. By the late 1980s, with such groups as Niggaz Wit Attitude (NWA) and Public Enemy, the protest element had transmogrified into Gangsta rap, whipping up justified rage against oppression of blacks but undermining their message with gang warfare posturing, misogyny, homophobia and racist depictions of other minorities, including Jews.

The antisemitism, says Ruby, was to do with prominent hip hop performers who were on the periphery of the Nation of Islam, like Public Enemy. "Chuck D, the main rapper in that group was a quite prominent Nation of Islam supporter and they had an implantation in black communities in New York, where hip hop was coming from. I'm not sure it's accurate to say that the genre as a whole was pervaded with antisemitism, but certainly there were reactionary attitudes – not just about Jews but about gender and sexuality."

Ruby puts the early evolution of hip hop into perspective: "A lot of people assume hip hop was always this intensely political cry of the oppressed, but its origins were as a party music, taking stuff from disco and funk, about DJs spinning disco, soul and funk records at block parties and then someone toasting over them or MC-ing over them in a way that borrowed from Jamaican dance hall culture. It was largely about black urban working class communities coming together and having a good time. There's an interesting discussion to be had about the relationship those parties had to public space and whether that was a political act – asserting your ownership over your patch, your block, your street and making that a community space. It's about people whose lives were pretty shit carving out a way to have a good time, which is very political. But *The Message* is cited as the track that transitioned it from being predominantly an art

form to being something more explicitly political.

"Grandmaster Flash, *The Message*, and some of Public Enemy stuff like *Fight the Power*, was political in a good way, but then you get like NWA coming out with *Fuck the Police* and it all goes wrong. I'm not an advocate of the politics on gender and sexuality or the general political perspective of a lot of west coast early '90s gangsta rap, but neither do I agree that it's devoid of anything working class or anti-capitalist. *Fuck the Police* was one of the seminal tracks of that moment in hip hop – you would have to be wilfully ignorant to not see the political dynamic of a song like that if you look at the LA riots, what was going on in LA at that time and is still going on today, the institutional racism in LAPD. And these were a bunch of young black guys out of one of the poorest working class neighbourhoods, whose daily experience of interaction with the state was harassment, racist bullying from cops, and that was the music they wanted to make."

But gangsta rap has prompted kids to ape the gang culture in real life.

"Yes, absolutely," says Ruby. "What starts to emerge out of that is a real emphasis on conspicuous consumption: the way out of the ghetto is you can either sell drugs and get rich that way or become a rapper and get rich that way, which is very problematic. Like any art form, it's contradictory. An attempt to aspire to political purity in any art form is at best futile and at worst culturally conservative because you're subordinating the potential of art to express something on its own terms to a predetermined political dogma, rather than looking at art in its social context and trying to tease out the political dynamics in every work of art."

So is The Ruby Kid in favour of absolute freedom of expression in art, including for Nazis?

"That's the important question: the Nazi punk scene in the 1980s, Screwdriver and so on, complicates the question of freedom of expression. I always refer to the manifesto that André Breton wrote with Leon Trotsky, *Towards a Free Revolutionary Art*. They were writing in the context of high Stalinism. The Stalinist attitude to art, which in a watered-down form is still quite prevalent on the left today, says that art only has value if it expresses a particular political message, like Russian socialist realist art – peasant women with 10 babies in one hand and a scythe in the other, and glory to the great socialist fatherland. Trotsky and Breton say this nonsense; there has to be freedom; there can be no state restrictions on what art can and can't say, and there are lots of ways in which art can be political. I agree with that 100%.

"Of course there are grey areas. Are we able to say *Triumph of the Will* by Leni Riefenstahl is a

IM NOT AN ADVOCATE OF THE POLITICS ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY
OR THE GENERAL POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF A LOT OF
WEST COAST EARLY '90S GANGSTA RAP, BUT NEITHER DO I AGREE THAT IT'S
DEVOID OF ANYTHING WORKING CLASS OR ANTI-CAPITALIST.

Writer and broadcaster
Mike Gerber's monthly
radio show, *Kosher Jam* can
be heard online at
www.europejazzradio.eu/uk

good film because it's revolutionary in its use of cinematic technique, even though it's a Nazi propaganda film? I don't know if I would feel comfortable saying this is exactly where we draw the line. *Birth of a Nation* by DW Griffith, again revolutionary in terms of technique, inspired Eisenstein and all those revolutionary early Soviet film makers, but it really paints up the Klu Klux Klan, saying what a wonderful bunch of guys they were. Is it legitimate to say there's artistic value in that, even though its political content is deeply reactionary? I don't know. There are huge problems with saying we're going to listen to Screwdriver as if they're just another punk band. Of course they're not. I would also have been on the side of the Anti-Fascist Action boys going down to try and smash up their gigs. Does that complicate my position on the freedom of art? Maybe."

In his teens, The Ruby Kid was involved in activism in Nottingham: "some anti-war stuff, Israel-Palestine stuff that I mainly got involved in through my *shul* (synagogue), because I was quite religious at that time. So there was all sorts of weird stuff going on in my head. At that time I undertook a conscious process of – this is a crude term – shopping around. I was starting to identify myself as a socialist, a Marxist, so I read everyone's paper, went to everyone's meetings. A large part of the reason why I joined Workers' Liberty was to do with the culture in that organisation. In the Socialist Party (SP), and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) particularly, I found their culture undemocratic, closed off, very much about a pre-existing leadership ordaining a line, and there wasn't a culture of criticism or independent thought or dissent. It was like, 'We've got all the answers.'"

He had misgivings too about the other groups' handling of Israel/Palestine issues: "What I got from the SP on the question of Israel/Palestine was just very crude – capitalism has no answers, what they need is socialism. And that doesn't actually get anyone anywhere. From the SWP I encountered an attitude that I thought was, at best, crude and, at worst, shaded into antisemitism. It saw Israel as being uniquely evil among the world's states, talked about Zionism in a way that no other nationalism was talked about, saw the history of Israel as being entirely a history of colonial settlement, writing out the reason there was a Jewish majority population in Palestine where there were refugees from genocide. I was trying to break from Jewish nationalism, to think about it in a critical way, and I found the SWP position repellent: there's no thought or independent analysis – Zionism is basically akin to fascism, the Israeli Jews are basically akin to the South African Boers, and that's that. Workers' Liberty had a much more open attitude on the question, not an immediate instinct to write off the Israeli Jewish national entity as historically illegitimate, and an attempt to be a little bit more thoughtful about the historical analysis. It was more conducive to thinking through those ideas and my identity."

The Ruby Kid has issued five EP records of his raps with their striking urban wordplay and occasional jazzy inflections. He says: "There is a perception that musically, hip hop is repetitive, like, 4/4 snare beats with maybe the odd sample here and there. But that's not true; it's incredibly rich musically, and there are some hip hop producers

doing phonically extraordinarily experimental stuff. There's always been a relationship between hip hop and jazz because they're both black genres in their origin, and there's been lots of intersections."

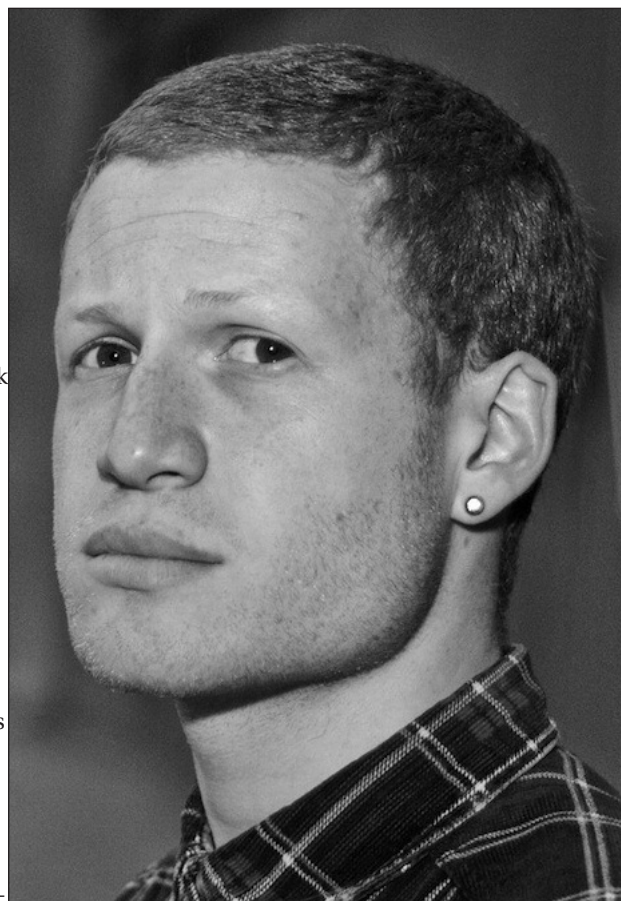
One of Ruby's raps, from his album *Winter in the City*, recalls the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire, the deadliest industrial disaster in New York City's history, which resulted in the deaths of 146 garment workers, most of them Jewish and Italian immigrants (see lyrics on page 13).

He acknowledges Dylan and other singer-songwriters, including Joni Mitchell, Woody Guthrie, Leonard Cohen, as major influences:

"The way those people influenced my work directly is in lyrical sensibility. Leonard Cohen's song, *Chelsea Hotel*, is about him and one woman in a hotel room, so the immediate images are quite small, interpersonal, human – then woven into that are very grand poetic brushstrokes about the nature of beauty. Images that deal with huge emotional or social issues in a very beautiful, painterly way, collide with a setting that is very immediate and interpersonal. That's there in Joni Mitchell and in some of Dylan, and in contemporary singer-songwriters, like Josh Ritter. I try to emulate that."

While many white kids got into hip hop via Jewish rappers, The Beastie Boys, with hits such as (You Gotta) Fight For Your Right To Party, Ruby was drawn by the spikier white rap of Eminem, who "was someone who almost had that anarchic middle finger to authority, and if you're a *pisher* little kid in a suburban comprehensive school and you want to do something like kicking out in adolescent rebellion, it's a good wagon to hitch yourself to because it's quite taboo and there were shock scandals against him. So very quickly I was like, 'Wow, he's actually doing something interesting artistically.' I was brought up in a very literary household where there was poetry and song – my parents took me to folk clubs where I saw storytelling and verse traditions. Something resonated from all that, and I wanted to explore this genre more deeply than connecting to it as facile teenage rebellion."

Ruby rapidly moved on from Eminem: "I would never deny his contribution and talent but he hasn't influenced me in an artistic sense. The hip hop I became attracted to is from a sub-milieu of the American hip hop scene, sometimes referred to as indie rap. The indie refers to the spirit rather than the sound – being experimental and independent, both lyrically and phonically, pushing boundaries with the form and the genre, being quite iconoclastic and deconstructionist towards hip hop's cultural totems, but also being respectful and acknowledging the historical-cultural space you're existing in. Some of it



The Ruby Kid.
Photo: Jon D Barker
MidTea.com

CULTURE

was quite radical politically as well, and this is all going on at the same time my politics is reconfiguring and I'm moving away from religion, from Zionism, towards socialism. I'm still at school, 13-15 years old. So I dived into American indie rap; that's where I've found the hip hop that's spoken to me."

How ethnically mixed is that scene?

"A lot of the most prominent people in the indie rap milieu are white and a criticism that's been levelled is that those people formed their artistic space because they felt, rightly or wrongly, alienated from mainstream hip hop culture which was black. I don't think that's entirely fair because indie rap is very mixed and there are lots of black artists as well as white. But certainly if you go to a gig put on by these big indie rap artists, including black ones, the crowd is probably going to be more white than you might get at an early to mid-'90s show by a mainstream black artist. There is an analysis that says this is an attempt by middle class white people to try and appropriate a culture, which I don't accept."

The New York indie rap artist, Aesop Rock, who has most influenced Ruby, is white. Ruby describes him as, "incredibly abstract lyrically, almost to the point of surrealism, and I've always been very interested in surrealism as an art movement, like Breton and the work he did with Trotsky, surrealist art, surrealist poetry, people like Benjamin Peret, a surrealist poet and also a Trotskyist. I don't for a second think that Aesop Rock sees himself in a tradition of radical political anti-Stalinist surrealism. His lyrics have a lot of free associative abstract imagery which is incredibly rich; you unpack one line and there's a million layers to it. He's certainly my favourite rapper."

He also cites Cannibal Ox, a black hip hop duo from Harlem: "What they do is very interesting in terms of the development of hip hop because some of their lyrics include quite abstract and poetic imagery, but these are also very rooted in their milieu as working class black guys from inner city New York. Like what we were talking about earlier, they take really grand poetic imagery and bring that into a very quotidian, urban, day-to-day, working class city space."

The Ruby Kid excels at conveying topographical, impressionistic facets of the cities he has been most associated with – Nottingham where he grew up, Sheffield where he was a student and began to win acclaim as a rapper, London where he lives now, and New York, his mother's birthplace, which inspired his memorable rap 'East 6th (Between 2nd & 3rd)': *Thousands of my forebears, singing strike songs in Yiddish.*

And that's where my city is – I'm sure I heard it; Under the dirt, the paving slabs, the yuppie flats, you've gotta scratch the surface.

