

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

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"Whether you live in London or are just visiting, these guided walks through radical history will help you see the city in a new light. Each of the different walks is a journey of discovery, a lesson in struggle, and a source of inspiration. David's knowledge, insight, humour and humanity bring our radical past back where it belongs: in the present." (Mike Marqusee – author and activist)



Fee: £8/£5 (unwaged). Book online at www.eastendwalks.com or email david@eastendwalks.com

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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

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Through this forum we aim to:

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

JEWISH ★ SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

No 68 Spring 2015 £2



■ Jewish Voice for Peace interview ■ Remembering Salonika ■ Roma Rights

■ Bundists in Israel ■ Syrian refugees ■ Jazz and justice

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EDITORIAL

The last few months have been an unnerving and eventful time. On the streets of Paris, in response to January's fatal attacks on the staff of *Charlie Hebdo* magazine and a kosher supermarket, world leaders jostled for the limelight (or at least not to be airbrushed out of the photos). Benjamin Netanyahu rushed round whipping up the fears of diaspora Jews and urging them to come into the warm, calm, safe arms of mother Israel. And our own nationalist treasure, Maureen Lipman, said, "It's crossed my mind that it's time to have a look around for another place to live." We can but hope.

It's a bizarre political stance that colludes with the perpetrators, saying: "The racists want to clear us out so let's clear out." But if you do take that view, perhaps it makes sense to go to a place where they are clearing out the Palestinians and announcing the deportation of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers.

A "survey" of Jews carried out by YouGov for another odd body, the Campaign Against Antisemitism, came up with the remarkable, and for most of us unrecognisable, statistic that "58% were concerned that Jews may have no long-term future in Europe, while some 45% felt their family was threatened by Islamist extremism" (The Guardian, 14th January 2015).

The hopeless survey methods and skewed findings instantly became a standing joke among those of us who have consistently campaigned to get accurate statistics and have fought antisemitism alongside and in solidarity with other threatened groups. But the worst of it is that distorting the picture to meet Israel's political priorities disarms diaspora Jews in their struggle against antisemitism.

The British government's response to these events was to divide and rule. Home Secretary Theresa May and Secretary for

JEWISH SOCIALIST

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Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles held up signs saying "Je suis juif". (God forbid.) At the same time, Pickles called on the Muslim leaders to "explain and demonstrate how faith in Islam can be part of British identity" and said, "We must show [the extremists] the multitude of statements of condemnation from British Muslims." With friends like that... as they say.

The Muslim establishment was pretty peeved and the self-appointed Jewish leadership wasn't too pleased either after centuries of cosying up to the British state, and the former Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, sympathised with Muslim leaders who felt they were being blamed for a global phenomenon.

The truth is that racism has proved to be both versatile and international. The violently fascist Jobbik party in Hungary, which has particularly targeted Jews and Roma, is set to make a political breakthrough. The far-right Front National is likely to make large gains in the French local elections. Nigel Farage has staked his election prospects on fear and demonisation of migrants from other European countries. And all this against a background of the constant drip of poison against Muslims and the terrifying conflagration in Syria, with related fires breaking out across the Middle East.

We need to be sophisticated in our response to this rise in racism and fascism, which is coming from the top of the political hierarchy as well as being a response to hopelessness by the poorest and most powerless people. But above all, we need to fight it alongside all the other minorities that are being targeted, in order to strengthen the vibrant, mutually supportive multicultural life we are forging together

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

Cover photo: Jewdas/Young Jewish Left participants on demo in solidarity with Gaza, summer 2014. Photo: David Rosenberg

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Reader survey The future format of Jewish Socialist. We need your views!

Jewish Socialist magazine is at a crucial juncture in its 30th year of publication. Our difficulties in appearing as regularly as we have wanted have been compounded by steeply rising postage costs and the economic difficulties of the book trade, resulting in significantly fewer retail outlets stocking the magazine.

This has occurred in a climate where more and more political activists are reading material online, which means sales at meetings and demonstrations are harder to achieve.

We are aware, though, that a number of our regular, loyal readers are not online or do not enjoy easy online access and may wish to continue receiving a printed copy of *Jewish Socialist*.

As a result of these different factors, we are more financially dependent on direct subscriptions.

We need to make some important decisions to safeguard the future of the magazine and we want you – our regular readers – to offer your guidance:

A Would you be prepared to pay more for your subscription (4 issues) to *Jewish Socialist* to offset our increased postage costs? If

yes, would you be prepared to pay £16? Would you be prepared to pay £20?
B Do you think the magazine should cease to be a print publication and become an online publication? Yes/No
C Do you think that the magazine should become mainly an online publication but bring out one print publication a year consisting of features, think-pieces and analysis, with news and more timebound items posted on the website?
D Do you have any ideas for other options that would enable *Jewish Socialist* to thrive in the future?

Please email your replies to: js@jewishsocialist.org.uk or send them by post to: JS, BM3725, London WC1N 3XX, no later than 31st May 2015. Prize for the first 10 respondents to our survey: You will receive a free copy of our pamphlet, *Freedom in His Heart: a tribute to Marek Edelman*.



Rebel footprints

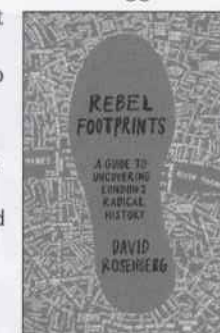
At a time when mainstream political parties are pandering to UKIP's poisonous anti-immigrant rhetoric, JS Editorial Committee member, David Rosenberg's new book, *Rebel Footprints*, highlights the crucial contribution of migrants and activists of migrant heritage to struggles for better lives in London.

Focusing on the period from the beginning of the 1830s to the end of the 1930s, Rosenberg writes about: William Cuffay, London's Chartist leader in 1842, whose father was born into slavery on St Kitts; John Archer, Battersea's black Mayor in 1913, of Barbadian and Irish heritage; and Shapurji Saklatvala, a Parsee Indian and London's first communist MP elected in the 1920s.

He emphasises the role of

Irish workers in the struggles by matchwomen, gasworkers and dockers in the East End, which brought about the new unionism, and the struggles of immigrant Jewish sweatshop workers between the 1880s and the First World War. The book includes nine annotated self-directed walks through London's radical history north and south of the Thames.

Rebel Footprints: A Guide to Uncovering London's Radical History by David Rosenberg (with a foreword by Billy Bragg), Pluto Press, £9.99



Families of victims demand independent investigation

Twenty-one years ago, 85 people were killed when the AMIA (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires was blown up. Yet to this day, shamefully no one has been brought to justice.

"Despite the magnitude of this bombing, in all of these years, there has been no truth; no one has been captured or convicted for this crime. All we have is impunity and a long

chain of cover-ups... The AMIA attack is an open wound in Argentine society, a large fissure that challenges the institutional legitimacy and social credibility of our nation."

Please read the whole of this statement of support to create an Independent Commission to Investigate the AMIA Bombing, and we encourage you to sign and share it. <http://apemiacominvestadhesion.ingles.blogspot.com.ar/>

WISEWORDS ELEANOR MARX (1855 - 98)

"Women are the creatures of an organised tyranny of men, as the workers are the creatures of an organised tyranny of idlers. Both the oppressed classes, women and the immediate producers, must understand that their emancipation will come from themselves. Women will find allies in the better sort of men, as the labourers are finding allies among the philosophers, artists, and poets. But the one has nothing to hope from man as a whole, and the other has nothing to hope from the middle class as a whole."

Extract from *The Woman Question*, 1886.

Eleanor Marx – trade union activist, actor, writer and translator (and youngest daughter of Karl Marx) – was a leading figure in the Bloomsbury Socialist Society, which helped to organise London's first May Day march in 1890. She organised women factory workers, fought for equal pay, worked closely with the gasworkers union, and learned Yiddish in order to help immigrant Jewish workers' in their struggles.



Be careful what you wish for

In January 2015, Israel's far right Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, drove through a new law designed to ethnically cleanse the Knesset (Israel's parliament). It raised the threshold for entering the Knesset from 2% to 3.25% of votes cast, the equivalent of four seats, in an attempt to disqualify small parties. On the basis of elections over the last two decades, that would have drastically reduced the number of MKs from parties that gain their votes principally among Israel's Palestinian voters.

His plan spectacularly backfired. In an otherwise dismal election, in which the main changes were a shift within the conventional right and far right away from the reactionary Jewish religious parties to secular right wingers, racists and ultra-nationalists, the parties owing most to Palestinian votes forged sufficient unity to campaign together in a Joint List comprising Hadash, Ra'am, Balad and Ta'al.

In previous elections many potential Palestinian voters have responded to calls to boycott Knesset elections so as not to legitimise the democratic façade of a country that operates institutionalised racist policies towards its minority communities. But in this election, when such voters saw the possibility of tactical gains, turnout among Palestinian voters rose from 56% to 68%. The Joint List won 13 seats, increasing by two seats the representation it had previously achieved as separate parties, but which would have been halved by the new law.

The new leader of Hadash – the strongest force in the List – is a 40-year-old secular socialist, Ayman Odeh, from Haifa. The Joint List's social agenda includes a 10-year plan to tackle issues especially pertinent to the Palestinian Arab sector, such as employment of women, rehabilitation of failing regional councils, recognition of unrecognised

Bedouin communities in the Negev, and public transport in Arab towns. Its new MKs include Aida Touma-Suleiman, a journalist, feminist activist and longstanding member of the Communist Party, and Yousef Jabarin from Umm el-Fahm, a village in Northern Israel with a strong record of campaigning on civil rights and equality issues. Among those re-elected was Dov Khenin – a Jewish communist member of Hadash, a lawyer who has been very active on environmental issues.

The four parties making up the joint list could have run on two lists and may still have achieved similar representation, but the urge for unity in response to Lieberman's provocation was particularly strong – bringing together socialist/communist, nationalist and Islamic parties into one parliamentary force. Their courageous step holds out the promise of greater unity in action between their supporters in their grassroots civil rights campaigning.



Summer rebuilding camp 19 July-3 August 2015 near Jerusalem

Internationals are invited to participate in the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) 13th camp. Join with Palestinians and Israelis who refuse to be enemies, in a powerful act of non-violent resistance by rebuilding a Palestinian home.

Participate in an extensive educational programme, including field trips to both sides of the divide. Strengthen your involvement in the global movement to end home demolitions and bring about peace with justice for all peoples.

Israelis, Palestinians and international volunteers have so far rebuilt 187 homes.

The fee for the 2015 camp is GB£1,116 (British pounds) or €1,425 per person (based on 5th January 2015 exchange rates). This includes accommodation, meals, field trips and educational programmes. It does not include airfares and airport transfer to and from Jerusalem before and after the camp.

For information and application form contact: summercamp@icahd.org

The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) was established in 1983 as an NGO working for sustainable development, environmental protection and women's empowerment. Today, PARC works with more than 160,000 rural and marginalised Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in its efforts to build greater food security. Palestinian agriculture suffers from a lack of open access to markets, scattered land holdings, a perennial shortage of water and land confiscation – problems resulting directly from the Israeli occupation.

PARC works with women heads of households to use rooftops, backyards and small scraps of land between buildings for gardening and animal husbandry. The women are provided with vegetable and fruit seeds and seedlings, as well as with breeding rabbits. PARC is also active in fair trade circles and their fairtrade, organic olive oil is available in Europe and in the United States. PARC describes itself as "a pioneer national developmental organisation with a regional trend committed to rural and agricultural development, social justice and national liberation".

www.pal-arc.org/index.html

CHANGE
THE
WORLD



COLD RECEPTION FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

Last June, to kick off Refugee Week, the Syria Solidarity Movement (UK) working with Syrian community groups and pro-refugee campaigning organisations, held demonstrations in London, Leeds, Glasgow, Liverpool and Oxford in support of Syrian refugees. Tragically, the campaign is even more urgent this year, and 16th June has been declared a National day of protest in support of Syrian Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK.

The UK government has accepted shockingly low numbers of Syrian refugees. At first the UK refused to join a UNHCR scheme for western countries to accept 30,000 of the most vulnerable refugees by the end of 2014, and another 100,000 over the following two years. Finally, under pressure, in January 2014 the government agreed to establish its own scheme, to take "several hundred". By last May only 24 had been admitted, and, according to the latest figures, a mere 143 Syrian refugees had been resettled in UK under the scheme.