You've gotta know the purpose that lies under us This place is the light of my history and it's still

fucking wondrous.

"The idea of that urban space, is something I'm fascinated by. Cannibal Ox also draw off sci-fi and fantasy so I'm interested in how they can talk about class in that day-to-day urban city space but not in a way that's just very dour, grim and miserable. A lot of hip hop says: 'I live on a council estate or a housing project and it's shit and there are drug addicts everywhere and the police hassle us all the time.' That's important, a very stark honest this-is-our-life, it's fucking terrible, just existing is a struggle – but another way to connect with that is to establish your setting then try and bring into it a grand register, perhaps a bit jarring and a bit of a juxtaposition and Cannibal Ox do that. One recurring image in their work is of birds, like city pigeons in New York, then transitioning that into images of phoenixes rising out of the ashes; that's a trope that I've cited in my own lyrics, a direct homage to them."

"I'm fascinated by urban space because the modern city in globalised capitalism – this is going to sound a bit lofty – but I think it's the pinnacle of human civilisation. I don't mean that it's perfect, but it's the space that creates the most potential for something beyond it that we want to see, a space that brings loads of people together from all sorts of backgrounds, which has incredibly progressive potential, a space which is hyper-connected both in terms of transport and telecommunications, so you're not shut off from anything and can access anything else in the world pretty much. And it's a space that has an immense potential for struggle, full of huge workplaces where workers are brought together and we can organise and struggle, a space that points the way to the potential for organising society beyond or after capitalism."

Ruby's upfront Jewish persona has generated threats from the English Defence League: "They found an article I'd written under my real name about one of the big EDL demos. Then they found out I was Jewish and, 'We've got to go to his next gig and sort him out'. In the end they didn't show up."

Some hard leftists did attempt to sabotage another gig: "I've had some interesting and slightly uncomfortable conversations with people from the hip hop scene who are very involved in Palestinian solidarity who come at it from that political angle that we've talked about. At a festival show in Sheffield three or four young guys from the local SWP branch tried to disrupt my set. They failed and it was very embarrassing for them. They'd brought an enormous kettle drum and a huge Palestinian flag and I think they were planning on rushing the stage but they sort of bottled it and ended up just standing at the front of the stage with the flag, and I don't think anyone understood what they were doing. I don't have any problem with people criticising me politically, as long as it's not done in a censorious way, when people try to shut down performances by people they disagree with politically. As I said, there's a grey area. I'm in favour of shutting down performances of a Nazi band like Screwdriver because I think fascism is not just another form of politics which is particularly reprehensible, it's a special political category. So obviously there's a line. But in general, no. My music has provoked conversations with people but that's good. I want that to happen, even if those conversations are uncomfortable."



Firefighters trying in vain to put out the fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York, evoked powerfully in The Ruby Kid's poem March 25th, 1911

Mike Gerber © 2013.
All rights reserved

March 25th, 1911

by The Ruby Kid



They were searching for streets paved with gold
to save them
But the streets weren't paved at all – and they
were expected to pave them.
They paid their debt to America in blood
And were only held together by solidarity and love.
The trip across the sea was bad enough, adding up
To weeks of bad conditions after which they'd
had enough.
After that ordeal came Ellis Island,
Daunted by the future, but haunted by the world
they'd left behind them.
Some still clung to the prayers that their fathers said
Others put their faith in a struggle based on class
instead
But all are simply finding their way through like a
lost child
The new world to them seems alien and kinda
hostile.
As far as work went, they took what could be got
A sweatshop lot, slave labour for a boss.
The dream that they'd envisioned seemed distant
They'd come to flee oppression but this wasn't
much different.

CHORUS

Coz I wish that I could see you now
Struggle together and we'd find a way through
somehow
To all my sisters – I know you're still hurting now
Respect the past, make the future ours.

The East Side was a proper ghetto in the first
place
Full of young flowers uprooted from their
birthplace
And in a ten-storey workplace making shirtwaist
The logic of it all played out in the worst case
Where Washington Place meets and intersects
Greene Street
The slaves were bonded, on a dollar-fifty each week
There'd been strikes before, but thoughts of

workers' power
Are kinda hard to come by after working fourteen
hours.
Conditions in the place were kinda typical
It was that same old, all-day, low-pay, no-breaks
ritual.
The principal exits remained locked from without
Keeping all the workers in and the propaganda out.
And what's more, fabric lay scattered on the shop
floor
The boss roars if he sees peeps gazing at the
locked door.
So one spring day, through the inner city
clamouring
All went to work but only some came back again.

Coz I wish that I could see you now...

Fire escape's fucked, it can't take the strain
Sound of flames contend with cries of pain
Stairwell's inaccessible, the elevator's blocked
And all the while the main door out remains locked.
Time seems to stop, then it gets real fast
Desperate workers fling themselves down the
elevator shaft.
But nothing awaits them, their ship's just sunk
It's meet death in the fire or meet death with a
jump.
NYFD turns up, but they're just not strong
enough
Flames are too much and the ladders are not long
enough
And it's only the workers hit the hardest
The bosses scarpered to the roof the second the
fire started.
Who knows if the old country flashed before the
eyes
Of over a hundred workers in the moment that
they died?
Punished by the greedy for trying to earn a crust
It's like ashes back to ashes and the same for the
dust...

75 YEARS AFTER KRISTALLNACHT

MINORITIES IN DANGER

On the 75th anniversary of Kristallnacht Jewish Socialist magazine launched an initiative to remind the wider public of the events of 1938 and send a message of solidarity from Jewish individuals in Britain today to all victims of racist activity and attitudes. It was published in full as a letter in the

Independent and *The Guardian* newspapers in both their print and online editions. It also featured on several websites including *Open Democracy*. We publish the full statement and list of signatories here together with some of the additional comments made by those who signed.

On 9th/10th November 1938, Nazi stormtroopers led a wave of violent attacks on Jewish people and property throughout Germany and Austria, which the Nazis had annexed. During these pogroms, 91 Jews were killed, thousands were taken from their homes and incarcerated in concentration camps, 267 synagogues were destroyed, and some 7,500 Jewish-owned shops were smashed and looted. The Kristallnacht pogroms presaged attempts to remove Jews from German life completely.

Many Jews left hurriedly to seek refuge in friendly countries, including Britain, but Britain was already in the grip of an "aliens scare". Newspaper headlines declared: "Alien Jews Pouring In", and claimed that "Refugees Get Jobs, Britons Get Dole". The media accused Jewish asylum seekers of "over-running the country". Despite wide public revulsion at the violence of Kristallnacht, powerful elements in British politics and business continued to admire Hitler and the Nazi regime.

Seventy-five years after Kristallnacht, racists and fascists

inspired by the Nazis continue to attack minorities in Europe. In Hungary neo-fascists target Gypsies and Jews. In Greece Golden Dawn members and supporters brutally attack migrants and political opponents. Here in Britain, minority communities, especially Muslims, have been targeted in an atmosphere that is increasingly hostile towards migrants and refugees.

As Jewish people mindful of this history, we are equally alarmed at continuing fascist violence and the toxic sentiments expressed by many politicians and much of the media against migrants, asylum seekers, Gypsies and Travellers.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in their efforts to live here in freedom and safety, to contribute to society, and be treated as equals. As Jews we stand together with all communities seeking to combat racism and fascism here and elsewhere.

Statement drawn up by Jewish Socialist magazine
BM3725 London WC1N 3XX

David Rosenberg, *Jewish Socialist magazine*
Prof Frank Land, 1939 refugee, *Kristallnacht* witness
Ralph Land CBE, 1939 refugee, *Kristallnacht* witness
Sheila Melzak, *Clinical Director, Baobab Centre*
for Young Survivors in Exile
Dr Jennifer Langer, *Director, Exiled Writers Ink*
John Speyer, *Director, Music In Detention*
Margaret Hodge MP
David Winnick MP
Lord (Alf) Dubs
Edie Friedman, *Executive Director, Jewish Council*

for Racial Equality
Gerry Gable, *Editor Searchlight Magazine*
Prof Nira Yuval-Davis, *Director, Centre for*
Research on Migration, Refugees and
Belonging, UEL
Prof Jacqueline Rose
Prof Francesca Klug OBE, *Director of the Human*
Rights Futures Project
Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah
Rabbi Barbara Borts
Rabbi Howard Cooper

Judge Laurence Brass, *Treasurer, Board of Deputies*
of British Jews
Miriam Margolyes OBE
Moris Farhi MBE
Anne Karpf, *journalist*
Bernard Kops, *playwright and poet*
Michael Rosen, *broadcaster and poet*
Michele Hanson, *writer*
Dr Ros Merkin, *Writer & Director of Suitcase 1938*
Benjamin Abeles, *rescued by the Kindertransport*
in 1939

John Abraham
Ruth Abraham
Karen Adler
Rochelle Allebes
Ruth Appleton, *Santé*
Project
Martha Jean Baker
Julia Bard
Zelda Bard
Jacob Bard-Rosenberg
Reuben Bard-
Rosenberg
Mark Barnes
Ruth Barnett
George Barratt, *Cllr*
Barking &
Dagenham
Larry Beckreck
N G Benjamin
Keith Benton
Sarah Benton
Mike Berlin
Shelley Berlowitz
Jo Bird
Rica Bird
Prof Haim Bresheeth
Lorna Brunstein

Barry Buitekant
Lionel Burman
Mandy Carr
Leon Charikar
Prof Andrew Coleman
Paul Collins
Ilana Cravitz
Judith Cravitz
Ivor Dembina
Prof Elizabeth Dore
Jack Dove
Norma Dove
Ora Dresner
Kjersti Dybvig
Prof Barbara Einhorn
Maggie Eisner
Antony Ellman
Michael Ellman
Judith Emanuel
Naomi Feldman
Rayah Feldman
Prof Robert Fine
Neil Finer
Sylvia Finzi
Frank Fisher
Nick Foster
Ann Frankel

Raymond Freeman
Melissa Friedberg
Carolyn Gelenter
Mike Gerber
Dr Ben Gidley
Stuart Goodman
Cary Gorney
Dr Claudia Gould
Hertzmann
Jeremy Green
Prof Colin Green
Grahame Gross
Sue Gutteridge
Belle Harris
Lisa Hatton
Rosamine Hayeem
Mike Heiser
Ruth Hendrick
Alain Hertzmann
Prof Susan Himmelweit
Dr Deborah Hirshfield
David Hoffman
Justin Hoffman
Claire Jackson
Riva Joffe
Dr Hannah Jones
Dan Judelson

Ann Jungman
Thena Kendall
David King
Susan King
Dr Brian Klug
Tony Klug
Erica Kops
Sarah Kosminsky
Marion Kozak
Stevie Krayner
Caroline Kubilius
Richard Kuper
Vivi Lachs
Jude Lancet
David Landau
Jon Lansman
Sheila Lassman
Pam Laurence
Antony Lerman
Pauline Levis
Karl Lewkowicz
Vivien Lichtenstein
Hope Liebersohn
Marian Liebmann
Prof Yosefa Loshitzky
Sue Lukes
Ruth Lukom

Simon Lynn
Ilana Machover
Moshé Machover
Diana Maiden
Mike Marqusee
Paul Mayersberg
Karen Merkel
Jane Merkin, *Exec Pro-*
ducer, Suitcase 1938
Paul Morrison
Miriam Moss
Maurice Naftalin
Annie Nehmad
Diana Neslen
Esther Neslen
Victoria Neumark Jones
Michael Newman
Paul Oestreicher
Margaret Owen OBE
Dr Daniel Ozarow
Gail Pearce
Helen Pearson
Mike Peters
Rob Porteous
Charlie Pottins
Dr Claudia Prestel
Marsha Ragsdell

Ros Raizada
Roland Rance
Daniel Randall
Norman Randall
Ronne Randall
Jerome Ravetz
Dr Esti Rimmer
Brian Robinson
Bruce Robinson
Ben Rogaly
Prof Jonathan
Rosenhead
Leon Rosselson
Michael Sackin
Jenny Salaman Manson
Raf Salkie
Prof Andrew Samuels
Ian Saville
Prof Joy Schaverien
Karel Schling, *child of*
Holocaust survivors
Monika Schwartz
Mike Scott, *Trustee,*
Nottingham & Notts
Refugee Forum
Amanda Sebestyen
Lynne Segal

Several signatories made additional comments when they signed the statement. Here are a few of them.

Please add my name in memory for my father who was working with the Socialist Party in Wien to help those Jewish families who were thrown out of their homes. He was caught and sent to Dachau both as a Jew and a political prisoner. He managed to escape with the help of the Quakers to the UK.

Monika Schwartz

One of my vivid memories as a child in Berlin was Kristallnacht. And I see too much in current attitudes towards asylum seekers and minorities which are a reminder of those now distant days. I would very much like to add my name to the statement.

*Frank Land, Emeritus Professor,
London School of Economics*

Am deeply saddened that this is necessary but delighted to add my name... Massive congratulations on making this stand.