The numbers suggested by the UNHCR are tiny when you consider the vast scale of the humanitarian crisis that has befallen Syria since the uprising of 2011 and the numbers of refugees spilling over into neighbouring countries. There are three million registered refugees, including a million in Lebanon, nearly a million in Turkey, and over half a million in Jordan. These are relatively poor countries with social problems of their own.

The response of Fortress Europe has been shameful: with no legal routes to safety, the Mediterranean has become a cemetery for tens of thousands of desperate Syrians, among others. The UNHCR resettlement programme is a very modest proposal when set against these figures but at least it was intended as a safe route for some of the most vulnerable refugees – families headed by lone mothers, rape victims and those in need of urgent medical attention.

Successive protests have been called to highlight this

scandalously inadequate response to the resettlement of refugees in the UK. Among the speakers at last June's Home Office protest were:

- Fabian Hamilton MP for Leeds North East, who spoke about his visit to refugee camps surrounding Syria, and the terrible hardship the refugees were experiencing there. As in nearly all refugee crises, the burden is overwhelmingly carried by the poorest states – a fact that led us to chant, "You let in only 24, Lebanon has a million more".
- Natalie Bennett, leader of the Green Party, who put the refusal to make a serious commitment to Syrian refugees in the context of wider public attitudes to immigration and refugees, which should be challenged.

- Left Unity's, Pete Green, who supported a comment made by No One Is Illegal activist (and Jewish Socialist's Group member) Dave Landau attacking all immigration controls. Green said, "Our position is very clear that we are for no borders – that all migrants and refugees should be welcome here." He added, if "the British values being touted by the Tories mean taking just 24 Syrian refugees from the current crisis – then they certainly aren't my values."

The Syrians who participated – many of them asylum seekers who had made their own way to the UK – highlighted other issues. These numbers are also modest (under 1,000 in the whole of 2012, according the Refugee Council's figures) mainly because of the enormous difficulty of getting to the UK to claim asylum. But the delays in processing even such low numbers of claims were causing asylum seekers great anxiety and distress, not so much for themselves as for their families left behind in calamitous situations – under siege, displaced, or in overcrowded refugee camps.

One asylum seeker told us: "I escaped Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp (in Damascus) just as it came under siege from the Assad regime and fled to the UK leaving my friends and family behind to starve. I had no choice – I was wanted for my political



opinions. I desperately want to help my family but my hands are tied because the Home Office has not processed my claim."

One of the demands we raised was that all asylum claims be processed within six months, in accordance with Home Office policy.

Many Syrians fled leaving everything behind so they are destitute when they arrive in the UK. The rates of asylum support they are expected to live on have been described as unlawfully low by the High Court in a recent challenge: single adults are expected to live on £36.62 per week. Many asylum seekers are going without sufficient food and other basic essentials for many long months or even years while their claims are being processed. One of our slogans on the protest was: "Asylum support £5 a day – live on that, Theresa May!"

Another problem for the refugees is that, if they finally obtain asylum, there is no legal aid available for assistance in the complex process of obtaining refugee family reunion. However in a landmark judgement on 13th June 2014 this was struck down as unlawful by the Court, and for the moment legal aid is available for refugee family reunion. We have helped to put Syrian refugees in touch with lawyers who will now take on their refugee family reunion cases.

Clara Connolly

Find out more

The Syria Solidarity Movement was founded in February 2014 and is committed to solidarity with the Syrian Revolution. Its aim is to provide political and material solidarity for the people of Syria and support their struggle for freedom. The SSM wants to work with all existing campaigns and progressive organisation to build a movement that can assist the Syrian people in their struggle for a democratic and free Syria.

<https://www.facebook.com/syriasolidaritymovement>

ANYONE WHO

Equality activist
DAVE LANDAU
took part in an
educational
project and saw
the realities of
Roma life

"They are all thieves! They defecate in the street! They're taking over our public spaces!" This was a local councillor talking about Roma people. Not Tory, UKIP or BNP, but a Labour Councillor (at the time). You may have heard about the murderous attacks on Roma settlements in Hungary, the systematic placement of Roma children into special needs schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the mass evictions and deportations in France and Italy. But here in Britain they face hostility, too, as the newest group of migrants to arrive. This has combined with an age-old hostility towards long established communities of Romany people and Travellers in Britain. Mix this toxic brew with the panic that "the country will be overwhelmed by Romanians and Bulgarians because of changing EU rules", and you have a highly dangerous movement of fear, loathing and hatred.

I work for Redbridge Equalities & Community Council (RECC), a local charity fighting for equality. We cover South Ilford, where there has been a growing Roma community, mainly from Romania. They are not the largest group of migrants in the area but they are new and very visible because of their clothing. Their social lives happen outdoors in large groups, and sometimes they beg (until 1st January 2014 they had no recourse to public funds, so there was surprisingly little begging, despite the perceptions). We have been trying to challenge this hostility by producing myth-busting materials and by building bridges between communities. We organise cultural events, explain their rights and provide information about how things work in London. We have worked very closely with local schools. Teachers have been working on winning the trust of parents, inclusion of Roma children into school life, and addressing the problems of under-achievement and attendance.

The London Borough of Redbridge and the Brasov County Educational Inspectorate in Romania secured funding from the Comenius Fund for a project involving visits to Romania by teachers from Redbridge and reciprocal visits from Romanian teachers and inspectors. The project was called HEART – Help Educate All Roma Together. The fund required the inclusion of community partners, and the RECC was that partner in Redbridge, so I had the privilege of going on trips to Brasov in Romania.

VISITING THE SHTETLS

There are four main groups of people in Romania: Romanians, Roma, Hungarians and Germans. There has been a degree of separate development of all four, but for the Roma this has been much more severe, largely reflecting a long history of discrimination and persecution. There are some villages that are entirely Roma, and sometimes the local school is almost entirely Roma because of its proximity to the village. I have long been aware of the similarities between the Roma and Jewish experiences – negatively, we share the experience of persecution, pogroms and our fate in the Holocaust

(called Porajmos, "the Devouring", by Roma people), being seen as the outsiders without an allegiance to the nations in which we live. Positively, there are cultural crossovers, especially in music.

I was not expecting to visit living shtetls but this is what they were. Villages of a marginalised people, living in tumble-down places with few utilities, except where some funds have been put into recent development. Animals grazing, especially horses. People were welcoming, as we were with teachers they trusted. We went through one village by horse and cart, with children running along beside us, who sometimes leapt on and joined us in the carts.

I have visited a village in Lithuania on the site of an old shtetl but now it is just a modern Lithuanian town. These Roma villages, though, are perhaps the nearest thing we have in the 21st century to the shtetls of the 19th century.

ORAL TRADITIONS AND EDUCATION

It might be argued that the big cultural difference between Jews and Roma is the apparent centrality of literature in Jewish life – we are called "the people of the book". Roma dialects are oral languages, rooted in ancient Sanskrit with connections to contemporary Indian languages. They have only come to be written down in recent times. So whilst our musics are intertwined and our arts and crafts are similar, maybe things are different when it comes to the written word. Roma have a great tradition of storytelling, whereas Jews have a Yiddish literature. The divergence is not as big as it might first appear. In 19th century shtetls there was a high degree of illiteracy. Yiddish would have presented itself largely as an oral tradition, despite some great Yiddish writings about shtetl life. In the more strongly religious villages there would have been a coterie of yeshiva types who were literate and spent their time studying the Torah whilst many others were illiterate. As Jews spread from the countryside to the towns and from the towns to the rest of the world, literature and education became greatly valued.

Historically Roma have been suspicious of educational institutions. This is hardly surprising given that, in many cases, children were put into special needs schools or remedial classes as if they had learning difficulties. This is still common elsewhere in Eastern Europe and perhaps in parts of Romania that we do not hear about. Illiteracy has therefore been reinforced through the generations. But there is an inaccurate stereotype of Roma as all poor and uninterested in education. Recently there have been articles by Roma people emphasising how Roma often achieve well in education and in their careers in parts of Eastern Europe, despite the discrimination. Often Roma activists and supporters are at risk of reinforcing stereotypes by emphasising the very real oppression and racism that they suffer.

However, the teachers we met through the HEART project were working hard to overcome low

HAD A HEART

attendance and achievement in Brasov County. They have won the trust of people in the villages. School attendance has to be won by going out into the community. This has been true to a considerable extent in the approaches developed by Redbridge teachers. But there are more practical obstacles, which have their roots in poverty. Some families say that their children cannot get to school because they have no shoes. The school has provided shoes, but sometimes these were then sold for food.

ROMA DAY

In the schools we visited, a conscious effort was made to acknowledge and celebrate Roma culture. We were seeing best practice, carried out by intensely dedicated teachers. We suspect that there are schools all over Romania where none of this is going on, where Roma do not attend, let alone achieve, and some sources indicate that the practice of Roma being shunted off to special needs schools or into remedial classes still goes on, as we know it does elsewhere.

But we had a tremendous experience at a big school in Sacele, a town in Brasov county with a large proportion of Roma children. We were there for International Roma Day, and the whole morning was given over to wonderful demonstrations of Roma music, dance and art.

At the same time, in London, there was a great meeting and procession marking Roma Nation Day – a slightly different name. Both go back to the First



Congress of the International Romani Union in London in on 8th April 1971. The idea is for a day that is marked throughout the Roma diaspora as a nation without territory or borders, represented on the world stage, for example, campaigning for representation at the UN. Echoes of Bundism.

Roma Day

Solemn speeches in the hall of Sacele School Number 5,
Tell of the London Congress long ago proclaiming
Roma Nation Day,
And here we are, a contingent from London.
I felt proud in my Roma Day T-shirt.

We all rose as the children sang the Roma Anthem
Gelem Gelem – "I travelled long roads and met lucky
people..."
Verse after verse recounts the tragic history of
genocide and persecution.

Suddenly a joyful exuberance took hold.
Children danced through the weaving lines of the
clarinet and accordion.
Acrobatic boys leapt and drummed their knees,
teasing and teased back by the girls,
Brightly coloured dresses waving defiantly at the
sneering world outside.

A Roma Romance in Romania!
The accidental conjunction of words
– Rom's ancient roots in Sanskrit, Romance/Romania
from Latin –
These words work their magic and veil the harsh
reality beneath.

What is this Roma Nation?
A nation without a territory, a people without
borders,
Unsettling the sedentary folk
Who yearn to take wing.

With their determination and support of their
champions,
Perhaps this time
The lucky people's luck will come in.

David Landau, Romania, April 2014

Clockwise from top left:
Art and craft activities
using natural objects
during 'Learn more, know
more' week; Roma
children give a thumbs up
to the visitors; Roma
students and teachers
from Mayfield School with
other HEART colleagues at
the Redbridge
Dissemination
Conference; Roma rural
life; a warm welcome for
the visitors.
Photos: Sue Mutter

MAKING COMMON CAUSE

As Jews, we should stand up for Roma rights, says **DANIEL MACMILLEN**



At first blush, there is an instinctive sense of kinship between Jews and Roma, emanating from a number of cultural resemblances and historical coincidences. Both groups share Eastern origins, have maintained ancient customs and traditions, and place an emphasis on family and community life. Laws of ritual purity play fundamental roles in both societies, from kashrut in Judaism to marimé in Romani culture.

Both developed their diasporic cultures in contexts of unease and hostility, and accordingly, Gypsies have a term for non-Gypsies (gaje), just as Jews have one for Gentiles (goyim). There is also a rich history of cohabitation and interaction. In the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, Jews, Gypsies and Turks lived together in an inter-ethnic quarter at the turn of the 20th century. Shtetls such as Ștefănești in Romania were constantly visited by Roma traders and blacksmiths.

In Hungary, Jewish musicians played so frequently in Roma orchestras that composer Franz Liszt called these bands Jüdische Zigeunerkapellen (Jewish-Gypsy orchestras). In pre-World War II Bessarabia, Gypsy musicians played at local Jewish festivals and balls.

Perhaps most saliently, there is also a painful shared past of persecution and suffering, characterised by wild prejudices, ostracisation, xenophobia, scapegoating, pogroms, ghettoisation and genocidal horror. In 15th century Spain, the deportation of Moors and Jews coincided with the attempted expulsion of Gypsies. Across the rest of Renaissance Europe, Jews and Roma were repeatedly banished, accused of banditry, disproportionately taxed, and portrayed as inferior and unhygienic.

Whilst the narrative of "two peoples bound by mutual suffering" appears clichéd, and simplifies the marked differences of policies effected towards Jews and Gypsies, the parallels remain poignant, nowhere more so than during Nazi rule. The infamous Nuremberg Laws of 1935 targeted Jews and Gypsies.