*Jane Merkin, Executive Producer,
Suitcase 1938*

Both our parents were shocked by the events of Kristallnacht into realising the need to flee Germany; I personally witnessed, as a 7-year-old child walking with my mother, Jewish shops being smashed up on the Taentzienstrasse in Berlin; and I, together with my parents, like Barbara's parents a couple of months later, were lucky enough to find refuge in 1939 in an equally reluctant New Zealand. We too feel strongly about the politics of exclusion, and negative attitudes towards minority groups as well as particularly towards refugees and asylum seekers.

Dr Paul Oestreicher, Prof Barbara Einhorn

The term "Kristallnacht" was coined to describe the smashing of glass of Jewish owned shops, homes and synagogues that were plundered and destroyed during a two-day pogrom. In Germany today, the term "Pogromnacht" is becoming more widely used. This violent assault on Jews was instigated by Nazi officials. The actions were led by stormtroopers and Hitler Youth activists who encouraged the wider public to join in. But the smashing of glass and burning of buildings was only part of the story. Thousands of Jews were arrested

and transported to concentration camps in its immediate aftermath. Hermann Striem, the father of one our signatories (Dr Jennifer Langer), was arrested and taken to Buchenwald. In these extracts from his written testimony, deposited with the Wiener Library, he describes the arrests and terror.

"The porter of Kernerstr. 26 confirmed to the Gestapo that I am in the flat and she gave them my door key ... I was arrested on November 11th at 5am.

I was taken to the police station in Victoriast. In front of the station stood some people ... some of the women said, "throw them into the fire". They were referring to the burning synagogue. In the cellar of the police station were already 10-15 Jewish prisoners. After several hours we were taken by lorry to a main police station. About 1,000 men and youths were already assembled there in the courtyard ... several top officials arrived and one of us dared to speak to them. He showed them his Iron Cross First Class from the war and thought he deserved better treatment. The officer tore the medal from him slapped his face twice and shouted ... "How dare a Jew behave this way."

In the evening ... we were marched under strict escort to Breslau station... We travelled all night ... At Weimar station ... we had to leave the carriages in a hurry and had to run across the platform down the stairs which had been made slippery with soap and anybody who fell was whipped. When we arrived at the bottom we had to line up 10 men at a time with our faces pressed towards a wall ... we could hardly breathe. We had to bow our heads and if we inadvertently raised them they whipped our hands. After this ... we had to run to the lorries and climb on them ... they whipped us when we did not hurry. A tarpaulin was thrown over us ... We arrived between 9-10 on Saturday morning and on the parade ground stood already



thousands who had arrived the previous day. They had shaven heads and soon it was our turn...

For us 12,000 new prisoners there were no barracks. They were being built by other prisoners ... we had to wait in the parade ground in the glare of floodlights... There was so little space that we had to lie sideways. There was no water, no washing facilities and for the first few days no toilets.

I had been arrested on Friday morning and received my first meal Sunday afternoon consisting of strong fish soup. For days we had nothing to drink... In December the elevation where our camp was, became rough and cold. No heating, no blankets, no warm clothing, and no regular food ... In the first nights the SS came into our barracks and everyone who was in their way was beaten to death... On some days we were compelled to sit. Those who stood up ... were given 10-20 beatings. Anybody who started to cry or pray was hung up along the barred windows of the administrative block in such a way that their toes just touched the ground. They were then put into a bunker and we never saw them again. Some were electrocuted when they touched the electric barbed wire in the dark. Others were driven towards the wire by guard dogs ... In the first fortnight about 1,500 died...

After two weeks we were forced to write cards saying we were well but require blankets, underwear, shoes, coats etc. Many of the parcels were stolen... I lost two parcels and only had rags for my feet...

In the two months I was in the camp my weight went down from 142lbs to 109lbs.

*Prof Victor Jeleniewski
Seidler
Sam Semoff
Barry Semp
Linda Shampian
Myrna Shaw
Polina Shepherd
Nicole Sherrick
Dr Jackie Shimshon
Prof Avi Shlaim*

*Alan Silver
Evelyn Silver
Liz Silver, Notts Disabled
People's Movement
Clifford Singer
Juliet Singer
Laurence Singer
Ray Sirotkin
Barry Smerin
Sue Smith*

*Ben Soffa
Catharine Claire Stewart
Jennie Stoller
Monica Stoppelman
Judith Suissa
Vivien Sunlight
Carrie Supple
Inbar Tamari
Ruth Tenne
Gil Toffell*

*Niki Tragen
Eva Turner, child of
Holocaust survivors
Lesley Urbach
Dan Usiskin
Dr Nadia Valman
Ida Waksberg
Rafael Waksberg
Adrienne Wallman
Prof John Weeks*

*Miri Weingarten
Jenny Weinstein
Pnina Werbner
Barbara White
Charlotte (Prager)
Williams
Shireen Wooldridge
Myra Woolfson
Dr Karen Worth
Binnie Yeates*

SOLIDARITY

MARGARET GREENFIELDS visits the Ujpest Roma Centre in the 4th District of Budapest, and describes a quiet but powerful example of intercommunity Jewish-Roma solidarity in action.

At the small, run-down but bustling Ujpest Roma Centre, two remarkable men, one Roma and one Jewish, work side by side to bring opportunities to the Roma youth and their families experiencing unemployment, housing and benefit problems, and threats of racism. Laszlo Rozner (a concentration camp survivor, who is now in his 80s) is a retired lawyer and head of the Ujpest Jewish Community. His friend János Pál Csóka, is President of the Roma Self-Governing Body of Ujpest. Their friendship, built upon a lifetime of living in an area which before the Second World War was noted for the close coexistence and intertwined lives of Jewish and Roma communities, has led to the development of a community space dedicated to ensuring that the coming generation of young Roma have more to look forward to than unemployment, early criminalisation, and a lifetime of lost opportunities.

János Pál Csóka told me (through translator Katya Dunajeva) that he didn't want to see the youth of the community "hanging around on the street", getting into trouble and losing hope for their future because they had inadequate skills to enable them to seize opportunities to build a better life. In seeking to bring education and training to the large number of Roma living in Ujpest, János has a determined ally in his close friend Laszlo, who provides legal advice and undertakes casework from his tiny office in the centre, a room which is bursting at the seams with files, papers and books.

Laszlo Rozner (known to everyone as Laci Bacsí, or Uncle Laci, the short, affectionate form of Laszlo) is equally passionate about ensuring that young Roma people have access to the life chances that other communities within the EU take for granted. He said that, as a direct result of his own experience as a Holocaust survivor, he had seen how after the horrors of the war, the Jewish community had been well represented and attempts made to provide support and reparation to survivors. In his own case, he had been able to make a good life, obtaining an education and training through Hungarian state support for bright students, and spending his working life as a trade union lawyer. Despite his success, he was haunted by the fact that Roma were equal victims of Nazi terror and had suffered and died alongside Jews in the death camps, but their life chances seemed no better than they had been before

the war. In fact, in post-Communist Hungary, Roma are significantly less likely than during the Communist era to have access to a decent education or to be employed.

Laci Bacsí's concern for the future of the Roma dates back, though, to long before the recent economic crisis. He had always been deeply worried that, whilst Jewish organisations were able to help support and resettle Jewish survivors, and worked to ensure that financial reparations were paid to Jewish victims, for decades, nobody had been concerned with helping Roma survivors of Nazi persecution. Moreover, for Roma experiencing racism or who feel that Hungary no longer has anything to offer them, migration to countries such as Canada or Western Europe may be the only option. All too often, as I saw amongst the clients of the Roma centre and Laci Bacsí's pro bono legal advice service, life after migration may prove far harder than expected, and people being deported back to Hungary may leave them in a worse situation than before they left – destitute, in debt to moneylenders for the price of their fares, and with no access to accommodation that was given up in search of a new life abroad.

Laci Bacsí's attempts to ease the plight of elderly Roma survivors and their children who were caring for them started in the 1980s. Aware of the meticulous record keeping of the Nazi administration, he began his painstaking search for evidence to assist victims of the *Porajmos* (the genocide of the Roma) in obtaining recognition for their suffering. He said that his training as a lawyer and knowledge of archives meant that he was convinced that he could follow the maze of documentation to ensure that victims had a name, and that the destitute or forgotten survivors would receive some financial restitution. Since that time,

The author wishes to thank Katya Dunajeva, PhD student, and friend of the Ujpest Roma Centre, who introduced her to the people featured in this article and translated from Hungarian to English



IN BUDAPEST

ANTIRACISM

Laci Bacsí has dedicated a large part of his life to seeking out the records of Roma victims of persecution and demanding compensation for them. In his search to uncover the records, he has travelled to Vienna, Berlin and Tel Aviv to explore archives that could be used to support claims.

While he worked so passionately to support Roma survivors and the Roma community, alongside the younger János Pál Csóka (who also spoke about the brutalities he had witnessed as a child under Soviet rule of Hungary), their friendship grew stronger.

Over time, as the older generation of survivors gradually passed away and as a result of his deep embeddedness within the Újpest Roma community, Laci Bacsí's workload changed. Now he holds a daily legal surgery at the centre, providing support to families on a wide range of issues, including housing and immigration problems. During my visit I met a number of young Roma who had recently been deported from Canada with their families. I talked to these young people about the shock of finding themselves in Budapest after they had spent several years growing up in Canada, speaking English and living in a completely different cultural environment.

Alongside the much-needed legal advice facility, the Újpest Roma Centre provides a wide range of services that are close to János Pál Csóka's heart. Both as an individual, and as the elected head of the self-governing Roma community of Újpest, he is passionate about the need to "give young people a future". The small, overcrowded, single storey Roma centre in the middle of a housing estate with a large Roma population, is evidence of the passion which the two old friends bring to this mission. On the day I visited, the centre was bustling with after-school activities run on a shoestring by a small number of Roma volunteers (teachers, community workers, and local parents). The centre survives from financial crisis to financial crisis through the dedication of János Pál Csóka and Laci Bacsí, who keep it going, supplemented by staff and volunteers running classes that use donated equipment, and finding innovative ways to stretch occasional financial donations from NGOs or individuals who recognise the value of their work.

Despite the centre's financial struggles and the need for more up-to-date equipment, the local young people make good use of the facilities. These include a gym/boxing room with punchbags hanging from the ceiling, and a skilled Roma woman PE trainer, Melinda, who gives boxing lessons to the overwhelmingly male attendees at the classes. Another room in the centre is set out with desks and rows of elderly computers, where young people and their families can access IT training and where Roma staff offer after-school English lessons and a homework club.

Artwork and photographs hang on the walls of the centre and Laci Bacsí and János Pál Csóka speak

with pride of the exhibition of the history of shared Jewish-Roma coexistence and the painstakingly traced histories – some tragic, others triumphs of survival – which the friends and communities created to show how Jews and Roma lived and died together in Újpest under Nazi rule. At present there is no room to show the exhibition, so it is stored in the local town hall, but they are keen to find space where it can be permanently displayed. They were eager to discuss the possibility of bringing it on tour in the UK and other parts of Europe to show how closely connected the lives of the two Újpest communities were before their destruction in the Holocaust.

The Újpest Community Centre is a beacon of hope for the future amidst a rising tide of hostility towards Roma in Hungary, and parents are enthusiastic about knowing that their children are safe and staying out of trouble in a culturally acceptable environment which helps them to learn valuable skills for the future. However, the interethnic and interfaith solidarity that exists in this setting is still relatively rare. Where Roma and non-Roma (anecdotally often Jewish activists) do work together in local community settings, such activities are largely driven by dedicated individuals who see the similarities in their histories, or who are horrified by the increasing anti-Roma racism which is so common in Budapest as the Jobbik party routinely uses antisemitic and anti-Roma rhetoric to whip up support for their party, and to seek scapegoats for the country's economic ills. Concern over the rise of the right, and the shared risk of being targeted by racist parties, means that now, more than ever, the need for Jewish and Roma solidarity is plain, not only in Hungary but also across Europe.

The local Jewish community in Újpest is small, never having recovered from the devastation wrought by the Holocaust, and the local rabbi is supportive of the work at the Roma Community Centre. But as he and his wife said, they struggle to maintain their own tiny population, needing resources to support the elderly people who returned to Újpest after the war. The community has shrunk and is ageing, and it is only on the High



Above: Young people learn boxing in the gym. Opposite: Participants at the Újpest Roma Centre in Budapest.

ANTIRACISM

AWARE OF THE METICULOUS RECORD KEEPING OF THE NAZI ADMINISTRATION, HE BEGAN HIS PAINSTAKING SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE TO ASSIST VICTIMS OF THE PORAJMOS (THE GENOCIDE OF THE ROMA) IN OBTAINING RECOGNITION FOR THEIR SUFFERING.

Holy Days that they receive more than a few people at their large, beautifully restored synagogue, a few moments' walk from the Roma Centre. As such, there is a limit to the support that the Ujpest Jewish community can offer to the equally struggling Roma population amongst whom they live.