In 1941, Reichskommissar Hinrich Lohse ordered that Gypsies "be given the same treatment as Jews" in the Baltic region. Otto Ohlendorf, commander of Einsatzgruppe D along the Russian front, testified during his trial that he saw no difference between Jews and Roma. Both were perceived as equivalent threats, and were jointly decimated throughout the

Ukrainian Babi Yar valley and Crimea. Across Poland, Gypsies were relocated to Jewish quarters, including the Łódź and Warsaw ghettos. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Treblinka and other concentration camps in occupied Poland, Gypsies shared the unspeakable fate of Jews. In Yugoslavia, both Jews and Gypsies were targeted by the Ustaše, and hundreds were executed together outside Belgrade.

This tragic tangling of fates prompted Holocaust activist Simon Wiesenthal to write that "we Jews, including Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, have by no means shown the Gypsies the understanding or sympathy to which, as brothers in misfortune, they are entitled." Wiesenthal gestured at a distinct responsibility held by Jewish people in relation to the Roma, one rooted in a sense of empathy and historical affinity.

Yet despite this bond, questions affecting the Roma arouse sparse attention in Jewish communities. How often do we think about the marginalised reality of Europe's largest minority? How much do we really know or learn about the Porajmos (the Romani Holocaust; literally "the devouring" in Romani)? How often do we speak up about the Anti-Ziganism (prejudice and discrimination against the Romani people) pervasively peddled in the media? How aware are we of the systematic poverty, exclusion, educational disadvantage, and discrimination faced by Roma across the continent?

There have a number of principled initiatives by Jewish organisations over the years, but these have been limited and are restricted to a few countries.

As support rises for far-right political parties in Europe, and Anti-Ziganist attitudes surge, it is ever more vital that Jews express their outrage against all expressions of racism, and work to combat the social exclusion of Roma.

Let us recognise the vibrant and extensive contributions imparted by the Roma to the world, but also recall our necessary solidarity with the plight of Romani people today.

Note: An inevitable problem that arises when discussing ethnic groups is appropriate nomenclature. The "Romani people", and designations like "Gypsy" or "Tsigani", are umbrella terms, which encompass a heterogeneous array of smaller groups, such as the Horahane, Kalderash and Ursari. There is no agreed categorisation which is fully precise or unobjectionable, which is why I have used all the terms "Gypsies", "Romani", "Roma", and "Rom" to collectively refer to the cohesive population of Romani groups.

FIND OUT MORE

Filip Borev has written an instructive piece on nomenclature. What is in a word? 'Gypsy': pride or prejudice, <http://pipopotamus.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/what-is-in-word-gypsy-pride-or-prejudice.html>

LIFE IN THE CENTURY'S MIDNIGHT

In summer 1944, Antonia Lehr and two of her friends were deported from Vienna to Auschwitz concentration camp. Posing as a foreign worker recently married to an Austrian, Lehr was actually a Viennese Jew and a seasoned Communist militant, specialising in exceptionally dangerous propaganda work amongst German soldiers in Paris; her two companions were communist underground activists. They had collectively received the death sentence for organising Austrian anti-fascists, the deportation a mere stop to liquidation. As national traitors, they considered themselves finished.

However, moving to Ravensbrück – a women's camp with a high proportion of condemned political inmates, and the intended final destination for them – communication from the Auschwitz resistance organisation informed the Ravensbrück resistance of their special status as seditious Jewish Communists. The organisation created false identities for them, successfully "vanishing" them from the camp.

Antonia Lehr and her comrades were saved not by chance, but as a result of the rigorous underground developed from the start of the camp. This experience, which was unusual within the general context of the Holocaust, is far from exceptional within the history of the anti-fascist movement that operated behind *stacheldraht* (barbed wire).

When the Austrian Communist, Ernst Toch, arrived at Auschwitz from Sachsenhausen, he abandoned any hope he had mustered at his previous camp of "standing a chance". Sachsenhausen was a "managed nightmare" but Auschwitz was a "jungle of murder, looting and slavery", as his fellow inmate, Heinz Brand, described it.

Situated between Cracow and Katowice there was little, initially, to differentiate Auschwitz from other concentration camps established during the war. On 14th June 1940, the day Paris fell, the first 728 inmates arrived, all of them Polish political prisoners. Housed in a nearby tobacco factory until the buildings and infrastructure were ready to absorb them, the camp was already staffed by 30 German criminal inmates imported from Sachsenhausen. Within 10 months, 10,900 were imprisoned, and from October 1941 onwards a second complex was built to ease the congestion of an anticipated influx of Red Army prisoners in Auschwitz I. Auschwitz II-Birkenau absorbed the 10,000 Soviet prisoners who arrived in late 1941, and all but 945 had perished by early 1942.

By this point, the Nazi leadership had already decided to eliminate Europe's Jews. Nazi architect Karl Bischoff accordingly developed Birkenau's four crematoria, a new reception building, intentionally overcrowded barracks and a complex shower system to be built for the destruction and disposal

of prisoners. As inmates like Toch and Brand arrived from other camps, the disarray and mass murder of the "new camp" was striking to them, and they noted the atomisation and hopelessness of the terrified inmates.

Underground organisation had started among the first Polish inmates, a core of Polish military figures hoping to organise a Polish military structure from within. A cavalryman, Witold Pilecki, deliberately got himself arrested in September 1940. He intended to establish a military cadre in Auschwitz. Its objectives were to disseminate news from beyond the camp, procure extra food for the organisation and create Polish military groups.

Historian Józef Garliński belonged to this milieu, and whilst he wrote of how his experience in Auschwitz cured him of any prejudice towards Jews, his seminal work, *Fighting Auschwitz*, significantly minimises the antisemitic outlook of his comrades and the indifference with which they treated other prisoners. Men such as the notorious Alfred Stossel, who undertook an SS role of killing the infirm and unwell (as well as healthy Jewish prisoners) by injecting poison into their hearts was involved with this group. Kamimierz Smoleń recalled how Polish officers on potato-peeling duties – a light work detail staffed with older members unfit for other tasks – demanded they be addressed by military rank, an act of churlish pride not merely grotesque but incredibly compromising, exemplifying their unsuitability for clandestine activity. On the whole, the Polish organisation's "absolute chauvinism" and suspicion of all other nationalities created serious problems, and complicated issues throughout the camp's existence.

Spanish Republicans mirrored the Poles as a sizable, distinct national grouping, though unlike the Poles, the Rouge Espagnol carried an inherently anti-fascist label. The attack on the Soviet Union on 21st June 1941 instantly produced feelings of sympathy amongst them, and a Spanish organisation of resistance and solidarity was immediately established. Whilst declaring similar aims to those of the Poles, the Spanish group also wished to strengthen confidence in democratic ideals and to extinguish any doubts of the final victory of anti-fascist forces.

Their fellow stateless subjects, the imprisoned German Communist Party

As world leaders paid homage to the victims at Auschwitz on the 70th anniversary of its liberation, the struggle of the left wing resistance movement inside the camp went unacknowledged. **MARCUS BARNETT** tells their story



Families come out of their homes to meet visitors in a Roma village in Apatá. Photo: Sue Mutter

(KPD) members, also sprang into offensive activity. A subcultural milieu in German society detained *en masse*, communist militants had spent the years before 1941 engaged in a war of position against the green-triangle-wearing criminal prisoners given positions of control by the authorities, and in many camps were eventually successful in grasping considerable influence out of "Green" hands. Upholding the Comintern's Popular Front strategy in Auschwitz, they reached out to previously chastised Social Democratic Party (SPD) members, accumulating further influence in a camp where terror loomed large and politically principled elements were thin. A huge organisational coup came with the arrival of Józef Cyrankiewicz, a Cracow social democratic leader sympathetic to the Communists, as well as Austrian Social Democrats far to the left of their sister organisations in Germany and elsewhere.

It was in this context that in early 1943 several representatives of different leftist resistance formations established Kampfgruppe Auschwitz (Auschwitz Combat Group, KGA) in Block IV of Auschwitz 1. This unified camp movement had been planned since late 1942, but the chaos that reigned in Auschwitz created permanent delay on clandestine activities.

Johann Hirschtritt, a Jewish Communist once active in the *Rote Sprachrohr* (Red Megaphone) agitprop theatre troupe and imprisoned since 1936, stated that the KGA consisted of a "solidly organised core" and "a more nebulous periphery of men who could be asked to perform certain tasks or join in certain collective actions". The first KGA leadership was restricted to four men, Social Democrats and Communists in equal measure. KGA membership reflected the membership of the two workers parties, although in fidelity to Popular Front tactics of incorporating "all progressive bourgeois forces", several Christian Democrats were also involved. Resistance groups were organised in small cells totally detached from each other, with militants receiving orders and directives only through intermediary contacts.

International fraternity was crucial for the KGA, rejecting Nazi-imposed national divisions and transcending organisational sectionalism. "Only solidarity, international cooperation, and the fight for freedom give us the right to regard ourselves as fellow fighters against the misfortune that Hitler's Fascism has brought all over the world," declared one statement in the summer of 1944, proudly asserting the group's internationalism. Quickly, the camp committee absorbed the national groups of the Spanish, Yugoslavs, French, Czechs, Romanians and Germans, including many individual Jewish socialists and Communists.

This stance was a principled opposition to the workings of the mainstream Polish resistance movement, which was "nationally conscious" and broadly suspicious of Jews, Spaniards and Russians. Cyrankiewicz, the Social Democrat and KGA leader

is credited consistently in testimony by resistance fighters for his active intervention against Polish chauvinism, using his authority in the Cracow resistance to politically isolate Polish fighters demanding amenities from outside sources for "Polish use only". German KGA militants in positions of responsibility also made a point of going the extra mile for Russian prisoners, ruefully aware of anti-German suspicions the cruelly treated Russians harboured.

Whilst Auschwitz was partially a labour camp for German industry, those with employment were consistently reminded by arbitrary murder and constant new arrivals of their total expendability. It was clear to the KGA that a fundamental task was to tackle the reigning atmosphere of defeatism, although due to high levels of repression, KGA cells could only muster the organisational strength to resist demoralisation amongst its own ranks.

Indeed, above any other strategic concern the *raison d'être* of the Left was survival – and given the psychological and social anchor that the KGA infrastructure provided, involvement broadly bolstered individuals against submitting to defeat. A political line, a better chance of good rations and increased work protection, the self-esteem and dignity received by resisting injustice and being coherently organised – none of these aspects can be underestimated when considering the spiritual resources of survival amongst political prisoners in Auschwitz. Education was still *de rigueur* to leftist groups inside the camps as it was in civilian conditions, with resistance fighters given socialist and humanist reasoning as to why they organise and fight in certain forms; Marxist discussion circles even existed, with treasured editions of Stalin, Lenin and Plekhanov being read.

The KGA usefully took advantage of ideological-economic friction within the Nazi bureaucracy over how much camp labour could be conserved. As Auschwitz expanded, the camp authorities increasingly relied on prisoner authorities' wisdom, broadly unaware of organised resistance. In camp hospitals and labour assignments, where KGA militants attempted to place their comrades, prisoners employed in clerical duties saved lives by altering lists for particular labour details, prisoner transfers, and so on, whilst KGA hospital orderlies could persuade certain camp administrators and SS doctors to limit the killings or prevent excessive murder. This particular effort produced relative success – by July 1943, the mortality rate at Auschwitz (not including those exterminated upon arrival) fell to 3.5% from over 20% in the winter of 1942-3.

The KGA also excelled itself at accumulating facts and figures of Nazi atrocities, the logic for this particularly risky activity being based on the hope of future political justice. Cyrankiewicz's former resistance group in Cracow preserved 350 pieces of correspondence from the KGA, which make for compelling reading. Reports reached London via Cracow with surprising ease, containing statistics

and information about camp developments, mass executions and details of industry. This work deeply worried the Nazi administration; a KGA communiqué broadcast on the BBC directly threatening the Auschwitz SS, was met with alarm, resulting in several name changes. The KGA even arranged for cameras and film to be smuggled into Auschwitz. Through a hole in his pocket, the International Brigader and Jewish Communist luminary David Szmulewski took photographs showing the bodies being burned next to a crematorium, some of the only images of the camps created by prisoners themselves.

The KGA's ultimate goal was armed revolt, but only after it had amassed plenty of weapons, and only if it was known that the SS were planning to gas all prisoners. This latter point perhaps seems insensitive, but the mass nature of Jewish extermination had to be assessed unemotionally in calculating political strategy. Without weapons and men to make notions of rebellion a reality, any armed confrontation would be suicidal. There would be an immediate collective reprisal. Many of the KGA believed that the mere existence of organisation in these conditions was a partial success. Years of hard work had built a camp counter-government.

Of course, the Jewish population did not have this option, which is why several isolated acts of armed resistance occurred. A group of Sonderkommando (Jewish prisoner work units tasked with disposing of dead bodies from the gas chambers) plotted revolt in summer 1944. Having been approached as a "Jewish political" of serious standing by an eager Sonderkommando, David Szmulewski put them in touch with the deeply sceptical KGA leadership. Viewing the Sonderkommando as a lumpen force of broken men, Szmulewski held that there was "another side to the coin", that "these were primitive people; people who had become bestial. But there were also those who ... from the first day began to organize an insurrectionist movement."

Hashomer Hatzair activists, Israel Gutman and Joshua Leifer, who worked at the Krupp factory in Auschwitz, were entrusted with supplying explosives and powder for a future action, alongside their comrade Roza Robota. Whilst still wary, the KGA informed the Sonderkommando that they were to be murdered on 7th October 1944. On that day, the Sonderkommando attacked SS members with machine-guns, knives and grenades created by Soviet prisoners. Three SS people were killed and several seriously injured; one Nazi was even cremated. In response, 451 Sonderkommando were executed.

Fewer than 30 Sonderkommando survived the Holocaust, with "generations" of workers routinely executed in order to remove living proof of Nazi crimes. Resistance objectives of survival were meaningless for those who attacked the Nazis on 7th October.

However, the moral question of death and decisionmaking in the resistance was raised in subsequent years following the onset of the Cold War. A "debate" on the role of the Left in concentration camps emerged. Many found it easy to criticise the resistance's morality, its involvement (or "collaboration") with camp administration and their mutual aid which ensured the survival of political

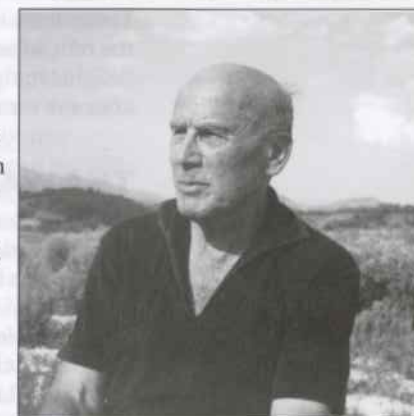
allies above other prisoners. "By what right did the Communists abrogate to themselves the power of life and death? Was it morally permissible for them to assist the SS in their running of the camp? Did they not become tarred with the same brush?" a *New York Times* journalist wondered in 1947.

However objectionable the notion of principled and humane individuals playing God with lives, one must be reminded of the harsh realities before arriving at a blanket moral judgement. The Christian anti-fascist, Eugen Kogon, reminds the reader of the competition underpinning the struggle for political self-determination in the camps, that "[the] SS principle of mixing categories, fostering national differences, and creating artificial ones had to be thwarted and rendered ineffective ... The only group that ever made an attempt to gain control of the internal leadership of the camps were the political prisoners and the [criminals]."

Within this context, "political" had to use the mechanisms of the camp apparatus or face the opposing criminal group utilising that same apparatus against them. Simone de Beauvoir furthers the logic of credential collaboration in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Once one is placed in an utterly inescapable situation of grave atrocity, "the only thing to do was to try, as far as possible, to rationalise it". An aloof attitude to mass murder, spurning the political possibilities of formal influence, would have been a true affirmation of hopelessness and futility, and a victory for criminal elements and Nazism. Articulating this in practical terms, the Buchenwald deportee and modernist novelist Jorge Semprun provides an example of the "ethics of the resistance":

The chief of the SS work unit orders the Kapo of the prisoner command, the day after tomorrow, Thursday, at six o'clock, I need three thousand men assembled in the yard to be sent to Dora. The Kapo consults with me, and I know that Dora is a harsher camp, where these men will likely die – so what do I do? Should I answer, No, I do not want to select three thousand men, they are all my comrades, I cannot choose? The idiot who says this is shot on the spot, and there will still be three thousand men chosen the following morning at six o'clock.

Herman Langbein (nom-de-guerre Victor), one of the "top four" of the KGA leadership defended their forms of resistance. He acknowledged the failures of the KGA to confront Nazism or destroy Auschwitz, save the Jews, or act in a wholly "pure" manner, but the organisation was able to alter the immediate destiny of the camp. In organising for survival, passing information to comrades on the outside and saving vulnerable comrades within, plotting for insurrection in the camps and for justice in post-war Europe, they were not merely objects in the cruel narrative of National Socialism but unbroken fighters for life in the century's midnight.



Three courageous members of the Auschwitz resistance. From the top: David Szmulewski; Herman Langbein, alias Victor; Karl Bischoff.

ABOVE ANY OTHER STRATEGIC CONCERN THE RAISON D'ÊTRE OF THE LEFT WAS SURVIVAL – AND GIVEN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ANCHOR THAT THE AUSCHWITZ COMBAT GROUP INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDED, INVOLVEMENT BOLSTERED INDIVIDUALS AGAINST SUBMITTING TO DEFEAT.

ISRAEL'S DIASPORA

Yitzhak Luden,
editor of
Lebnsfragn, the
Bund's
magazine in
Israel, talks to
MIKE HEISER

Yitzhak Luden was editor of *Lebnsfragn* (Questions of Life), the Bund's magazine in Israel, for over 50 years. The 60th anniversary edition was produced in 2011 but it ceased publication in 2014. I had first met him at Bund conferences in New York in the 1990s but last May, he took time out from preparing the proofs of the final issue to talk to me.

Luden described how a number of Bundists moved to Palestine in the 1920s, including Benzion Tsalevitch. He was a baker, who organised the first bakers' strike, and was also a correspondent for various Yiddish Polish newspapers at the time when Jewish nationalists were so hostile to Yiddish that they set fire to kiosks selling Yiddish newspapers. Tsalevitch nevertheless had the courage to give speeches in the *Histadrut* in Yiddish.

Later, during the war, when Yiddish-speaking Poles in the Allied forces were stationed in Tel Aviv, Tsalevitch's home in Basel Street, Tel Aviv, became the official address for Bundists in Israel. Luden delights in the paradox that Basel Street was named after the venue of the first Zionist Congress.

THE WAR YEARS

Luden, who was in the Polish army during the Second World War, first heard of Tel Aviv's Basel Street when he was in hospital in Karakalpakstan (now part of Uzbekistan) after the Sikorski armistice. He received a package from Palestine containing clothes and shoes sent by Benzion Tsalevitch. Luden arrived in Tel Aviv in 1948 as a refugee, not as an *oleh* (immigrant). He, along with many other Bundists, had been forced to leave Poland after the Communist takeover in 1948. He looked for the address on the package and there found a warm Bundist family welcome.

Isachar Artuski, who became leader of the Bund in Israel, was there. He was a former Communist who had turned against Communism after the 1936 Moscow Trials. For some time he had been editor of the Bundist paper, *Undzer Shtime*, in Paris, then the Bund's Co-ordinating Committee in New York agreed to send him to Palestine to strengthen the Bundists there.

The founding meeting of the Bund in Israel was held in a carpentry workshop in May 1951. Luden was serving as a soldier in the Israeli army and couldn't attend, but after leaving the Israeli air force (where he worked as a photographer in Dakota planes) he went to his "remaining family", the Bund. The rest of his family had perished in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Bund organised Yiddish supplementary schools, where his daughters studied, but they had to be taken home by taxi or minibus because of the hostility to Yiddish at that time.

After leaving the air force he couldn't find permanent work as a photographer but found temporary work as a journalist – which has lasted 61 years. He worked for *Letste Naves*, a Yiddish daily paper, for almost 40 years, then for the New York newspaper *Forverts*, for 15 years, and for

Lebnsfragn for 45 years. His lack of writing experience was offset by the good literary Yiddish style he learnt at his Bundist *folkshul* in Warsaw.

The New York Bundist, Mott Zelmanowicz, suggested Luden take on the editorship of *Lebnsfragn* in 1970 after Artuski's death. Artuski had prepared the issue; Luden only had to produce the cover and the last two pages – the obituaries (including Artuski's) and the editorial. Since then he has produced around 400 issues.

He reflected on the *chutzpah* of being a Bundist organisation in Israel. They were isolated as anti-Zionists but he is clear about Zionism, saying: "The Israeli State, the success of Zionism, was at the expense of the millions who died during the Holocaust." He doubted whether the UN would have voted for a Jewish state had it not been for the Holocaust, adding: "They always said that Zionism flourished on 'catastrophe'." If Jews are killed in South Africa or in Belgium it is declared as antisemitism and *aliyah* (migration to Israel) is encouraged. The more antisemitism there is, the more *aliyah*. In this way the state has grown to 8 million, of whom 5.5 million are Jews. He saw this as similar to the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution, when young Jews had wanted to be Communists.

But the Bund in Israel declared themselves as non-Zionists rather than anti-Zionists. Luden said that, when the leaders of Israel declare themselves as representatives of the Jewish people, the Jewish people as a whole are seen as responsible for the failures of the Israeli government. Zionism was born, he said, of the catastrophes that befell the Jewish people; and now Netanyahu brands every demonstration against Israeli government policy as antisemitism.

THE PERSISTENCE OF YIDDISH

In a radio interview, Luden said that there are many Yiddish-lovers but who do not dare to go against the government. In other countries, such as Argentina, former Yiddish schools became Hebrew-speaking under the pressure of Israel; those who ran the schools were too frightened to go against this. They are still around but *gut lebn hot men nisht* (they don't have a good life).

Central to the Bund's longevity in Israel has been the fight for Yiddish. When, at last, an official body was set up, Luden was invited to be a member of it, not as a representative of the Arbeter Ring or Brit Ha'avodah (to give the Bund in Israel its full name) but of the Writers' Union. He tried to fight for the rights of Yiddish but resigned when he could not stomach the corruption and provincialism, and because it was weighed down by faction fighting.

As time has gone on their strength as a movement has waned, but they have a lot of sympathisers. He says: "Every collective group, no matter how great or how small, has a right to self-determination. We are living in our own small world, against the tide."

Today there are few Yiddish schools and teachers

SOCIALISTS

compared with 80 years ago but Luden is confident that a new generation will arise with their own style to match the need of their own context. Very few children in Israel today have learned Yiddish from their parents, but they can now learn it in schools. Luden says that his generation has no more activists but younger sympathisers helped in organising an event to honour *Lebnsfragn* in April 2014. One of them is Benny Mer, a *Ha'aretz* journalist.

PARADOXICAL POLICIES

How relevant are Bundist principles to the situation in Israel and Palestine today? Luden linked the principle of national cultural autonomy to the historical situation in which the Bund developed, with millions of Jews in Poland, Ukraine and Bessarabia needing someone (other than the traditional Jewish religious community) to stand up for their rights. The Bund stood for national secular rights, and developed this in a situation where the rights of Jews were not being promoted by the existing socialist organisations within the Russian empire. The Jewish workers were oppressed both as workers, on account of their class, and as Jews, on account of their national status. The Bund was formed to fight for Jewish rights both as workers and as Jews. The idea of national cultural autonomy was developed in the Austrian socialist party by thinkers such as Otto Bauer, based on the multinational and multilingual realities they faced.

The original founders of the Bund did not intend to develop a national theory but leading Bundist thinker, Vladimir Medem, saw the need and persuaded the Bund to adopt it as a principle. Yiddishkayt was the glue, the identity card, that kept together not Jewish religious identity but "general Jewishness", Luden said. "Yiddishkayt without Yiddish is like coffee without caffeine," explaining that, when Jews assimilate into other languages, they become incorporated into the culture of those countries such as France or Russia. But then you no longer have a single Jewish people. The Jews are a world people, but if you lose the Yiddish language, which expresses this history and experience, there is no Jewish future. As scientific discoveries progress, religion is not a sufficient *raison d'être*.

DANGEROUS TIMES

The Bund fought religion, Zionism and Communism. Luden pointed to the danger of nationalism and fascism today, whether in France, Greece or in Israel. On the one hand globalisation has saved capitalism; on the other, the same forces have made nationalism stronger, and bring about more crises, with less social insurance. Capitalism is like a speeding horse galloping from crisis to uncontrollable crisis. He thinks this is leading to a "post-humanist" situation, where people are losing control. Other factors which are leading to this are the population explosion and nanorobotics.