Where the two communities have continued to work together, however, is in sending a message of shared experience as victims of terror, attending rallies jointly against fascism, and celebrating through their work their shared past and present as neighbours and friends. In a remarkable coincidence, and marking public recognition of the value of their shared work in achieving social justice for Roma people, both Laci Bacsi (in 2010) and János Pál Csóka (in 2013) have been awarded

the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation medal for their work in selflessly improving the life and wellbeing of their local communities, with Laci Bacsi being nominated by the Ujpest Roma Community in recognition of his decades-long dedication to their cause.

Although the exhibition that details the lives and deaths of the close-knit communities lies packed away in the basement of the town-hall until it can be shown again, the local residents, Roma and Jews, haven't forgotten their history, their friendships and their sorrows. Now they are working together to bring about a better future for the young people of Ujpest, the children who both János Pál Csóka and Laci Bacsi agree, represent "hope for a better way of life, where we are all equal".

BRINGING HOME the lessons of Auschwitz

School students **RUTH MOSTYN-DIGNAN** and **GABRIEL NEOPHYTOU** were chosen to participate in a powerful project to teach the history of the Nazi genocide and its importance in fighting racism and fascism today.

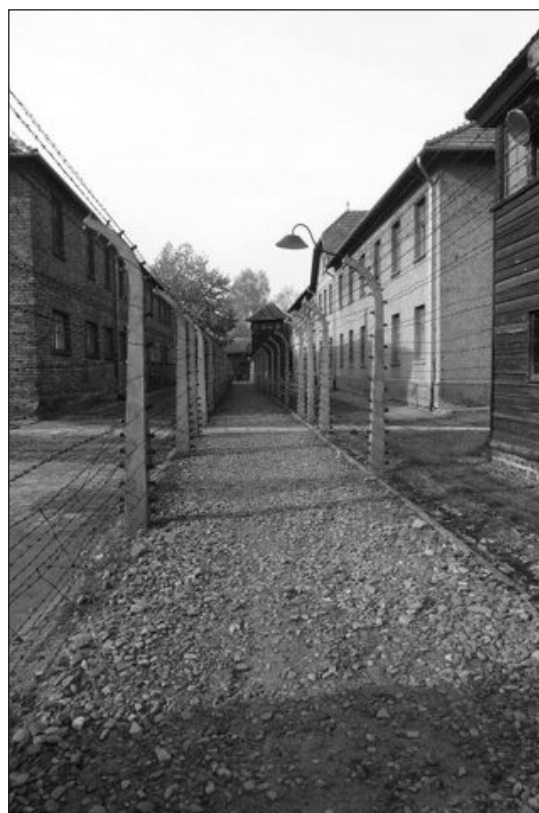
Since 1999, the Holocaust Educational Trust has run a project for school students called Lessons from Auschwitz. Two students from each of the participating schools are chosen to take part in the four-part course, which aims to increase knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust for young people and highlight what can happen if prejudice and racism become acceptable. The Holocaust Educational Trust believes that "hearing is not like seeing" and so the students take part in one-day visits to the former Nazi extermination and concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

After being selected to represent Highgate Wood School in Haringey, North London, we first attended a one-day seminar where we learnt about pre-war Jewish life and heard firsthand testimony from a Holocaust survivor, Zigi Shipper. As a young boy in Lodz, Poland, Zigi and his grandparents were sent to live in the ghetto where his grandfather died. He and his grandmother were later sent to Auschwitz, where his grandmother also perished. Zigi survived and later came to live in England.

This was followed four days later by the visit itself. We arrived at Luton at 5am and joined the 200 other students and teachers we would be travelling with. On the journey out to Poland we felt apprehensive and we discussed our expectations of the day. On arriving in Poland, our first visit was to the town of Oswiecim where, before the war, Jewish people made up 60% of the town's population. Now there is not a single Jewish resident. Seeing the town and the site of the Great Synagogue was really important to rehumanise the victims of the Holocaust as individuals rather than statistics.

Then we travelled to Auschwitz, the

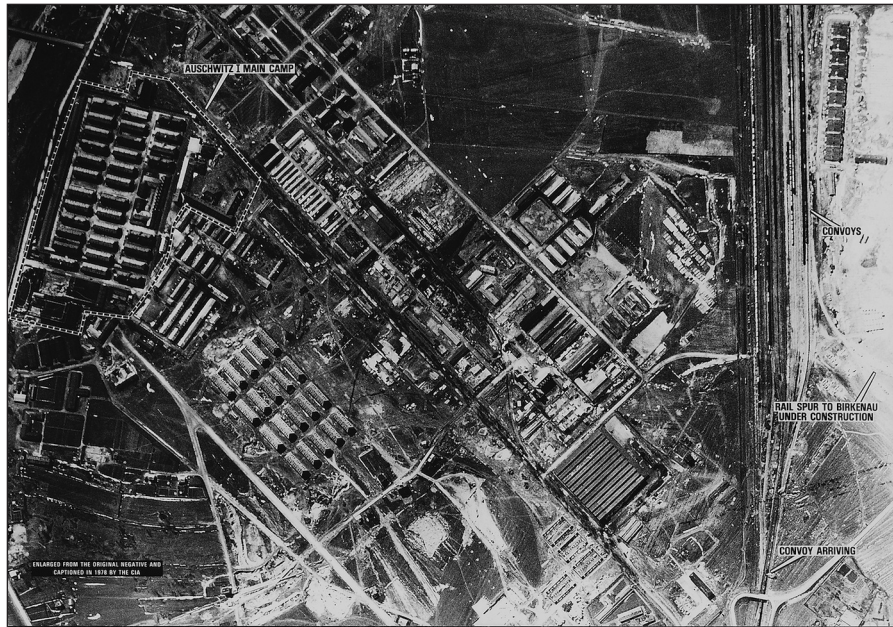
concentration camp. Escorted by a guide, we walked through the famous entrance gate, we passed the prison hospital and were shown the museum-style section of the camp in the barracks. This includes registration documents of inmates, piles of hair, shoes, clothes and other items seized



from the prisoners as they entered the camps. One of the things we found surprising was the overwhelming number of photographs. Walls were lined with pictures of the people who had been sent to Auschwitz, with details of their lives before the Holocaust. Six million is such an enormous figure that it is hard to comprehend each individual affected, so seeing the faces

of the teachers, lawyers and writers who were murdered at Auschwitz was really powerful in understanding the scale of the brutality. We were then taken inside the gas chambers. Standing in the room, where the mass murder of innocent people occurred was completely overwhelming and something that we will never forget.

We were then taken the short distance to Birkenau. This is the death camp, where the vast majority of the victims were murdered. When we arrived, we went up the watchtower and were surprised at how big the camp was. What remained at Birkenau was about the size of Crouch End (the area of London where we live). We were then shown the famous railway tracks, remnants of barracks, crematoria and gas chambers. One of the things that struck me at Birkenau was the cold. It was early October when we visited and about 2°C. I cannot begin to imagine how victims at Birkenau were



ANTIRACISM

The students were shocked by the scale of the camp. This aerial photo (left) was taken in 1944. Below, two images of Auschwitz as it looks today.

Photos below: Rosa Levi Smythe

made to work in even colder temperatures, wearing only pyjamas. We were taken to a room filled entirely with the photographs people had brought with them, which were seized. The tour of Birkenau ended with a memorial ceremony held next to the destroyed Crematorium II, led by Rabbi Barry Marcus of the Central Synagogue, who pioneered the one-day Auschwitz Birkenau visits. This gave us a chance to reflect on everything we had seen throughout the day.

The final part of the Lessons from Auschwitz project, deemed by Holocaust survivor Zigi Shipper to be the most important, is the communication stage. He argues that all students and teachers who have taken part in the scheme should make it their objective to pass on their experiences and feelings to as many people as they can. After my visit, we sat down in the evening and talked with our parents about what we'd experienced. Even though they were fairly knowledgeable about the subject, there were still things we told them that shocked them. For example, Gabriel's parents were astonished by the sheer size of Birkenau and found it hard to imagine how such a place had the sole purpose of barbaric mass genocide.

As well as writing articles, the two of us will also hold a series of assemblies in our school to communicate what we've learnt to our peers and teachers. This is a prime example of the importance of this final stage, and how the Lessons from Auschwitz project have been so important in the sharing of knowledge, especially amongst younger people. Over 20,000 students and teachers from the UK have visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in the Holocaust Education Trust's 13-year history. As a result of this, and the project's encouragement to communicate these experiences, thousands more now have a better understanding of the Holocaust.

We hope this will ensure that those who were killed during the Holocaust are never forgotten, and the stories of the few who survived will continue to be conveyed to others. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the project and all the stages in it can ensure that the prejudice and hate that unfortunately still exist in our society can be removed for the good of all.

Since 1999, over 20,000 students and teachers have taken part in the Holocaust Educational Trust's Lessons from Auschwitz Project. Find out more about it at: www.het.org.uk/index.php/lessons-from-auschwitz-general/about-lfa

ASYMMETRIC IS GAZA

COLIN GREEN
looks beyond
superficial
political reasons
for Israel's
repeated
military
engagements in
Gaza

Israeli sources, such as Breaking the Silence and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel have shown that the Israeli assaults on Gaza in 2008-09 (Cast Lead) and 2012 (Pillars of Defence) were planned many months ahead. This poses questions about the real motives for the seven-year siege and these massive attacks on a helpless concentration of impoverished and imprisoned people.

- Why do the international community and the UN allow Israel to blockade and besiege Gaza for nearly seven years with absolute impunity (noting that the blockade was established at the same time as offshore natural gas was discovered in Gaza Marine)?

- Were the asymmetric assaults on Gaza in 2008-09 and again in 2012 an emergency response to Qassam rocket attacks or carefully planned attacks for other more sinister reasons?

- Why are NATO naval fleets, operating in the Eastern Mediterranean, allowing Israel to commit piracy in international waters preventing unarmed merchant ships reaching Gaza?

Could all this be about trials of new weapons, testing of new missile defence systems, field trials of new strategies for control of impoverished and dissident populations and, perhaps most importantly, control of the immense energy resources found in the Eastern Mediterranean?

Examine first the demographics just before the Cast Lead assault. Gaza is a narrow strip of land, 45km long by 5-12km wide, in which 1.5 million Palestinians lived at a density of 4,119 per km². These people were mainly accommodated in five cities and seven large refugee camps with 1 million registered as UN refugees.

There was around 24 km² of potentially productive farmland, the best of it adjacent to the north-eastern border with Israel. The Gazan economy was desperately poor, with 80% living below the poverty line, 40% unemployed, 60% dependent for food on UNRWA, and 59% children. This population was ruled by the freely elected Hamas party for over a year, until Israel designated it a terrorist organisation and labelled Gaza a "hostile entity".

From 2006 onwards, Israel set out to destroy the Gazan economy and ensure food insecurity – a kind of controlled starvation, as a means of punishing the population and breaking its will. It did this through: tight control of the borders; setting up a buffer zone (1,500 metres deep) on the inland border, making precious agricultural land impossible to farm; and by preventing exploitation of maritime riches in Gazan waters. It has been estimated that the natural gas yield in Gaza Marine 1 and 2, of nearly 1.4 trillion cubic feet could turn the economy around and make Gaza energy-independent of Israel. By unilaterally reducing the territorial waters agreed at Oslo from 20 nautical miles to six, and then still further to three, the

Israelis have not only prevented exploitation of the gas platforms but have also reduced the fish stocks available by 84%.

Analysis of the timelines of both major military assaults is instructive. For the six months leading up to Cast Lead, Hamas observed a ceasefire until an Israeli incursion into Gaza on 4th November, which killed six Palestinians, predictably triggering a response with Qassam rockets fired into Israel. It should be noted that these homemade tokens of resistance to military occupation cannot be aimed specifically at military targets. Fired indiscriminately at a vague area, civilians are the likely victims, so their use can be labelled potential war crimes and provide just the excuse needed by the Israeli military to attack on a massive scale. In fact, since the year 2000, the Gaza rockets have killed a total of 22 Israelis – roughly the same number killed in 10 years that Israeli motorists kill every 10 days.

The Israeli attack started on 27th December 2008, with three days of intensive air strikes, carefully planned to coincide with the changeover in USA presidents. On 30th December, a Ceasefire Resolution 1860 was blocked by the USA in the Security Council. The House of Representatives backed the Cast Lead invasion by 390 votes to five, and the Senate by a similar margin, hence Congress supported it overwhelmingly. US President-elect Barack Obama uttered not a squeak. Tony Blair, posing as the Quartet Peace Mediator, issued a tepid call for a ceasefire.

The 2012 assault was again triggered by rockets; these were fired after the Hamas military chief Ahmed Jabari was assassinated by the Israelis. This man had been working with the Hamas Deputy Minister, Ghazi Hamad, with Egyptian intelligence officials and with the US-Israeli go-between, Gershon Baskin (who was in direct communication with Israeli Defence Minister, Ehud Barak) to work out a peace deal. After weeks of negotiations, it is said that Jabari had a signed peace agreement in his pocket when he was killed, and that Baskin was furious that all his efforts to broker that deal had been in vain.

Palestinian casualties in the Cast Lead invasion were appalling. Over 1,400 were killed, 412 of them children and 110 women. More than 6,000 were badly injured, including 1,855 children and 795 women. From evidence provided by my Norwegian medical colleagues, Mads Gilbert and Eric Fosse, who were working in Gaza at the time, and from subsequent analysis, I conclude that fewer than 20% of the deaths were actual Gazan combatants and the remainder were civilians. Both these doctors and Palestinian medical staff reported lesions of a type they had never seen before, providing circumstantial evidence that the Israelis had used and tested new weapons as well as white phosphorus in heavily populated civilian areas.

WARFARE

A TESTING GROUND?

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Apart from severe burns, there were abnormally high numbers of amputations and maiming among the wounded survivors. For example, 150 amputees had to be referred to Egyptian hospitals; in Jabalia refugee camp there were 165 newly disabled patients, of whom at least 90 had amputations, some multiple.

These casualties were caused by the full armamentarium of known conventional weapons but some injuries strongly suggest that other ordnance was tested and trialled for the first time under war conditions. Some of these described here were definitely used; others are still in doubt.

White phosphorus shells contain small strips of felt impregnated with the chemical, which scatter over a radius of 100m when the shell explodes in mid-air. It is officially used as a smokescreen device and for illumination at night, but is also an incendiary device and was used as such in Gaza on several occasions.

Flechette shells contain thousands of darts about 4cm long, which disperse in a widening cone when the shell explodes about a metre from the ground. These darts are ballistically designed to tumble on penetration of the victim and wreak havoc in soft tissues. These were used in 2008-09 but not in the 2012 assault.

The **Keshet rapid-fire automated mortar** was tried out to devastating effect in a crowded street in Jabalia refugee camp near the Al Fakhoura school, in full view of the Israeli troops.

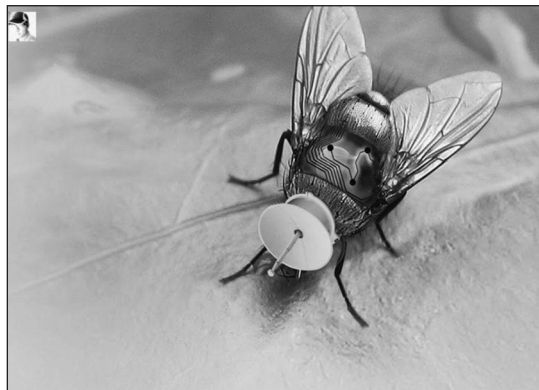
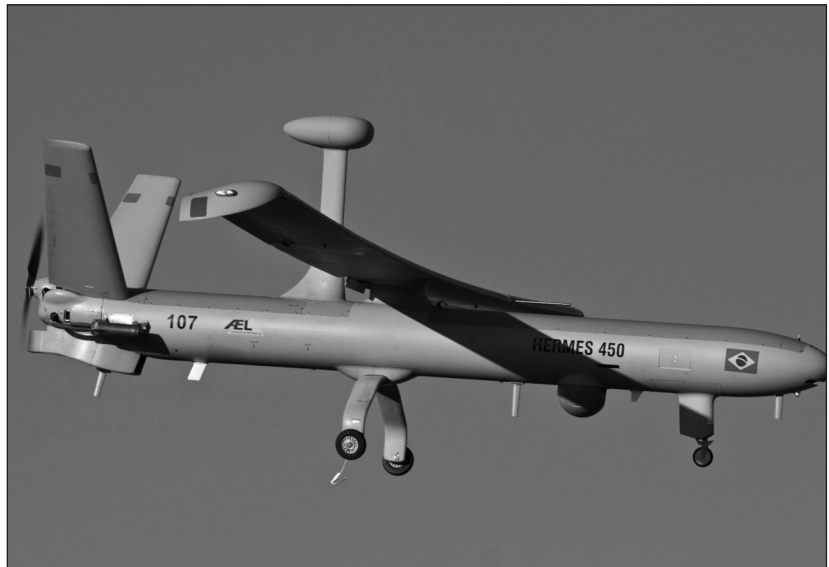
Kalanit shells were fired from 120-mm tank cannons. These explode in the air, stop and release six mini-charges, which spray a target with shrapnel from above.

Dense inert metal explosives (DIMES) are newly developed ordnance comprising a carbon-fibre casing packed with micro-shrapnel of inert metals like tungsten, nickel and cobalt. These cause a massive implosion within a relatively confined space, supposedly allowing a precise kill without collateral damage over a wide area. (The evidence for the use of DIMES is not definitive, being based on the powdered shrapnel found over the liver surface and other soft tissues, as well as the clean-cut multiple amputations suffered by many casualties.)

Small-diameter bombs (SDBs), which glide toward their target under laser direction. These can be fitted to F16 fighter aircraft and were used in Gaza (1,000 were purchased from the USA in early December in readiness for the 2008 attack), and it is thought that they contained dense inert metal shrapnel.

Depleted uranium tipped shells are designed for deep penetration of targets such as tanks, and create a high temperature fireball inside. In Gaza they were used to attack large buildings – not tanks.

Finally, although the Israelis have been accused of using thermobaric weapons in Gaza as bunker



Israeli drones. The Hermes (above) carries a Brazilian insignia; the UK Government has ordered 100 of them from the Israeli manufacturer. The bluebottle version (left) can buzz around a room at a board meeting and relay inside information about a rival company's affairs – and some say it can carry enough poison for targeted assassinations.

busters targeting the Egyptian border tunnels, there is no clear evidence for that, nor that they dropped cluster bombs as they had in the 2006 assault on the Lebanon.

This is a supreme example of asymmetric warfare between the most powerful military state in the Middle East, and a besieged concentration camp. To give you an idea of the military might of this prototypic modern warrior state, they have at, the last count: between 240 and 300 nuclear warheads; huge stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction (yet calling indignantly for the destruction of all in Syria); 620 warplanes, including F16 fighters (soon to be replaced with the latest F35 lightning fighters costing \$200 million each – 25 promised by the USA to Israel ahead of all other recipients as they come off the production line). Also: Cobra and Apache helicopters; six German-built and donated Dolphin Class submarines, some capable of being armed with nuclear warheads and two thought to be currently operational in the Persian Gulf; an unknown number of short, intermediate and long-range (up to 8,000km) ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear payload (Jericho 1, 2, 3); a modern navy of 58 combat surface warships, many

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

armed with missiles, which regularly exercises with the NATO Fleet in the Mediterranean; three squadrons of drones (Hermes, Searcher and Heron), many designed and built in Israel, with 100 on order by the UK Government; a highly trained army with 2,442 heavy Merkava tanks, 1,265 armoured troop carriers and numerous other smaller military vehicles; 2,754 pieces of heavy artillery with diabolical ordnance specifically designed to create havoc in civilian populations; and a standing army of 26,000 bolstered by 107,000 conscripts to a total of 133,000 troops (60% bigger than the British Army), which, in emergency, can be rapidly expanded nearly threefold with 400,000 personnel who are forced to train for mandatory periods each year from 18 up to the age of 40.

Think back to the size of that total population of 7.8 million Israelis (of whom at least 20% are ineligible to join the armed forces because, as Arabs, they are regarded as a fifth column). How on earth can any group of that tiny number anywhere on the planet provide the men and women of combatant age to operate all that hardware, as well as the logistical support (generally calculated at seven times the number of frontline troops) as well as the economic support for that military machine? No wonder the one million Russian immigrants (many of them economic migrants and practising Orthodox Christians) were so welcome in the 1990s. This is a massive investment in war, both in blood and in money.

How much does all this cost? The official Israeli line is that they spend roughly 7% of total GDP (US\$265 billion) on the military machine (as compared with 4.5% in the USA and 2.5% in the UK). This is roughly \$17.3 billion a year added to the \$3.1 billion donated by the USA and the submarines donated by Germany. Once a tiny state like Israel with only 5.92 million of the population eligible for supporting this war machine is committed to such a massive proportion of its GDP for war, then the most natural way to pay for that is through a homegrown arms development programme and then arms trade, so that expensive weaponry can be sold at huge profit. What is more, that war machine needs to be used to justify its existence, otherwise the taxpayer starts asking where their money is going. And the military themselves get restless.

The Israeli arms and homeland security industry have made themselves absolutely indispensable to the global arms trade, both in hardware weaponry (particularly drones) and in IT and cyber-warfare expertise. They also provide skilled personnel for hire as advisers in other states (for example Georgia, Iraq, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Brazil) or megacorporations such as G4S. Based on their 2012-13 sales (£8 billion), they lie fourth in the world league table (the UK is in third place, with £11.5 billion sales). However, if you factor in their premier place in the homeland security trade geared to control of internal sociopolitical conflict and civil disobedience and their massive arms

trade through the global criminal underworld, they may well rival the USA for top place. Just like any other corporate enterprise, they want an expanding market, which, in turn, demands continuous conflict situations both for marketing and for proof of good value after testing in the field under combat conditions. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this trade to Israel.

The military-homeland-security industrial complex is the largest employer in the country, offers the greatest support to the universities (these in turn attracting vast grants from NATO and the EU for "security research") and is the single most important contributor to the GDP (10% for legal arms alone). All the Israeli arms industry promotional material boasts the "tested in combat" tag, leading to the suspicion that they need conflict in Gaza, giving rise to their constant refrain that it is a hostile entity.

The big unanswered question now, is why the USA and its puppets routinely veto in the Security Council any and every UN resolution criticising Israel (43 times so far – more than all other countries have used their veto on all other issues combined).

Could their arms manufacturers be so evil as to get the Israeli military to test new weaponry on an impoverished population in a concentration camp called Gaza? Of great economic importance to Israel itself, what better way to test your missile defence systems (Iron Dome and Patriot) than to provoke Gazan resistance fighters to fire off pathetic Qassam rockets and show potential buyers like India how effective the Iron Dome system is? Could it be that the western states and the Israelis want to demonstrate to the world that 1.7 million people can be imprisoned without risking Israeli prison warders' lives, simply by snuffing out troublesome dissidents with armed drones and naval siege, no boots on the ground needed, even a model for the next virtual exercise of hegemony, in which control over huge areas of land and sea can be exercised by small numbers of highly trained personnel?

In addition, there is all that lovely natural gas in offshore fields extending from Egypt right up to the massive Leviathan field off Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus and Turkey, as well as the oil terminal in Ceynas (Turkey) bringing black gold from the Caspian oil fields. They also need protection for the western states, and who would be better placed than Israel's war machine to ensure energy security?

Israel's armoury of weapons of mass destruction serves as the ultimate extension of Western hegemony in the region. That, and the corporate needs of the USA-dominated western military-security-industrial complex in which Israel has made itself indispensable, have to be the main reasons for the West's endless and unashamed total support for an immensely powerful warrior state governed by a militarised ethnocracy masquerading as a democracy.

FROM 2006 ONWARDS, ISRAEL SET OUT TO DESTROY
THE GAZAN ECONOMY AND ENSURE FOOD INSECURITY –
A KIND OF CONTROLLED STARVATION, AS A MEANS OF PUNISHING
THE POPULATION AND BREAKING ITS WILL.

What's new on the Left?

The People's Assembly

In June last year, 4,000 people from across Britain – young and old, trade unionists, activists, and ordinary pissed-off citizens – travelled to Westminster Hall to take part in the People's Assembly Against Austerity.

What made this event significant in the ongoing struggle against austerity was not simply the impressive number of people and organisations that were brought together. It was also the fact that this mass meeting was designed as a workshop rather than simply a spectacle. Halfway through the day, activists from across the country split into groups so they could meet with people in their locality. Since then, local people's assemblies have been springing up across the country.

Last summer, people met in 70 different locations to build local movements. In South London, where I lived until recently, activists have come together from borough-based anti-cuts campaigns, from organisations set up to save particular libraries or recreation grounds, from the disabled people's movement and from the trade unions. The People's Assembly, of course, is not being built in a vacuum. In South East London, for example, a strong People's Assembly group emerged against the background of an impressive local campaign to save Lewisham hospital.

The point of the People's Assembly is not to replace local campaigns, which are crucial in empowering people to fight back against the cuts that affect them the most. But it does aim to draw local campaigns into a coordinated, national movement of resistance. Because, ultimately, austerity is not being driven by the councils that

pass on the cuts but is being directed from Downing Street.

The People's Assembly is a broad movement, which is nonetheless underpinned by certain key convictions. The first, and most obvious, is that austerity must be stopped and rolled back. Secondly, this cannot be achieved from above; but nor can it be achieved from below, except by a genuinely inclusive mass movement.

The starting point for any such endeavour is to recognise where our allies stand. One of the Assembly's great strengths is that it has been able to engage the energies of many people both inside and outside the Labour Party. In this respect, the People's Assembly reflects the make up of most local anti-cuts campaigns.

Nationally and locally, the People's Assembly played a crucial role in building for the 60,000-strong demonstration in Manchester in September, where large contingents from the PCS and Unite unions marched alongside a huge range of community activists.

Various mainstream commentators have expressed fears that the People's Assembly will pull the Labour Party to the left. But this is not what really matters if this movement is to succeed. The real aim must be to make Britain difficult to govern as long as austerity is implemented, whoever is occupying Number 10. This requires a combination of militancy, breadth, and a strong alliance with the trade union movement. In all these respects, the People's Assembly has made a good start.