Luden is optimistic, though, that, eventually, the

rules of morality and justice will win out over the law of the jungle and, ultimately, humanism and socialism, freedom, equality and humanity will triumph. He points to things he has said which were ahead of their time. Fifty years ago, before the modern Green movement came into existence, he wrote an article entitled "Ecology the new ideology".

PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

What are the possibilities of peace between Israelis and Palestinians? "It is easy to say the word 'Shalom'," he said. "It is used all the time. President Peres is very popular and represents himself as the greatest peace lover of all, but, as Minister of Defense, he was responsible for opening up the West Bank to Jewish religious settlers. He allowed a small group of fanatics to open a yeshiva in Sebastia, which has grown into a settler population of 350,000. Now Peres talks of wanting an agreement."

Luden describes Ariel Sharon as "the bulldozer of the colonists"; it was he who called on the settlers to take every hilltop and build settlements around cities such as Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron, in all the strategic places. When George W Bush produced his Road Map, Sharon declared that Greater Israel was a dream and a delusion, and that they should not rule over another people. This convinced the Left and led to the withdrawal from Gaza. Sharon presented himself as the "angel of peace". Even Benjamin Netanyahu now proclaims two states for two people, despite coming from a tradition that wanted to colonise both sides of the Jordan, using every excuse not to move towards peace. Even Yitzhak Rabin, after the pogrom perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein in Hebron that killed 30 and wounded 200 worshippers, couldn't use this to evacuate the Jewish settlers in Hebron. Today the Israeli army protects the settlers. Security is the universal justification, and movements that were once marginal, like the campaign to build a third temple, today have a real impetus.

Artuski, the founding editor of *Lebnsfragn*, talked of a confederation between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians, where each would have autonomy but be in partnership. Under Netanyahu, though, the situation seems to be moving towards three states in one land, with Gaza and the West Bank cities cut off from each other as well as from Israel. Luden believed that the recent agreement between the Abu Mazen and Hamas was an opportunity but Netanyahu is using every excuse to derail it.

As we said goodbye, Luden prepared to put the final touches to the final issue of *Lebnsfragn*, the last regular Yiddish Bundist periodical anywhere in the world. Its clear-sighted analysis will be missed.



Yitzhak Luden. Photo: Alon Aviram, courtesy of 972mag.com

Find out more

You can find information in Hebrew and Yiddish about the Bund/Arbeter Ring in Israel at www.bund.org.il

The final edition – and an archive of *Lebnsfragn* (in Yiddish) – can be accessed at www.lebnsfragn.com

Bundaim, a film about Bundists in Israel by Eran Torbinder is available at www.bundism.net/torbinder-eran

COLLUSION MASQUERADING AS COMPASSION

Barnardo's reflection on its first two years at Cedars "pre-departure accommodation" highlights the problem of NGOs working to a state agenda, says FRANCES WEBBER

When, in the wake of the coalition's 'abolition' of child detention in 2010, Barnardo's announced its participation in the Home Office's new 'family-friendly pre-departure accommodation' to be managed by G4S, it ignited a furious debate in the voluntary sector about the ethics of such contracts and the extent to which organisations' independence, values and *raison d'être* were compromised by involvement in the mechanisms of control. Since the contract was signed, campaigners angry at what they see as collusion with the re-labelled, prettified detention of children have picketed Barnardo's charity shops, leafletted staff and customers, occupied its Barkingside headquarters and disrupted a charity concert at the Royal Albert Hall.

The charity responded that it was merely doing what it did best: providing welfare and social work services to support some of the most vulnerable children in the UK. CEDARS, the name of the centre, is an acronym for Compassion, Empathy, Dignity, Approachability, Respect and Support, which is supposed to represent the attitude to the families staying there. (It is not called a detention centre, despite its obvious security features.)

In case G4S did not live up to the acronym, Barnardo's set out seven 'red lines', pledging to speak out if a family stayed more than once, or for over a week (the absolute maximum permitted period of detention, requiring ministerial authorisation for any period above three days), and to withdraw from the contract if this happened more than twice; to speak out if the level of force used in moving people to and from the centre was 'disproportionate' or if it had serious concerns over staff behaviour, and to withdraw from the contract if these issues once raised were not adequately addressed.

Reading its report, Cedars: two years on, reopens all these questions, and induces a tumult of reactions. In fact it is over three years since Barnardo's announced the contract. It is only fair to acknowledge (and the report cites testimony from HM Inspector of Prisons and others) that Barnardo's presence appears to have lessened the immediate violence of detention and removal and reduced the levels of stress and distress for many of the children and parents held at Cedars. We also learn that it is supporting some G4S staff to undertake a diploma in childcare.

The removal of a young teenage girl and her mother was stopped when Barnardo's staff shared concerns about a risk of trafficking or exploitation. This is the only instance in the report of Barnardo's intervening to stop a removal; generally, their task is to make families feel better about being removed, through kindness, talking, games, perhaps contacting family members in the home country or ensuring some post-return financial support. The report proudly recounts the story of a family highly distressed at the prospect of removal when they arrived, transformed by Barnardo's care and expertise

into one dressed in their best and looking forward to seeing extended family again and going to the beach on return – they even sent a thank you email.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report is not wholly complacent about the centre. It describes four areas where "improvements can be made". Arrest and escort arrangements, where continued routine use of too many uniformed officials descending on families in their homes and bundling them into vans, exacerbates distress, and Barnardo's recommends that escorts (currently from the private company Tascor) in "appropriate" numbers, wearing uniform and protective equipment such as handcuffs only when this is really necessary, should use unmarked transport to remove families, who should be given time to dress and collect belongings, and unexplained and unnecessary delays should be avoided. Properly recruited specialist escorts, trained in safeguarding, should be used to work with children and families. It is concerned too about inconsistency in the use of force: when it should be used, to what extent, and how to avoid it. It has intervened with the Home Office on three occasions on the disproportionate use of force, and wants a Home Office policy emphasising techniques to minimise the need for physical intervention. It reports that the Home Office no longer authorises the use of force on pregnant women or children except to prevent harm.

Its strongest criticism is of splitting families for the purposes of immigration enforcement, which it says should never be done: the only justification for splitting families is protection and welfare concerns. It also expresses concern about failed returns followed by rearrest.

WHAT'S MISSING?

So why does the report leave a queasy feeling? The sleight of hand (I won't call it dishonesty) of omitting children held elsewhere from the statistics on children's detention doesn't help. We read that a total of over 1,100 children were detained in 2009, before the coalition pledge to end children's detention and the setting up of Cedars, and that only 120 children were held in Cedars in its first year and 90 in its second. No reference to the children held at Tinsley House, or in airport holding centres, which pushed the numbers up – or to the scores of children held as adults, in adult detention centres.

The self-congratulatory tone doesn't help either. Passages describing Barnardo's input in choosing paint colours, furnishings and discreet "dynamic security" before the centre opened in August 2011, disguising security arches with murals to ensure child-friendliness induce fury. "It's a detention centre, you can't disguise it!" you want to shout. Even the criticisms of the Home Office and of

escorts are muted and conciliatory. Negative incidents tend to be skated over: there are no details of the widely publicised incident of the dangerous use of force on a pregnant woman, described in the HMI report, no description of the other incidents on which Barnardo's claims to have intervened with the Home Office, and no reference to any attempted suicides at the centre, although at least one has been reported by Right to Remain (formerly the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns) and found in *Indymedia* (October 2012). No reference, either, to the fact that, as HMI reported, over half of all arrests were "dawn raids". The language employed gives no sense of the extreme distress of children caught up in these raids, viscerally reported by Sir Al Aynsley-Green in 2009 when he was Children's Commissioner, in The arrest and detention of children subject to immigration control, and unchanged since. The report has a sense of unreality about it: guards and escorts don't use force on children (so when a child fearfully clings to his bedframe, they wait indefinitely? Coax him with sweets? Go away?) With some minor, easily remediable exceptions, the report's tone suggests, everything at Cedars is hunky dory.

FADING RED LINES

Yet even on the face of this report, it would appear that Cedars and escort staff have strayed over Barnardo's red lines: in the repeated (though not systematic) use of disproportionate force; in the "repeat detention" of families referred to obliquely towards the end of the report. But there is no mention of withdrawal from the contract, which the famous "red lines" require (with hindsight one sees how carefully they were drafted, giving the organisation plenty of wriggle room). The failure to spell out with sufficient clarity the serious incidents of misconduct and the repeat detentions which might have justified withdrawal, and the bland, reassuring language of the report gives the contrary impression: it is onwards and upwards for Barnardo's, with its "responsibility to improve both the Family Returns Process and the wider asylum and immigration system".

And how could it be otherwise? Having taken the contract in the first place, and having seen the difference skilled and caring staff make to the process of detention and removal, it is practically impossible for Barnardo's now to pull out. The organisation would see it as a betrayal of those children.

Herein lies the nub of the problem. Barnardo's presence does make removal a less painful process for some children and families – but that makes it wholly complicit in the process. If Barnardo's was serious about its mission to improve the wider asylum and immigration system within which it operates, it would be up in arms about the legal aid cuts which have led to the decimation of good independent legal advice and assistance for those seeking to stay. It would be no less angry about the abolition by the Home Office of its promising attempt to reform asylum decisionmaking, the Solihull Pilot or Early Legal Advice Project, which was hailed for cutting costs, reducing appeals and providing more credible and sustainable decisions through a collaborative process between the

asylum seeker, the lawyers and Home Office caseworkers. These two developments since Barnardo's entered its contract mean that the families in its care now face removal after a significantly worse, less reliable decision-making process than before, with much-reduced access to decent legal help.

The organisation has, in the past, lobbied government to ensure that the rights of unaccompanied children are respected in the asylum process – yet in this review of its involvement in the removals process, there is nothing which indicates its understanding of the impact these changes have had, and will have. Nothing, either, about the likely impact of the removal of most appeals under the Immigration Act, which received royal assent on 14 May 2014 – although the Act's statutory grounding of the Family Removals Process Act is (rightly) welcomed for the additional safeguards it confers.

So it is almost a case of the three wise monkeys. Barnardo's selective vision means that neither in the laws that strip families of access to meaningful legal remedies, nor in the processes whereby children and families are removed, does it see or hear evil. It does not (and cannot) generally challenge or second-guess the basis on which removal has been ordained (with the one exception of the possible trafficking victim). It has unquestioningly accepted the Home Office's categorisation of families as the non-compliers, the refusers, who having been refused leave to stay, refuse to leave, will not accept voluntary removal, will not co-operate with arrangements for their removal – and that is why they are there. It is not Barnardo's job to question or survey the context within which it works. It cannot but accept the Home Office frame of reference, and its stance is that the children should not suffer for the sins of their parents. But what if the parents' desperation stems from their being more sinned against than sinning?

OBJECTIONS

While Barnardo's bona fides in seeking to make the experience of detention and removal as painless as possible for children is beyond question, it is its naïve, unquestioning acceptance of the framework of its care provision, and of all the other players, that angers objectors. In the final analysis, the concern expressed by Al Aynsley-Green, then Children's Commissioner, when Barnardo's took the contract – that organisations can't effectively hold government to account if they work inside the system and take public money – is vindicated by this report. Barnardo's colludes with, legitimises and provides chintz curtains for a system of institutionalised disbelief, indifference and inhumanity – no matter how kindly it does its job.



Find out more

The full Barnardo's report can be downloaded at www.barnardos.org.uk/16120_cedars_report.pdf

Right to Remain, <http://righttoremain.org.uk>

Sir Al Aynsley-Green's report, The arrest and detention of children subject to immigration control, can be downloaded here: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_361

Sir Al Aynsley-Green, then Children's Commissioner, raised the dilemma of children's advocates colluding with government policy from the start: www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/al-aynsley-green/who-is-speaking-for-britains-children-and-young-people-challenge-to-chil

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A GROWING

As Israeli forces bombarded Gaza last summer, a radical Jewish opposition was growing stronger in the largest diaspora community – the USA. **DAVID ROSENBERG** spoke to **REBECCA VILKOMERSON**, Director of Jewish Voice for Peace

"In six cities we had civil disobedience actions within the course of 48 hours. I was at the New York one. We decided to target the Friends of the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces). Ten of us went inside [their building] and we had a support demonstration downstairs ... we started reciting the names of all the people who had been killed in Gaza so far, at that point it was about 600... We didn't get to the end of the list. We were saying the names and the ages of each person. You start to feel what 600 people is, when you are saying each name. And that was just the beginning, as it turned out. Anyway we were arrested ... but our charges were dismissed."