Reuben Bard-Rosenberg

<http://thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/>

Left Unity

There can be few on the left who can have failed to notice the rise of Left Unity. What began as an appeal by Ken Loach in March 2013 to discuss founding a new party to the left of Labour, supported by almost 10,000 people, has turned into a vibrant movement with 100 diverse local groups springing up organically around the country.

Like the People's Assembly, which we support, Left Unity's roots are in the anti-austerity movement. Unlike the People's Assembly, Left Unity argues that, because Labour has failed to provide an answer to austerity – adopting Tory spending plans and refusing even to pledge to repeal the brutally unfair bedroom tax – we need a new party of the left.

That party, established on 30th November 2013 at our founding conference in London, is

committed to being an open, democratic, one member one vote organisation.

As the name implies, Left Unity encompasses a very broad range of opinions, from socialists to social democrats, anarchists to greens. It is not an attempt to stitch together the existing alphabet soup of far left parties into an electoral coalition, but to reach out to traditional Labour voters disgusted by Miliband's supine acquiescence to the Tory austerity agenda, which is having a devastating impact on Britain's poorest and most vulnerable people.

As such, a debate has inevitably sprung up over whether Left Unity should be an explicitly socialist party, or a broad left party that includes socialists among many other progressive voices. This was one of the key discussions addressed by the November

SPORT

conference and is one which will aid Left Unity as it draws up its manifesto this year. The conference supported the broader "Left Party" platform by a large majority.

We are currently engaged in an exciting and refreshingly open process of policy formation, which is being assembled from the bottom up. In the Economic Policy Commission, which I'm co-convening, we are discussing ideas such as public ownership of the banks, a mandatory living wage, tax justice, renationalisation of the railways and utilities, and supporting worker cooperatives. Many of these ideas and more will be taken to a policy conference in spring 2014 to be voted on by all members, as the flesh is put on the bones of a new party seeking the radical transformation of society in the interests of the many.

Of course, the road to that mass party of the working class is littered with the bones of a dozen other worthy but ultimately unsuccessful attempts: the Socialist Alliance, Respect, the Socialist Labour Party. So what makes Left Unity different?

It does not have one dominating charismatic figure. Loach himself has made clear he is not the

leader of this movement, while other "celebrity" backers figure as supporters rather than unaccountable messianic figures. Nor does it have one dominating far left group, and it is not a patchwork banner of tiny Trotskyist parties to be hung out at election time and then left to gather dust. It is genuinely a movement that has been built from the bottom up by its activists who are involved in the everyday campaigns against austerity, racism and war, learning from the democratic traditions of Occupy and UK Uncut, and learning from the mistakes of the past by putting women, as well as minorities, oppressed groups and disabled people, at the heart of its work.

Does that mean we won't make new mistakes? Of course not. And of course there will be people who are put off getting involved because they've been burned too many times before. Left Unity has a long way to go and a lot to prove. But I'm hopeful we can make it together.

Salman Shaheen

Left Unity National Coordinating Group

www.leftunity.org
www.salmanshaheen.com

WELL PITCHED

An exhibition about Jews and football reveals a lot about British Jewish identities.

DAVID ROSENBERG reports

The media controversy raging recently over whether Spurs supporters should or should not use the word "Yid" or "Yiddo" took it as a given that most Jews who are keen on football support Spurs, while others support their rivals and neighbours, Arsenal. You would never guess from the media coverage that meaningful numbers of Jewish football fans exist in several other clubs. Or indeed that Jews are, or have been present in the game at other levels. All of which makes the excellent Four Four Jew exhibition launched by the Jewish Museum in October 2013, very timely.

It would not be particularly taxing to assemble a display that celebrated Jews who have reached the heights of the business world that the one-time amateur sport of football has become – a world that has deservedly achieved a reputation of being steeped in greed and corruption. And part of this exhibition does indeed celebrate the achievements of that select band of Jewish football entrepreneurs, who, weirdly all share the name David (Bernstein, Dein, Gold, Levy). But thankfully the main thrust is completely different.

It is a sociological-cum-anthropological exploration of how football was one of the vehicles through which at least the males within an immigrant working class community overcame the challenges of being unwelcome outsiders and were able to integrate into British society. It examines how Jewish football fans maintained their

ethnic/religious identity but built wider shared identities and loyalties beyond their own community, making real progress towards breaking down longstanding prejudices. And it is not just males. Who would have imagined that, in a previous life, the official club photographer for the west London team, Queens Park Rangers, was Ariel Friedlander, a female rabbi?

The lazy media stereotype that reduces Jewish football fans nationally to a couple of north London rivals probably won't have reckoned with Jewish QPR fans, but there's a good reason why this team should attract a certain Jewish following. In 1967, Third Division QPR defied massive odds to beat First Division West Bromwich Albion in the League Cup final. But surely the odds on a winning goal at a Wembley final being scored by a Jewish footballer were even greater?

The name of QPR's Wembley hero was Mark Lazarus, whose family eked out a living in run-down, overcrowded Stepney, east London, before moving out to what transpired to be more hostile territory in suburban Chadwell Heath in Essex. Two of Mark's brothers – Lew and Harry – learned to cope physically by becoming boxers, but Mark dreamt of becoming a professional footballer. His reluctant parents accepted Mark's plan when he agreed to do an apprenticeship as an upholsterer as a fallback option.

Mark Lazarus began his professional football

SPORT



Left: David Rosenberg (right) shares memories with Mark Lazarus. Below: 1930s Leeds player, Lesley Goldberg.

career in 1958 at Leyton Orient, a lower league east London club with a substantial Jewish following, which had one season in the top league in 1962-63. After two years with Orient, Lazarus moved on. His career spanned several clubs. Like a lucky mascot, he was part of promotion-winning teams four times. I remember watching him when I was 12 years old, after he returned to Leyton Orient late in his career, and was part of a free-scoring team that went from the Third to the Second Division. It amused me that, when he scored a goal, instead of leaping in the air, arms aloft, pulling his shirt over his face or sliding on his knees – he would walk along the terrace smiling and shaking hands with those at the front, as if he was saying “Gut Shobbos” at the end of a shul (synagogue) service.

Together with other ex-players, managers, fans, writers and club administrators, Lazarus and I both appear in a 20-minute film running on a loop in the exhibition. He talks about standing up to antisemitism in the game. I remember an article about him a couple of years ago in which he described how opposing defenders, egged on by their coaches, would attempt to rile him with antisemitic abuse. But with great self-discipline he would respond by upping his game rather than fighting and being sent off. The worst antisemitism he encountered in football was not from players, but from fans, at Sunderland. They called him a Jew bastard and told him to get back to the gas ovens. So Paulo di Canio cannot claim to be the first fascist to turn up among the Mackems.

In the 1960s, when I started watching West Ham, Jewish professional footballers were pretty rare but there were a few, such as Barry Silkman, also from Stepney and today a football agent. He played at various times for Manchester City and Crystal Palace but, like Lazarus, also had spells at QPR and Leyton Orient. In the film he recounts his rather direct approach to a manager's antisemitic comment: “I hit him round the head with a cricket bat.”

Like most professional footballers in England, Silkman and Lazarus came from working class families. Today, many working class people are being priced out of watching live football, but the high point of Jewish participation as fans on the terraces was in the interwar years, when Jews were in closer-knit working class communities, and

when football was a relatively cheap entertainment. In that period, around a third of Spurs' regular fan base was Jewish.

But, in London, football loyalties were affected by dispersal as Jews left their East End heartland via the “North East passage” or the “North West passage”. Those heading towards Ilford and further into Essex were more likely to be attached to West Ham but, as the game has lost its innocence and become all about titles, trophies, and big bucks, many Essex-born grandchildren

choose to support more successful, less local teams. North West London Jews largely opted for Arsenal or Spurs.

Outside London, two teams that have considerable numbers of Jewish fans are Leeds United and Manchester City. In the 1930s and '40s, Leeds had a popular right back called Lesley Goldberg who grew up in the local Jewish community. In the film, writer Anthony Clavane recounts when a Leeds rabbi met the team's most successful manager, Don Revie, back in the 1970s. He illuminated what they had in common: “We share the same congregation,” the rabbi said. “I have them in the morning, you have them in the afternoon!” One display identifies commonalities between a shul service and a football match: both being communal gatherings with traditions, rituals, and chants, where expressions of faith are regularly intoned.

The possibilities of uniting enthusiasm for shul and football are shown through paraphernalia – yarmulkes (skull caps) representing different teams, and a green and white Celtic FC tallis (prayer shawl) that belongs to Lord Livingston. (He felt that regular black and white taleysim implied support for Newcastle). I still regret that, as I turned 13, I was unable to persuade my parents to order a barmitzvah cake with a football pitch theme, as many of my friends had, but had to settle instead for a cake styled to represent an open book with the fifth commandment on the page: Honour thy Father and Mother.

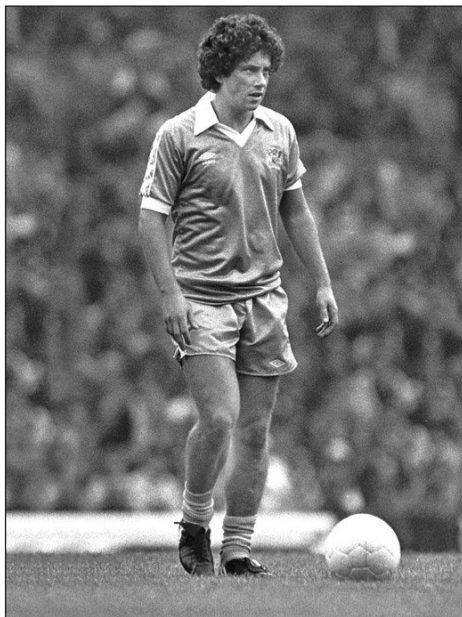
Clavane remarks that football enabled Jews to be seen competing physically with other communities, breaking down stereotypes that Jews were bookish intellectuals, unable or unwilling to engage in strenuous physical activity. He argues that the growth of Jewish football teams based around youth clubs, which played against Jewish and non-Jewish teams, together with the fact that some Jews became professional footballers, showed that Jews had bodies as well as minds. It is a narrative in which Jews staked their claim for equality by showing how much like the host society they were, despite their “alien” origins. It avoids the more difficult argument about diversity, though: we are culturally different but should be treated equally.

The leaders of Jewish youth clubs used sport



SPORT

1960s player Barry Silkman, now a football agent.



Four Four Jew: Football, Fans and Faith was at the Jewish Museum until 23rd February 2014, and may move to Manchester. www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/Football

David Rosenberg is the author of *Battle for the East End: Jewish responses to fascism in the 1930s* (Five Leaves Publications), and writes a regular column for *Over Land and Sea* (OLAS) the West Ham football fanzine.

instrumentally, consciously promoting sport as a vehicle of Anglicisation and assimilation that instilled citizenship values. They were determined to break down any barriers that might prevent Jews from feeling they were part of the society and entitled to all that it offers. An extract from a report on display, from the Brady Club early in the 20th century, noted how "Jewish and non-Jewish boys have been brought into contact with one another in friendly rivalry and this has tended to do away with much racial prejudice."

Whilst the children populating the youth clubs were impoverished recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, club leaders tended to be drawn from the older, more established Jewish communities of Sephardi or German Jewish background. Their use of sport as a means of instilling values of citizenship, discipline and good behaviour in youngsters, fitted into a narrative in which they saw themselves on a civilizing mission. It smacks of condescension and paternalism and says much about class distinctions in Anglo-Jewry.

One nugget I stumbled across researching my book on anti-fascism in London's East End in the 1930s, which would have complemented this exhibition, was a comment from Cable Street veteran Charlie Goodman. The conservative Club leaders became increasingly anxious as young Jews involved themselves in militant anti-fascism. Goodman says these leaders arranged extra football matches for the Sunday when Mosley intended to march his uniformed fascists through the East End, trying to divert young Jews away from street fighting. I commented in my book, though, that the "young people, with their eyes firmly fixed on their social and political goals, abandoned the football pitches to tackle fascism".

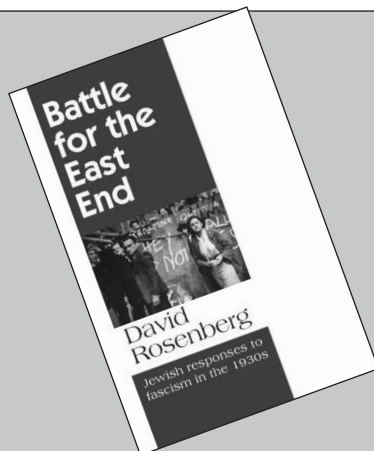
The material in the exhibition on Jewish youth teams and the fight against antisemitism is made more poignant by the story of Wingate. Unlike other Jewish football teams, who played mainly in Sunday leagues, Wingate were an avowedly secular Jewish team that played in non-Jewish, Saturday leagues in their blue and white kit with a Star of

David on their shorts. They were formed in 1946 by Jewish ex-servicemen aiming to as much to strike a blow against antisemitism as to identify with Zionist aspirations. They named their football club after a non-Jewish British army general – Orde Wingate – who collaborated closely with Jewish armed forces in Mandate Palestine. Some of Wingate's founders were linked with the physical anti-fascists of the 43 Group, but Wingate's ethos was to assert Jewish pride and physical prowess with their feet not their fists. For much of its history Wingate had mainly Jewish players but gradually eased in non-Jews. In 1991 they merged with another more longstanding amateur club, Finchley, and these days have very few Jews playing for them, though their exploits still feature occasionally in the Jewish press!

The triangle of Jews, football and anti-fascism rears its head in two other fascinating displays. One concerns December 1935, when a match between England and Germany was scheduled at White Hart Lane, home of the team with the largest Jewish fan base. Newspaper cuttings and photographs document how the swastika flag flew from the stadium (though an anti-fascist Spurs supporter climbed up on to the roof and removed it at half-time). Some 10,000 German fans made their way to Britain for the game. There were protests and demonstrations from Jewish, trade union, and anti-fascist groups.

The other display relates to Manchester City, who also had a large Jewish following, controversially signing goalkeeper Bert Trautmann, a German prisoner of war who had joined the Hitler Youth when he was 10 years old. There were moves by Jewish fans to institute a boycott of the club and some season tickets were torn up. Trautmann received lots of hate mail but stood firm. Eventually a local Rabbi, Alexander Altmann, who had himself fled from Hitler's Germany, intervened on Trautmann's behalf. He argued that one individual soldier could not be blamed for the terrible crimes committed by his country's forces.

Fewer Manchester Jews have been attracted to Manchester's historically more successful side, United, although it was United who had a Jewish player in the 1930s: Aubrey Cohen. His career was cut short as he came under pressure to take a position in the family business. Footballers were not paid a great deal in those days, and Cohen's economic prospects were probably better with his family. Times change.



Battle for the East End: Jewish Responses to Fascism in the 1930s

by David Rosenberg
published by Five Leaves, £9.99

Throughout the 1930s, Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts increased their campaign against the Jewish community, particularly in London's East End. As their campaign became more overtly anti-Semitic the Jewish community debated how to deal with the Fascist threat, building their own defence organisations, culminating in the Battle of Cable Street when more than 100,000 Jews, Irish and others came out to stop Mosley marching into the East End.

Available for purchase online from Inpress www.inpressbooks.co.uk/

Drawing nourishment from deep roots

REVIEW

In the 1990s, Russia's Jews, along with other national and ethnic minorities, tumbled from a turbulent century into what historian Prof John Klier described as "the internal disintegration of the Soviet Empire, largely on the nationality question." In the aftermath of the atomisation and reconfiguration of the Soviet Union into separate states, Zvi Gitelman, in collaboration with Valeriy Chervyakov and Vladimir Shapiro, have investigated how the Jewish populations of Russia and Ukraine understand their own identity and situation. They chose these two countries because they had the highest Jewish populations in the former Soviet Union (FSU) and are civic states, where officially all citizens are equal, rather than ethnic states where one group is privileged over the others – though the cataclysmic events in the Ukraine are in danger of destabilising this characterisation.

The authors' detailed surveys and extended conversations conducted in 1992-93 and 1997-98 throw up challenging questions about the nature, persistence and meaning of ethnic and national identity in general and about the character and future viability of Jewish life in the FSU.

Jews have lived under Russian rule for centuries, and have found many ways of adapting to and surviving frequent cataclysmic changes. Gitelman gives a vivid example. In 1918 a citizen of Lemberg, would have been living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1920 this town was Polish and called Lwow. In 1939 it was under Soviet rule and called Lvov. From 1941 it was occupied by the Nazis, then in 1944 came back under Soviet jurisdiction. Today it is a Ukrainian city called Lviv. Gitelman looks at how successfully Jewish life has navigated these rapids, what Jewishness in this context consists of, and asks whether it has a viable future.

From the late 19th century, the traditional foundations of Jewish life – religious, linguistic, institutional – were alternately strengthened and undermined. Gitelman gives a detailed overview of this history: the 1880s when pogroms swept through the Ukraine and Russia, and Jews' residency and work rights were restricted, which was a major factor in provoking mass emigration to the west; the 1917 revolution, followed by tens of thousands of Jews being killed in pogroms at the hands of the White Russians in the 1918-21 civil war, but also a hopeful period in which all nationalities were granted full civil and national rights. Over the ensuing years, most Jewish people left the poor villages, or *shtetlakh*, for cities; antisemitism was outlawed; within constraints set by the state, their mother tongue, Yiddish, and Jewish secular culture, media and academia thrived, while Judaism, the religion, like other religions, was suppressed. Then came repression: the dismantling of Jewish institutions and the suppression of Yiddish culture, culminating in the execution of leading Jewish cultural figures in 1952,

accusations of corruption and embezzlement, and the characterisation of Jews as "rootless cosmopolitans" – traitors.

The assumption by the Russian revolutionaries (and incidentally pretty much everyone else touched by the Enlightenment) was that "progress" would undermine ethnic and national identities, and lead to a brave new world in which no one "needed" to cling to "backward", usually religious, communal ties. In a 1975 article in *European Judaism* entitled "The Jews of the Diaspora or the Vocation of a Minority", Richard Marienstras described this as "the benevolent violence of redemptive universalism". Nevertheless, the Soviet state allocated nationalities to everyone, including Jews, which, Gitelman argues, helped preserve their sense of themselves as a people.

Exploring the complex meaning of ethnicity, the flexibility of ethnic identity, and the inadequacy of the language we use to describe either the variety or the uniqueness or the commonality of ethnic expression, Gitelman writes: "All conceptions of Jews are hybrids of historic elements and environmental influences." But he centrally addresses the persistence of ethnicity, which is generally perceived as an irrational anachronism in a modern society. Why, after the Russian Jewish experience over the last 150 years, haven't Jews simply shed their identity? Why, despite having had no access to religion or religious education, having had their identity dictated to them by an authoritarian state, enduring fluctuating levels of state and grassroots antisemitism, experiencing first the promotion and then attacks on their culture and institutions, do they still feel – and want to feel – Jewish?

The book explores the experience and meaning of Jewish identification among people who for two or three generations have been cut off from the religious traditions that underpinned Yiddishkayt – the feeling and experience of Jewishness – and asks if there is a watershed beyond which Jewish life will irreversibly decline. If so, is it possible to rebuild the foundations, and to nurture and support the reconstruction and revitalisation of the centuries-old Jewish communities in the states of the former Soviet Union? And, if this is possible, are the "ethnic entrepreneurs" who have emerged following the fragmentation of the Soviet Union able, willing – or appropriate – vehicles for that support? Parachuting in, mainly from Israel and the US, their agendas range from Putin's favourites, the Hassidic Chabad-Lubavitch, aiming to expand their institutional empire into the FSU, to the Zionist Jewish Agency and others, encouraging the latest mass emigration of Jews, this time to Israel. Added to the mix are local Jewish oligarchs, funding Jewish institutions to the tune of millions of dollars.

The picture that emerges is of a Jewish community like no other. Here, the two boundaries that most of the world's Jews have seen as the

JEWISH IDENTITY IN POST-COMMUNIST RUSSIA AND UKRAINE: AN UNCERTAIN ETHNICITY

by Zvi Gitelman
Cambridge University Press,
£20.99

REVIEW

crucial demarcation protecting their continuity as a people – intermarriage and conversion – are viewed quite differently. Breaking the last taboo, many Jews have embraced Christianity but are not outcast as they would be in other diaspora communities. Many families are mixtures of Jews and non-Jews; intermarriage is common and sometimes even seen as desirable. Gitelman's surveys revealed a "decline in 1992-97 in the proportion of Russian and Ukrainian Jews affirming that Jews should marry each other", which he believes "may be due to the greater emigration of the endogamously married". "An elderly woman in Kiev reported, 'All our children married Russians and I don't think it really matters. If you love someone you cannot start thinking about the fate of the Jewish people.'"

However, the similarities and differences between the Jewish communities of the FSU and those in other parts of the world are not clarified by Gitelman's repeated comparison with Israel, an aggressively majoritarian ethnic state where, if a parallel were to be made at all, it would not be with the Jewish population but with the Arab minority. Nor is it very enlightening to look to the USA, with its contrasting history and ideology, or to Britain, where the author misconstrues both the character of the state and the facts and implications of the Established Church, saying, "Unlike in countries of immigration, in England (sic) there is an established ethnic group that, some Jews feel, has the right to dominate." This image seems to rely on a 1950s stereotype of British life, before communities of immigrants helped create the vibrant multiethnic society it is, not least in the cities where most Jews live.

What the surveys and interviews show are Russian and Ukrainian Jewish communities that are rapidly ageing, mainly as the result of emigration of the most actively and committedly Jewish younger people. As a result, the Jewish entrepreneurs are diverting their efforts from recruitment into welfare. These are also communities where few people have any knowledge of religious traditions – or even secular traditions – apart from what they remember from their parents and grandparents, and where many families contain both Jews and non-Jews.

The gatekeepers at the boundaries of Jewish life have been banished; the barriers have been breached; but to everyone's astonishment, Jewish life continues. Gitelman's surveys demonstrate that people describe themselves and think of themselves as Jews. They relate more strongly to other Jews than to the different nationalities amongst whom they live, and, despite often having seen their identity as negative and problematic in a context of state and/or grassroots antisemitism, they are, and want to continue being, Jews.

Ethnicity is persistent. Minority cultures and languages survive all manner of threats from majoritarianism. This should not be a surprise in the light of recent history – in Spain, the Balkans, the Middle East and, indeed, the FSU. Minorities under pressure hide and adapt their traditions and languages but once lid is off, they spring back to life as Richard Marienstras argued. Indeed, it would have been interesting to see a deeper investigation of the languages used and not used by the people surveyed by the authors. In a number of places he



Right: KlezFest 2012 in Lviv, an annual festival of secular Jewish music and culture

refers to Yiddish and Hebrew as the languages of former generations of Jews. But although some would have been able to speak Hebrew, it was not their *lingua franca* but the language of religion and prayer. The mother tongue of former (and quite recent) generations of the populations he has investigated here would have been, in the main, Yiddish. How many of the sample still speak it? How many know fragments of the language? Songs, poems, proverbs and idioms? How far have the remnants of the language supported the survival of Jewish identity and cultural expression?

This book presents a fascinating and significant portrait of Jewish life at a time of rapid and unpredictable change after a long period of separation from other Jewish communities and from access to their own rich and complex history. It describes their perceptions of their own situation and explores the web of relationships and experiences that underpin their understanding of themselves as Jews.

The question that informs and motivates the research is whether the community that exists today is viable in the future. Can these Jews establish the institutional framework they need to communicate with each other, with Jews in other countries, with the wider society, and with the state? These are the institutions that are necessary for communities to express themselves in all their diversity, politically, socially, culturally and religiously – to rediscover and reconnect with their Jewish past, to debate their own needs and determine their own future.

So far, Jewish life in the former Soviet Union has survived. This should not surprise us. As Gitelman shows, people don't easily give up their ethnic identity and take on another. What's perhaps more surprising is the power of majoritarian ideology, which allows us to be convinced, in the face of so many examples of robust, adaptable, persistent, creative minority communities across the world, that ethnic identities are always in danger of extinction.

Julia Bard

Portrait of an iconoclast

REVIEW

The *Hackney Gazette* recently recommended David Perman's biography of the German refugee and Hackney resident, Lotte Moos, who died aged 98 in 2008. The article was subtitled "Jewish Poet who 'Felt at Home' in Hackney".

Counteracting the less than cheerful implications of the book's title, *Stranger in a Borrowed Land*, (a quote from one of Moos's poems), the *Gazette* journalist aimed to evoke a sense of tortured wanderings concluding with peace in our tolerant borough.

Lotte Moos's daughter, Merilyn, objected strongly to this interpretation. "All Lotte's life, she opposed all forms of oppression including differentiation based on 'ethnic identity'. The only way she [said] that she could be defined as Jewish, is if one accepted Hitler's antisemitic definition based on ancestry." She left Germany (in 1933) for "entirely political reasons". Moos insisted that, far from reaffirming one's Jewish identity in response to the Holocaust, one can champion humanitarian, non-sectarian ideals by the very act of refusing to call oneself a Jew.

Perman's book portrays a woman who defied and subverted received ideas, and saw active and sometimes dramatic service on the personal, political and artistic fronts. Her relationship to her Jewish identity seems more complex and ambivalent than her daughter implies, but this is just a strand in an intricately woven, ambiguous and enigmatic life imbued with socialist convictions.

Perman quotes from many sources: letters from Moos and her husband, friends and family members; correspondence from literary editors and TV executives to whom she submitted work; the file kept on her by MI5; and her own archive of poems, stories and plays. There are touching minutiae, such as her request for "lyel-flog" (lisle flock) stockings while she was imprisoned as a suspected Soviet agent in Holloway in 1940. We eavesdrop on pivotal moments such as when she received a letter in 1946 from a representative of the surviving Jewish community in Berlin saying that no grounds remain for hoping that her father, last heard of in Theresienstadt, is still alive.