Neither the British Jewish newspapers, nor the larger, more powerful non-Jewish press reported this demonstration described by Rebecca Vilkomerson of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), or the related actions in other American cities. The mainstream media seem more comfortable with lazily perpetuating the idea that Jews in America fully supported what Israel was doing in Gaza and that the American government backed Israel because it was responding to powerful pressure from the organised Jewish community.

Vilkomerson's experience of these actions contradicts this perspective, and it is undeniable that support for Jewish Voice for Peace mushroomed through the latest Gaza conflict. In early 2009, during the previous Gaza operation – Cast Lead – JVP's mailing list quadrupled from 20,000 people to 80,000 and its members were organised into five chapters (branches). "Now," says Vilkomerson, "we have 71 chapters. Thirty of those are new since June [2014]. They are all sticking."

The organisation has developed a larger and more diverse base but is more united in its politics and strategy. "We have a Rabbinical Council of about four dozen members. We have a youth wing; an Academic Advisory Council, an artists' faculty; we have 'Open Synagogue' for synagogue members who want to be active. We have local organisers, regional organisers. We are getting into everywhere. We have created such a varied and multifaceted set

of institutions for people to come into."

Vilkomerson, herself, became a member of JVP at the time of the second Intifada which started in September 2000, but JVP itself goes back further. It began life in 1996 as an initiative by three young Jewish women in Berkeley, California. At first it was more of a cross-cultural exchange

organisation, promoting contact and cooperation between local Jewish and Muslim organisations, who refused to replicate the antagonistic relations of those communities in Israel and Palestine. But it

became more political in the charged atmosphere of the Second Intifada and the events of 9/11 which followed one year later, with all its negative impact on attitudes to Muslims in America and elsewhere.

The members of JVP in its early years were mainly secular Jewish leftists. "They had been active in many movements and they decided to be active as Jews because they realised it would have a bigger impact." The shift towards becoming a more politically oriented organisation suited Vilkomerson who by that time had already identified as an active leftist, on both domestic and international issues.

"I was working in Guatemala with an indigenous women's cooperative, and I got an education there about the US role in the Guatemalan civil war. I came back and felt I should be doing work back in the US." She became involved in welfare rights and homeless rights, then, in 2002, she was involved in her first public action as a Jewish activist.

"It was after the invasion of Jenin, when we took over the Israeli Consulate office. We had these T-shirts, which I thought were bold to wear, which said 'Peace for Israel requires justice for Palestinians.'" She looks back on that slogan now as rather limited; still locked in a framework that places Israel at the centre, which supports justice for Palestinians in order to make things better for Israel and Israelis. JVP now talks a much more direct and consistent language of universal rights, challenging injustice for its own sake.

But Israel had already featured significantly in Vilkomerson's life as she was growing up. "I had had a very Jewish upbringing in a Conservative (Masorti) synagogue that my grandparents founded. My aunt had made aliyah [emigrated to Israel] and my grandparents followed. We went back and forth every three or four years – so we had a very strong connection with Israel. When I went in my 20s I felt uneasy. I had vague arguments with my family about it but didn't feel I knew enough, so we put it off." When the second intifada started she could no longer avoid the issue. By then she had also married an Israeli – and she acknowledges that this forced her to confront the questions more deeply.

The conditions were ripe for JVP to expand in the early 2000s, but its initial growth was fraught with problems. "There were several small organisations around the country. Our tone and our message was attractive to them, so they came to us. We absorbed five or six local organisations but that turned out to be a bit of a disaster. They wanted to be part of JVP but they also had their own small organisations, with their own way of doing things, their own egos. It didn't quite coalesce in the right way. Most of the organisations that joined us, left us again, it was close to falling apart," she admits.

As JVP was enduring what it refers to retrospectively as "the troubles", Vilkomerson moved to Israel with her husband and young children. They stayed for three years. Here she became very directly involved in radical protest movements and organisations seeking to change

CLAMOUR

people's immediate circumstances.

Her first call was Ta'ayush – Arabic for "coexistence" or "life in common". This grassroots movement of Palestinians and Israeli Jews, in its own words, works "to break down the walls of racism and segregation by constructing a true Arab-Jewish partnership" and striving for "a future of equality, justice and peace through concrete, daily, non-violent actions of solidarity to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and to achieve full civil equality for all."

Vilkomerson's younger daughter was five months old at the time they came to Israel. "I thought, what can I do that doesn't involve being tear gassed. I started to raise money for a playground in the South Hebron hills; I was driving kids in the West Bank to hospitals in Israel when they had permits to do so. I was working for an organisation called Bustan [a joint Palestinian-Israeli project working for environmental and social justice] and also for a Palestinian-Israeli education policy group, which was working on education issues in the Palestinian sector. I was continuing to work with the activists, eventually doing most with Anarchists Against the Wall."

Her experiences in Israel and Palestine altered her perspective on the kinds of solidarity activity that could be done by campaigning groups in the diaspora. She was in Israel during the wars in Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2009. She says: "Gaza 2009 was really when I became convinced about BDS [Boycott Divestment Sanctions]. Very small groups of amazing people such as Anarchists Against the Wall were protesting every day. People were throwing eggs at us and attacking us on the way home. Shortly after that Naomi Klein came for a tour according to the BDS demands – not under any state sponsorship. The whole BDS thing began to grow inside Israel, and that was for me when I became convinced that it was a good tool."

When Vilkomerson returned to the USA in 2009, JVP was emerging from its internal difficulties, had strengthened its infrastructure, and was growing rapidly in popularity in direct proportion to the rising deaths and devastation caused by Operation Cast Lead. JVP was advertising for a new Executive Director.

"I marched myself in," says Vilkomerson, "and said I would like to be the Executive Director. Up to that point the centre of the organisation was in California. They always had ambitions to be a national organisation. I said I wanted to do it in New York because that is where all the Jews are, on the East Coast. And so I became Executive Director in 2009 and it worked out."

Vilkomerson brought her political experience to the project and, under her leadership, it appointed its first organiser and oriented itself much more to grassroots organising and reaching out. The resulting changes have significantly altered the demographics of the organisation.

"The biggest area of growth is among young people, so JVP is much, much younger than it used to be. The younger folks tend to be more Jewishly

observant and to come from Jewishly committed households, and they have khavurot (collective religious gatherings). Often they have been in Zionist organisations earlier, however, what is interesting to me is that, the more Jewishly observant they

are, the less hesitation they have about identifying themselves as anti-Zionist. The Jewish identity of many among the older generation – my generation and above – is about the Holocaust and Israel, whereas the younger generation have this active Jewish identity that is not tied to Israel. They feel themselves free from Israel – no problem. They feel comfortable with anti-Zionism, they don't feel that removes their Jewish identity."

She emphasises that JVP does not define itself narrowly as an anti-Zionist organisation. "Somebody at a conference recently said it was very anti-diasporist to define yourself in the context of Zionism. If you are a diasporist Jew why should you define yourself in terms of Zionism? But that is not the reason why. We honour our heritage, and that feels too rejecting of our families and family histories. We try not to talk about 'Zionism' at all because it is very hard to define 'Zionism'. We talk about equal rights, about human rights, about international law and freedom and security for all the peoples of the Middle East. We always try to talk from a place of principle, not from a place of ideology. 'Zionism' is a word that cuts off debate. But there are some people in JVP who want to define themselves as non-Zionist or anti-Zionist and I think we are all comfortable with that."

The emergence of J-Street, a liberal-Zionist lobby group aiming to shift American policy in a less right wing direction in relation to Israel, but unwilling to step beyond the framework of "what would be good for Israel" to "what might be good for the Palestinians", who are, after all, the ones suffering occupation, has actually helped to bring about greater unity in JVP.

"We always tried to have a big tent. Our politics narrowed a bit and went left when J-Street emerged. They took our own right wing away and we became more unified politically. We don't take a position on one state or two states. Our position on that is that it is not our position to decide as American Jews. Our job is to change American policy."

JVP looks to the Anti-Apartheid struggle and the American civil rights struggles as models of grassroots based movements that forced a change



of agenda at the highest levels. "We made the analysis that the US government is playing a destructive role in relation to Palestine in the 20-plus years since Oslo. Given the strong opposition we face from the lobby – the Jewish organisations, the Christian evangelical organisations and the military-industrial complex – the right strategy is to do grassroots organising to develop a strong enough group of people that eventually forces the government to change its policies, in the way that the Civil Rights movement did. The government also changed its policy to South Africa in response to the Anti-Apartheid movement. And gay marriage too. Fifteen years ago you couldn't even talk about gay marriage but now two thirds of the people live in states where there is gay marriage. Change can happen slowly, it can happen fast.

While JVP is in for the long haul in seeking to shift government policy, its practical support for Palestinian rights and justice are enacted through BDS campaigns. Vilkomerson describes BDS as "a tool for being in solidarity with the Palestinians as part of a larger movement and for defining ourselves as being in favour of universal values of equality and justice and human rights. We are not the movement, we are part of the movement – a

Jewish voice in that movement."

JVP is proud of how it supported the Presbyterian church's divestment campaign. "There are all these inter-faith commissions, which do very anodyne things. We supported the Presbyterian Church in their divestment campaign. It's our biggest win so far. The Presbyterian Church voted to divest from three companies profiting the occupation. Meanwhile, the coalition that the Presbyterian Church is part of used all the pressure they have, to bully them and say that 'if you don't do what we say, we are out of this coalition'. We stepped into the breach. We recognised the key role that we could play as a Jewish organisation supporting a church to make the right ethical decision. We played a real linchpin role.

"We launched this campaign to get the biggest educational organisation in the country to divest from companies profiting for the occupation. We made that into a coalition effort. They divested \$72 million of capital stock out of their social choice fund. Those are the concrete victories but I also think the real victory is how big we are right now. The growth is enormous."

JVP have reached a level of strength and influence that has created a quandary for the

American Zionist establishment organisations. "My sense of where we are at is that the mainstream Jewish community is starting to give up on convincing at least the progressive wing of the Jewish world by force of argument. They are trying to enforce it by silencing, intimidation and threats, and because they are giving up on arguing with us, they have a lot of rules now about excluding us. For example, Hillel International and the Jewish Federation have been drawing up guidelines, so that anyone who 'supports BDS', including boycotting settlements products, anyone who 'delegitimises Israel', anyone who applies a 'double standard' to the state of Israel – very vague terms – can't be part of their organisation. In the case of the Jewish Federation which is the biggest funder of smaller Jewish organisations, any Jewish organisation that gets funding through the Jewish Federation can't even be on a panel with anyone from JVP. They are totally shutting us out; they're blackballing us.

"At the same time, though, resistance is popping up. In Hillel there is this ... 'Open Hillel conference'. It's all students, and they're saying that 'Hillel is an organisation for all Jewish students. Some of us support BDS, some of us are JVP and some of us aren't, but we want to have an open argument.'

There were 350 students there. It was phenomenal – a very direct challenge. It was calling the Jewish community's bluff, saying, 'Are you truly willing to let go of this smart, young, thoughtful, committed, connected, segment of the community just because of political views?'

"In the Jewish community there is an obsession with intermarriage, with assimilation, with young people. They have endless conferences about 'What do we do with young people?' but they don't want to let young people have their say. They want them but on their own terms. Part of what we are doing is building alternative Jewish communities. Part of being progressive and Jewish in the USA now is having JVP-ish kind of politics. Some people who identify with JVP are religiously Jewish, some are secular, and some people are part of it because of the history of involvement with social justice. There are all kinds of Jews."

"With Netanyahu's bullishness and arrogance antagonising increasing numbers within the American political establishment, the situation is looking more and more promising for Jews, young and old, who are committed to progressive politics and to social justice, and for those whose causes they are supporting.

Jewish Voice for Peace
jewishvoiceforpeace.org

NEW KIDS

A young activist Jewish left, challenging Israel and setting its own agenda, is developing in the UK. **PHILIP KLEINFELD** reports

On a small bank of grass outside Sinclair House in Redbridge, 20 young British Jews are mourning for the dead. In their hands a banner with the words Haskalah Not Hasbara ripples gently in the breeze. It is a message for the Zionist Federation (ZF) holding a conference inside: a plea for education over PR, for enlightenment over nationalism.

"We affirm a Jewishness not tied to state violence," says one of the activists as he reads a statement to the group. "We affirm a diasporic Jewishness that welcomes critique and speaks truth to power. We refuse to be complicit in our words, in our actions, or in our silence, to the massacres perpetrated in our name."

Since Israel's latest assault on Gaza there is a sense that things have changed for young Jews in the diaspora. The sheer brutality of Operation Protective Edge, broadcast outside of the old media hierarchies, has brought a significant number of left-wing Jews into contact and action, to rallies and marches, and to community events like this one.

"Among the younger generation there is a desire for an alternative," says Annie Cohen, a member of Jewdas, the radical diasporist group. Annie was one of many young Jews who assembled outside the Red Lion pub on 19th July to march from Downing Street to the Israeli embassy. The circumstances were profoundly tragic – 300 Palestinians had already died by this stage. But it was a cathartic moment for many of those involved; a chance to demonstrate their commitment in public with other Jews that think the same.

"Being Jewish should by no means equate to full-fledged and blind support for Israel," said Dimitri Macmillen, who was marching for the first time that day. "This was my first ever involvement in a public gathering concerning Palestine. Attending it never

quite amounted to smashing a psychological barrier but perhaps served as a minor milestone in my ever growing understanding of Israel."

These rallies were the start of a period of intense activity for Jewdas and other Jewish groups. A week after protesting in Redbridge, a number of activists attended an event at the new Jewish cultural centre, JW3, on British Jews and the conflict – a space for young Jews to discuss how what was happening in Israel affected them.

"The aim was to help move those people who are somewhat open-minded towards a more critical stance," said Joseph Finlay another Jewdas member. "And I think we may well have managed that. I think it shows the effectiveness of an 'inside the room' strategy – where there are Jewish community events that are open, we go to them and articulate a critical/non-Zionist position politely, in a way that tries to take people with us."

On 11th August a number of Jewdas activists attended a Board of Deputies Town Hall meeting in North London. Some sat inside observing and recording what was said. Others distributed flyers advising Jewish institutions not to conflate Judaism and Israel.

A week later, Jewdas travelled to Brighton to protest at an Israel solidarity demo organised by Sussex Friends of Israel, who had invited the mayor of an illegal Israeli settlement as one of its key speakers.

"We went to the rally because we were concerned about the links between Sussex Friends of Israel and the Far Right," says Annie. "We were also concerned that the Board of Deputies had backed, and attended, this rally despite the shameless inclusion of the Mayor of Efrat. Our presence wasn't welcome, but showing fellow Jews that there is Jewish

ON THE BLOC

opposition to Israel is immensely important."

While these actions unfolded, another space thrived online. Set up in 2008 during Operation Cast Lead, the Young Jewish Left Facebook group has grown rapidly over the last few months. Lev Taylor, one of the group's founders, explains:

"In 2008 I felt like the entire community was defending the indefensible," he says. "So with some friends, scattered around the country, we made a Facebook group to vent about what we were seeing. At the time, it had fewer than 50 members. Since Israel's latest onslaught on Gaza, it's grown to nearly 500 and moved more and more offline, fusing with Jewdas, the Jewish Socialists' Group, Jews for Justice for Palestinians and other groups. The number of Jews waking up to Israel's injustices and becoming openly critical of the occupation is steadily growing. An entire generation is becoming disillusioned with the 'Israel-right-or-wrong' mentality. I hope the forum will continue to grow and we'll be able to create a positive, diasporist alternative."

Being on Jewish blocs was an empowering experience for many activists involved. But it wasn't without difficulties. The vast majority of people attending demonstrations and marches were clearly not antisemitic, but racism was still present.

"As a Jewish group, the apparent rise of antisemitism was a key concern for us," Annie says. "None of us have found it acceptable seeing the occasional swastika on demos, even if they are only 'occasional'. The solution for Jewdas was to challenge these placards, signs and banners directly."

Guides on how to criticise Israel without being antisemitic were made and handed out to demonstrators. Some people accepted their error when approached but many were unwilling to

acknowledge the problem.

"A lot of the people I approached didn't seem to be aware of why certain images – a Jewish leader with horns, for example – might be seen as antisemitic," said Annie. "Even when I explained, they insisted they hadn't meant it as antisemitic, and that if it was interpreted that way, why should it be their problem? Most Palestine campaigners have been hearing the accusation of antisemitism from the Jewish establishment for so long that trying to get people to discuss the issue was difficult and exhausting."

The activism during the Gaza war was built on opposition both to Israel and to the mainstream Jewish establishment which defends it. For many young Jewish activists the next step is to move from a group opposing a war to one that is capable of social change.

"The Jewish community remains the biggest link with and support to Israel," Annie says. "I believe that changing opinions and growing new, critical movements within that community can make a difference. I would like to see more Jewish groups growing and actively showing solidarity with Palestinian activists and campaigning to end the occupation and the siege."

This also means building a Jewish culture without Israel at its centre, something Jewdas has been doing for the past decade. "We're all engaged in different ways in a countercultural project," says Joseph. "To reclaim the specificities of Jewishness that are rooted in all the myriad places Jews lived, and reject the bland homogeneity of Zionist Jewish identity."



RECALLING APARTHEID

STEPHEN MENDEL visits Palestine and sees similarities with apartheid in his native South Africa

I'm a social worker who visited Palestine in 2014 and worked with the Palestine Union of Social Workers and Psychologists in Bethlehem and Hebron to develop a model of social work practice supervision that could be adapted to their circumstances. My initial feeling in Bethlehem was shock at its poverty, which reminded me of what I'd seen in South Africa before I moved to the UK in 1977.

Israeli power was evident in the oppressive height of the Separation Wall, which winds itself through Bethlehem. There were regular protests against the Occupation, which were rigorously suppressed. Soon after I arrived, I visited Aida Refugee Camp where there'd been a protest earlier in the week. There was an acrid smell; my guide told me the Israelis had used something Palestinians call "skunk", which smells like cow dung, and lingers on anyone who has been sprayed with it.

The Wall prevents most Palestinians from visiting Jerusalem and Israel and this means that their contact with Israelis is restricted to times when they are in conflict situations, protests, passing through checkpoints or being stopped by soldiers. On the one occasion when I was in a taxi stopped by soldiers, I noticed how rude they were to the passengers and the driver. The obsequious, placatory behaviour of the driver reminded me of how fearfully black people responded to being

stopped by police in Apartheid South Africa. I was shocked by the routine of Palestinian bus passengers at checkpoints: they had to get out while I and other foreigners remained inside. My colleagues in Palestine, Hebron and Jerusalem were never able to predict when or if they would be stopped and how they'd be treated at these times.

My perception was that the level of oppression in Palestine is much higher than it was in South Africa because the country is so small. Palestinians have different coloured identity documents, which determine where they live and their rights of travel to Jerusalem or Israel. There are heavy penalties for infringing regulations, with regular checks on buses and other transport. On a bus back to Bethlehem from Jerusalem, our vehicle was stopped by soldiers and some passengers were taken off. Once we were on our way again, a man next to me spoke about the experience; he was angry and said that what I'd seen was a regular occurrence because people needed to break the law to work. He said his permit allowed him to work in Jerusalem during the day then return to Bethlehem where he lived.

Seven months after returning from Palestine, the effects of my visit are still strong. My memories include a feeling of connection with my Palestinian colleagues, which I believe came from our common refugee experience and a joint commitment to a free

Palestine. I felt welcomed by the professionals with whom I worked. What was more complex was to be upfront about being a Jew who supports Palestine, when the Israeli and Jewish identities have been combined on the West Bank in the Palestinians' campaign against occupation.

My regret after leaving has been that the social work supervision model, which had been agreed, wasn't tested because there weren't the resources required to make that commitment. What I left was the chance that the model developed by the Palestine Counselling Centre would be rolled out over the West Bank and for Bethlehem University to work on a practice-based supervision qualification. I never felt proprietary about the model, and I think there are others who can take the concept further. I'm looking forward to returning to the West Bank for the Palestine-UK Social Work Network Annual Conference (see below) to meet and catch up with the people with whom I worked.

Based on my experience in Palestine my view remains that Zionism is a racist ideology, which still drives Israeli policy. Israel is not a "partner for peace" as evidenced by their collapse of the peace

process led by John Kelly. I think a two-state solution is no longer possible, and the only peaceful, though unlikely, option is one progressive state made up of Gaza, the West Bank and Israel.

The West Bank situation has deteriorated since I left, with continued settlement expansion and the consequences of the killing of three Israeli teenagers near Hebron. Active opposition to the occupation has resumed, with a wounding and killing of prominent Zionist activists in East Jerusalem resulting in Israeli authorities closing the Al Aqsa Mosque, which prompted serious civil protests. A *Financial Times* article (31st October 2014) described continuous Israeli settler expansion in East Jerusalem and the last direct link between Bethlehem and Jerusalem being cleared.

I still think that passive resistance opposition to the Occupation is effective because it has led to increasing Palestinian support, including support for the United Nations recognising the right for a Palestinian State, which the British Parliament voted to support in October 2014.



Israeli activists protest in support of the Sub Laban family outside their home on 22 March. This Palestinian family that has lived in Jerusalem's Old City since 1953 is being forced out of their home by Israeli settlers backed by the state. Photo: Sarah Levy

SOCIAL WORKERS of the world unite

On 4th August 2014, 100 years since the start of the "war to end all wars" and as the Israeli assault on Gaza was continuing, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) issued a statement condemning the Israeli government's aggression and calling on the British government to end arms sales to Israel. This reflects a growing concern amongst British social workers about what is happening in Palestine, and has resulted in the establishment of the Palestine-UK Social Work Network and links between individual social workers in the two countries.

The network was established after a trip to Palestine in November 2011 by four social workers, who visited branches of the Palestine Union Of Social Workers and Psychologists (PUSWP) across the West Bank and in Jerusalem. On our return, we launched the network and, at its 2013 conference, the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, Dr Manuel Hassassian, announced that the following conference would be in Jerusalem.

Members of the Jerusalem branch of PUSWP emphasised the symbolic importance of having their organisation's head office in Jerusalem, despite the restrictions on movement that meant most of their members would not be able to visit it. Because of these restrictions the second day of the conference was held in a West Bank city, to allow many more social workers to actually attend. For most of the social workers going from Britain, this was their first visit to Palestine, and was a unique opportunity to learn about the situation there.

This initiative goes along with other international developments in social work. In 2010, the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development

was established to work together "for change, for social justice, and for the universal implementation of human rights". PUSWP and BASW are also members of the International Federation of Social Workers, who have launched a campaign for the end of the occupation.

We have also been pleased to help develop the UK-Palestine Mental Health Network, which brings together psychotherapists, psychologists and other mental health workers concerned about the impact of Israeli policies on the psychological well-being of the Palestinian people, and aims to link UK mental health practitioners with their Palestinian counterparts. The mental health network has also registering its concern about the decision of the European Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies to hold its annual conference in Israel in 2015.

The social work and mental health networks are a step towards supporting the population of Gaza, following the huge scale of devastation, loss of life, and injury, physical and psychological.

Guy Shennan, Sarah Sturge, Rupert Franklin, Steve Mendel, Palestine-UK Social Work Network

FIND OUT MORE

For information about the Palestine-UK Social Work Network, contact palukswnetwork@gmail.com

For information about the UK-Palestine Mental Health Network, contact ukpalmhn@gmail.com

BASW statement on Gaza
<https://www.basw.co.uk/news/article/?id=791>

Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development
<http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/globalagenda2012.pdf>



Palestinian children and Israeli wall. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palestinian_children_and_Israeli_wall.jpg#/media/File:Palestinian_children_and_Israeli_wall.jpg

REMEMBER THAT

KEVIN OVENDEN vividly describes the fate of the Jews of Salonika and makes a plea to build on their rich cultural and political legacy

The first transport from the city of Salonika, northern Greece, shunted out of the railway station on Monasteriou Street on 15 March 1943. It was carrying hundreds of Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau in occupied Poland.

The Wilhelmine imperial project of a Berlin to Baghdad railway, in answer to Britain's Cairo to Cape Town link, had been transfigured from means of economic and military competition in the *belle époque* to artery for genocide at the midnight of the century.

All generations were stuffed, standing room, for days. Those who survived the journey in cattle trucks – and many did not – were gassed within hours of arrival and turned to ash.