Perman's style is straightforward, and the material is skilfully structured.

One of the saddest, and at times blackly comic, parts of the book deals with Moos's sojourn in Moscow in 1936 with Brian Goold-Verschöyle, a courier for the Soviet regime. Both of the young people wanted to experience the great Soviet experiment for themselves, and we accompany them as they blunder through a world of contradictions, exhausted by everyday Soviet hardship, courted and suspected by mysterious, often grotesque individuals whose motives are

unclear, haunted by the (accurate) impression that they are under surveillance. Moos was thoroughly disillusioned.

The escapade had a tragic ending. Moos was allowed to return to England and her beloved husband, fellow German socialist, writer, eminent economist, and son of Jewish parents, Siegfried Moos, to whom she remained devoted until his death in their sixth decade of marriage. Goold-Verschöyle paid for his transgression in allowing her to join him (and implicitly for her freedom to leave): his controllers promptly dispatched him to war-torn Spain. Increasingly dissenting from the Party line, Goold-Verschöyle ended up in a Siberian gulag, where he died aged around 30. Their Moscow fiasco came back to haunt Moos four years later, when official curiosity about whether she might also have been a spy put her in Holloway. She was exonerated, but her grief and guilt about her friend never left her.

Moos was immersed in some of the most interesting events of her times. Her experiences in the 1930s and '40s touch us with the immediacy of film footage. Some of her stories and articles in that period were published (including, pseudonymously, in *Die Zeitung*, the wartime paper for German refugees secretly funded by the British Government. One of her plays was performed at the Lyric Hammersmith in 1962 with Glenda Jackson among the cast.

But it was with poetry, as a member of the Hackney Writers' Workshop and the Approach Poets, that she used her remarkable voice to greatest effect. She

enjoyed a period in the limelight of anthologies, public readings, and ultimately, her own collections. A disturbing and uncompromising voice emerged: original, technically brave, lit from the linguistically unexpected angle that sometimes gives a non-native writer the edge in using English to the full – and taut with a political energy. The list of her publishers at times reads like a hymn to the Left of the 1980s, fighting its many battles against the outrages of the day.

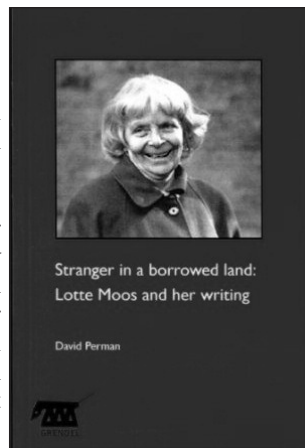
Moos never participated in party politics, but remained true to the socialist principles she had embraced as a young woman in Germany. Many of her poems are as resonant politically today as they were when she wrote them. She wrote of Thatcher as "The Empress of Hypothermia" – I wonder what metaphors she would have deployed for the current administration

Perman has portrayed a complicated woman, who, through a confused and dark century, seems never to have stopped interrogating and recording the world around her. It is a fascinating record, which does justice to someone, Jewish or not, whose life and writing deserve to be remembered.

Claudia Jessop

STRANGER IN A BORROWED LAND: LOTTE MOOS AND HER WRITING

By David Perman
Grendel Publishing,
£9.99



REVIEW

Permanent protest the only option

ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL: DIRECT ACTION AND SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN POPULAR STRUGGLE

edited by Uri
Gordon and
Ohal Grietzer
AK Press, £9

Some years ago, a friend who lived in Belfast at the height of the war said that she would see news coverage of the riots and shootings on the television and have to pinch herself to remember that she lived in the same city. She lived peacefully in an area quite untroubled by the war. I was reminded of this reading *Anarchists Against the Wall*, as one contributor referred to those Israelis who feel no need to think about the occupation while sitting in a coffee shop or eating hummus in Jaffa. The one difference is that the man and woman in the Jaffa café have almost certainly been in the IDF, or have children who have been, or children who will be. Yet the number of Israelis prepared to take action over “the situation” – *hamatsáv* – is few, especially at the cutting edge of protest against “the wall”. For many, emigration is a way out, with perhaps a million Israelis living abroad.

For a small number of Israelis, a life of permanent protest is the only option, Anarchists Against the Wall (AATW) being one of the most active organisations. In this short book, AATW members outline their history and actions. The book is split between reprinting some AATW leaflets and a longer, more interesting, section of personal accounts by activists. AATW began, formally, in 2003. The group rejects lobbying, electoral efforts and “interfaith” dialogue in favour of direct action and civil disobedience, having “let go the coat-tails of the Zionist left” to work with the “popular committees” of Palestinians on the West Bank, especially at Bil’in and Ni’lin, on the weekly demonstrations against the wall. While 20

Palestinians have been killed in these types of demonstrations, AATW members have had no fatalities but share in being teargassed and shot at by rubber bullets, and occasional live ammunition. They accept that they cannot be equal partners in resisting the occupation – Israelis can go home or drop out of activity at any time – but their solidarity actions give them “an opportunity to cross the barriers of national allegiance.”

The book is primarily about the group’s day-to-day activities, though demonstrations against the war in Gaza are also mentioned, with some reference to individual involvement in campaigns against gentrification within Israel, within the social movements and actions in solidarity with refugees. To the Israeli right, AATW activists are traitors – more so to those who (shockingly) describe the 1967 Green Line as the “Auschwitz borders” to justify Israeli expansion. AATW has little time for groups like Peace Now, which have faded anyway after the failure of Oslo. One contributor remarks, “So we give up on these people. Our statements [at general peace demonstrations] are not meant to communicate but to rage and keep us going.”

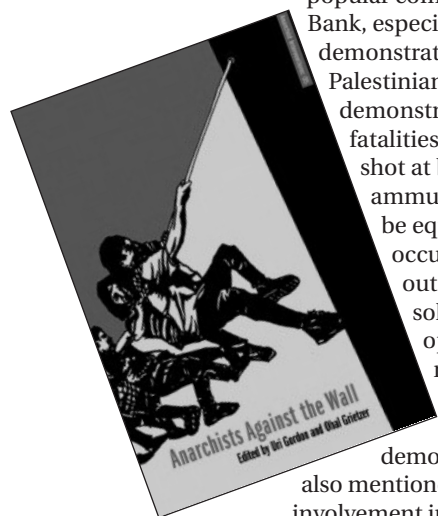
In exchange, “Radical activists in Israel/Palestine run from one action to the next. It feels like everything is urgent.” Another writes, “We hardly ever bother with promoting our various grand-scheme-of-things ideas. Once the occupation is behind us, we will have the luxury to discuss our diverse opinions.” A further contributor adds, “Personally, I do not think I will see the end of the occupation in my lifetime — I am 30 years old.” Yet another, “‘When the occupation ends...’ How many times have we said this to ourselves, fantasizing over a future paradise, while becoming more and more cynical and disillusioned with each passing year. Today we know better. The occupation is not going to end; it is here to stay.”

Little wonder that the group is subject to burn-out. One chapter is devoted to trauma, with some activists showing genuine symptoms of post-traumatic stress due to their regular exposure to violence.

Some readers of *Jewish Socialist* will have found it difficult to speak of their views within the formal Jewish community, if involved in it, or within traditional Jewish families in which they were brought up on Zionism. For some Israelis, becoming a dissident means isolation from friends and family. “Like others, I have gradually lost contact with most of my friends from home. Some of us cannot deal with the confrontations and so we drift apart.” Whilst most Palestinians welcome Israeli Jews taking part in their struggle, others question this. “A local Palestinian farmer stopped me and bluntly asked what I was doing there. Why, for example, was I not in Tel Aviv talking to Israelis, or demonstrating outside the Knesset or Prime Minister’s house? I did not have a decent answer for him, but I did not go to another demonstration for three years, although I did not confront Israeli society either. I just left the country.”

I admire what AATW does, and would encourage people to read this book, yet I was left with a feeling of unease. So many of the contributors felt little hope for the future, and the weekly demonstrations clearly take their toll (exactly why the IDF comes down so hard on those taking part). Some of the writers remarked on how isolated they felt from all their fellow Israelis, how difficult it was, even, to take part in joint campaigns on other issues. Yet the book makes only a passing reference to the International Solidarity Movement, which operates in similar territory, and no mention of, for example, Gush Shalom (the radical peace bloc), B’Tselem (the Israeli human rights organisation, active against the occupation), the soldiers’ movement, Breaking the Silence, the Israeli Coalition Against House Demolitions or any other group that are on the same side but which might not share AATW’s anarchist views. I wonder how much of the isolation is self-imposed. The book left me wanting to know more.

Ross Bradshaw



The Jewish Socialists’ Group is organising a dayschool on 100 Years of Jewish Anarchism, in London in the autumn. Please contact jsg@jewishsocialist.org.uk nearer the date for more information.



ODD PAM

Tom Lehrer sang that he was "Spending Chanuka in Santa Monica" but, as we celebrate Purim, I'm reminded that around this time last year Pamela Geller accepted the Queen Esther Award for Jewish Heroism at the Shangri La hotel in the same resort. Her coronation, staged by the Creative Zionist Coalition, may have encouraged "Queen" Pam to wage war on the Queen of England, or at least start a lawsuit, after she and associate Robert Spencer were refused visas to grace an English Defence League demonstration in London.

Besides anti-mosque protests in New York and posters supporting Israel as "the civilised man" against "savages", Geller's oeuvre has included a video suggesting Muslims perform sex with goats and a blog claiming President Obama's mother was involved with pornography and that he was Malcolm X's "love child".

Grinning broadly in photographs, whether at the gullibility of her followers or from too much botox, Geller hasn't always been laughing. On 11th January 2007, Collin Thomas was shot in the back as he closed up for the night at Universal Auto Sales, on Long Island, owned by Geller's then husband, Michael Oshry. Police investigating the murder discovered that Universal Auto had been helping drug dealers and other criminals launder their profits, supplying them with Maseratis and Aston Martins on loans to quite different people whose names appeared on the documents. Pamela Geller, by then divorced from Oshry, but still listed as co-owner of the business, burst into tears when told her ex was under criminal investigation. "I have nothing to do with this," she insisted.

It seems to have worked. A dozen people connected with Universal Auto were arrested in 2008, but Pamela Geller remained free to collect a \$4 million divorce settlement, a portion of the \$1.8 million realised from the sale of the Long Island home and then a \$5 million life insurance payment when Michael Oshry died a few months after remarrying in 2008. These windfalls have enabled the merry widow to live in luxury on an entire floor of an upper Eastside condo, while various trusts pay for her and Robert Spencer's political escapades. Had the pair come to Britain, I doubt whether the EDL would have needed to raise their fares.

ON THE MONEY

Ian Saville's Money Magic Show, conjuring coins from thin air and banknotes from his empty palm,

pausing to converse with Karl Marx or consult Archie Andrews' twin in the City, has delighted audiences from the Edinburgh Festival to the Jewish Socialists' Group Chanuka party. A man in Edinburgh came over after the show and asked where Ian had worked as a City trader. Our conjurer had done some research, but admitted he had no firsthand experience of high finance. All the more impressed, his fan says he works in the currency markets, and finds Ian's depiction all too accurate.

GOOD FOR NOTHING, OR GOOD FOR SOMEBODY

Relatives of Jimmy Mubenga, who died while being restrained by three G4S security guards, are waiting to hear whether the Crown Prosecution will press criminal charges. A jury last summer recorded a verdict of unlawful killing of the Angolan, who died while being put on a plane at Heathrow.

G4S's failure to provide security for the London Olympics did not prevent it getting the contract for the G8 summit, but its Australian subsidiary has lost the \$244 million contract for running the controversial Manus Island asylum detention centre in Papua New Guinea, where an Iranian asylum seeker was killed.

G4S still provides security systems and equipment for Israeli occupation facilities like Al Jalameh interrogation centre, where Arafat Jaradat died last year after brutal treatment. Here in Britain, G4S has been entrusted with activities ranging from detaining asylum seekers to hospital Private Finance Initiative contracts. It could be in the running to take over disability assessments from ATOS, held responsible for far more deaths than the heavy security guards.

Australian media interested in its finances found that G4S paid no tax in Australia in 2012, but received a tax refund of \$2.2 million. The company paid its British parent more than \$4 million in fees, despite declaring a loss of about \$264,000. In the same year, G4S paid no company tax in Britain, according to a report from the British National Audit Office. Perhaps G4S stands for Good for Shareholders?

GIFTED

A friend is stroking his beard and pondering the significance that French comedian, Dieudonné, accused of antisemitism, and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu both have names meaning "God given". I say I don't believe in that nonsense. "Maybe not, but they do," he replies.

JOIN THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

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

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

For further information write to:

Membership Secretary
Jewish Socialists' Group,
BM3725, London WC1N 3XX
jsg@jewishsocialist.org.uk
www.jewishsocialist.org.uk



JEWISH SOCIALIST

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

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

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

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

☐ I also enclose a donation of £.....

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Country _____

Overseas subscription £20 Sterling

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.