In just a few weeks, the near half-millennium history of the Sephardic population of the Aegean jewel of the Balkans – Salonika/Thessaloniki – was ended as over 40,000 lives were extinguished.

Their ancestors had arrived in 1492, following the expulsion of Jew and Muslim alike from southern Spain, when Seville, Cordoba and Grenada fell to Ferdinand and Isabella in the *conquista* (there was little *re-* about it).

The Jews of Salonika created a unique musical, linguistic and cultural synthesis.

Forget your self-conscious fusion food in colour supplements; for true hybridity look to the *City of Ghosts*, the title of Mark Mazower's magnificent biography of Salonika. His equally indispensable *Inside Hitler's Greece* recounts the honourable record of rescue by the Communist-led national liberation forces of 1941 to 1944.

The Saloniko-Sephardic creole

Out of the mouth: Old Castilian, Andalusian Arabic, demotic Hebrew, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian dialect, Aramaic, Aragonese...

On to the palette: Iberian and Iranian saffron, Greek oil and greens, Turkish sweetmeats, Arab *mishmishya*...

On the ear: sufi, acem, rembetika, makam, tetrachords and all manner of musical devices.

The millenarian message of 17th century revolutionary rabbi, Shabbetai Zvi, also sank roots in Salonika.

How fitting, then, that this city's radical, far-from-rootless cosmopolitanism gave birth to the Greek Communist movement two centuries later. It was embodied in militants such as Bulgarian-born Avraam Benaroya, who died in penury at the age of 92 in Holon, Israel, where his memory is shamefully neglected. But perhaps that's to be expected.

It was nurtured in the Jewish-led proletarian struggles of what became Greece's second city when it joined the Greek state in 1912, following the First Balkan War (World War I came two years early to south eastern Europe).

Male dockers and female tobacco workers in Salonika and in nearby Western Thrace forged Greek organised labour.

On visiting Salonika in 1911, David Ben Gurion confided in his diary and to Theodore Herzl that it was a "Jewish city that has no equal in the world". He was exasperated that its long-established

inhabitants showed no desire to uproot and settle in Palestine.

The internationalist and communist tradition lives on in the struggles of today, in which Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Syrian and other newcomers resist austerity and racialised authoritarianism alongside those whose families arrived merely a little earlier.

Sadly, the music is preserved now largely outside of Greece. Yasmin Levy is one of the great interpreters, and is connected by family back to the City of the White Tower. She has performed there often.

As reparations for the Nazi occupation of Greece return to the European political stage, let us raise also condign punishment for the right wing, royalist and collaborationist bourgeoisie of Salonika.

It was they who seized the immovable property of the 44,000 Jews who were rounded up in Plateia Eleftheria (Freedom Square) – the choice of pen, a deliberate cruelty, not a bureaucratic accident.

Scandalously, the war crime site is scarcely marked today. It is a nondescript car park.

On the third Viva Palestina relief convoy to Gaza, via Europe, Turkey and the Levant, we gathered at Freedom Square to remember, through storytelling, and to pay our respects alongside the socialist city councillors and activists who had welcomed us.

Young Bangladeshi participants from London's East End proudly revealed to our hosts that they were from the same housing blocks – indeed, some from the very flats – as the equally youthful Jewish Communists who three generations earlier had organised the defence of Cable Street from Mosley's Hitlerite incursion on 4th October 1936.

When we crossed the Evros River two days later into Turkey, we remembered the Eastenders of the International Brigade who had battled Franco's fascists at the near homonym – the Ebro – in Spain in 1938.

"A million pennies from the East End" was Tower Hamlets' internationalist call to *Aidez L'Espagne* in the war for the democratic republic. We were proud in 2009 to hybridise it, with the permission of veteran Brigaders, in solidarity with the victims of Cast Lead in Gaza.

That Jewish-Salonikan property which could be moved was sucked into the Nazi coffers, along with Greece's national bullion reserves and much besides. But the "real property", the homes, the shops, the religious and community buildings... they were taken by others – by Greeks in Greece, the oligarchs who had distilled their own noxious antisemitism five times over in a pre-Nazi campaign to exterminate the internationalist labour movement.

Even the headstones from the old Jewish cemetery were dug up in desecration and used as hardcore for the post-war construction boom, which bulldozed the graveyard itself.

The oligarchs enriched themselves, as migrants to the city, from Greece and from the diaspora, were crammed into poorly built blocks, just like the working class, timber-framed shoreline districts

DAY IN 1943

which were destroyed in the great fire of 1917. It was allowed to rage for days, conveniently cleansing of Jewish proletarians the outstandingly beautiful *corniche* up to the iconic White Tower.

In the long boom and after, it was earthquakes, not fire, which were to produce yet more ghosts. But the city lives on, once again a nursery for an emergent, European, new left.

It survives, too, in the acts of remembering, retelling and rediscovering, which young people called Mohammed and Aisha are doing today in Shadwell and Stepney.

We can all too frequently bemoan the loss of collectivist tradition and belittle our efforts as but a shadow of previous glories. But, with common humanity and effort, our internationalism can be enriched, not merely preserved as if in formaldehyde.

In the battle waged in Greece today for all of Europe to be free of racism and fascism, the shades of the past are with us – urging us on in the old Jewish vernacular, so that they as well as we may find that

tremulous cadence of peace, which Sophocles heard long ago on the shores of the Aegean.

FIND OUT MORE

Sentir, Mano Suave or any CD by Yasmin Levy, much of whose work is also on YouTube.

Thessaloniki: City of Ghosts and Inside Hitler's Greece, by Mark Mazower.

The Black Life, by Paul Johnston and *The Thread*, by Victoria Hislop – two novels of different genres which touch on Jewish Salonika.

The Narrative of Evil, by Lisa Pinhas – a memoir by a Salonika survivor of the Holocaust, published following her death in 1980. The early account of growing up in the city where she was born in 1916 ranks with Claudia Roden's vivid accounts of the Eastern Mediterranean region as seen from a Jewish family.

The Greek anti-fascist movement needs your support in its campaign to ensure that a successful outcome to the prosecution of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn – whose National socialist antisemitism is of the unreconstructed Der Stürmer variety. Please see the appeal in the international section at www.jailgoldendawn.com

Give me the other Jews

Some Jews like the status quo or go with the flow but give me the other Jews dissenters, poets and revolutionaries

So here's to the other Jews who build no boundaries around their humanity

Give me Emma Goldman against the American way, Osip Mandelstam sticking pins in Stalin and Isaac Rosenberg against the British ruling class

Give me Primo Levi and Szymul Zygielbojm against forgetting, Marc Bolan when things get too serious and red Rosa when things are not serious enough

Give me Erich Fromm to show us how to love

Give me Baruch Spinoza against Jewish orthodoxy, Albert Einstein against the bomb, Jews, Gypsies and Arabs creating flamenco in the Andalusian sun

Give me Abe Meeropol writing Strange Fruit for Billie, and dead in a Mississippi summer remember James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman

Give me Ruth First alive and Jews against Apartheid Listen to the jazz blues sound of Jewish London town, Amy Amy Amy

So here's to Palestinian liberation and to Yesh Gvul reservists who refuse to serve in

the Israeli army of occupation (and to Ta'ayush, Gush Shalom, Bat Shalom and Anarchists Against the Wall)

My heart goes out to a proud, despairing Walter Benjamin dying at the Spanish border On the cliffs above Port-Bou throw my ashes to the wind and waves

We are internationalists or we are nothing, so hold up the Bund's two fingers to Zionism Stand on society's border rather than in its middle (said Michel Warschawski on trial)

At our best we are routed cosmopolitans and planetary humanists (for Paul Gilroy)

When I was younger I gave my father *Under a Clear Blue Sky* by Edward Said and he gave me *From Time Immemorial* by Joan Peters – m.a.d We have no choice but to choose differently So here's to the black liberators who include us – to Audre Lorde with love and to the Palestinian liberators who include us – to Afif Safieh with love

'There is no hierarchy of oppression' So tear down the wall Israelis face Palestinians naked like Allen Ginsberg

(and to all the others)

Simon Lynn

JAZZ &

MIKE GERBER explores the life of a mercurial character in jazz and illuminates struggles for equality in 20th century America through interviewing his biographer, Tad Hershorn

Impresario of Jazz at the Philharmonic, manager of Ella Fitzgerald and Oscar Peterson, founder of Verve and Pablo record labels – Norman Granz was one of the foremost facilitators in jazz history and courageously principled in his stand against racial bigots on behalf of musicians he represented. So Tad Hershorn's exhaustive new biography, *Norman Granz: The Man Who Used Jazz For Justice*, is a welcome addition to jazz bibliography.

Tad is an archivist at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University in New Jersey, and he originally contacted Granz as a photographer: "I first wrote to Norman Granz in 1979 to express my interest in shooting his artists." That was for Pablo Records, whose covers were adorned with monochrome photos of the musicians. "Then I met him in Dallas in March 1980, and at that point I was getting more interested not only in him using my work but some of the research I had done showed me that he was a leader in promoting and recording jazz – and what he did in civil rights is remarkable."

Born in 1918 in Los Angeles, the son of Jewish immigrants, Granz refused to accept second-class treatment for black musicians. How did Granz get into the jazz business, and what explained the man and his principles?

"He was a student in UCLA in about 1940-41 and the LA jazz scene was really quite active at the time.

Nat ["King"] Cole was out there developing his trio and very popular. That was one of Norman's early close friends and took him on inside the black jazz scene. Norman was hanging out in these black nightclubs, going to jam sessions – a lot of Norman's ethic goes back to those early days. Norman went around to some of these nightclub owners and said 'I could book a show for you, like a contractor, and here's the way I would do it, there would be preconditions that you advertise ahead of time so you pay these musicians, and don't wait for them just to walk in the door and play for free. Put tables on the dance floor because this is music to listen to and not to dance to. And third, you've got to open up to all patrons. And if the shows are successful and you want to keep them, then you'll integrate the audiences seven nights of the week!'"

The next step was Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic (JATP) jams and tours, described by Tad as the longest-running and most successful series of jazz concerts in the music's history. "The black press of Los Angeles and sooner or later all over the country really were aware that he was doing business in a proper way. And a lot of that

came down to the fact the he did a lot of his own advance work with JATP; it became a national thing, he would go to all the radio stations, he cultivated both the mainstream and the black press, he bought ads."

It was all an audacious challenge to the discriminatory practices prevalent in American society at the time. By Tad's reckoning, some of it came down to personal relationships: "He really had the interests of these musicians at heart, and JATP was so successful, he could pay good fees for that and underwrite recording projects that maybe other recording producers could not afford to underwrite, certainly not on the scale that he did."

Did Granz's Jewish upbringing influence his stance on racism? "That's a very curious thing," said Tad, "because Norman was extremely private. At one point he asked me to draw up a list of questions that gave him some idea of some of the things that I wanted to know. Some of his first questions were about his parents who both came from the Ukraine to the United States around the turn of the century, and [their] social outlook ... And it was not until about a year and a half later that I started to do some telephone interviews and those were among the first questions that I asked him. That made him very uptight and angry and ultimately he cut off the interviews and we didn't talk again for about eight months."

"I just figured when we did get back to speaking and I went to see him in Geneva that I would ask questions about that kind of stuff at my own peril. If it broke down once, there was no reason to continue with that line of questioning. I phoned Norman one time, I said when you look at the lives of unusual people, whether you're talking about Picasso or Basie, you certainly want to know about their background, what influenced them in the direction they took. It's not exactly a threepenny question. But that's just part of Norman's very private side, and I just figured to pick up that line of questioning again was really at my own risk. This was a very mercurial man."

It was perhaps that aspect of his character that induced the great clarinetist and bandleader, Artie Shaw, when I interviewed him for my own book, *Jazz Jews*, to deride him as "a prick". That response, which shocked me, was certainly not in reaction to Granz's line on race – Shaw was one of the first white bandleaders to employ black musicians, and even dared taking Billie Holiday on tour of the racially segregated southern USA.

From Tad I learned that Granz had been in the Communist Party. Did that come back to haunt him during the McCarthy years?

"He was in the party I think somewhere around 1945 to 1947 and it was actually like a musicians' group. It came back in terms of having to deal with that in 1956. The House Un-American Activities [Committee] came to Los Angeles to focus in on

JUSTICE

party influence in the music business, which was getting pretty obscure. But he knew ahead of time that he was probably going to be subpoenaed."

Granz was on a trip abroad when he found out that he might be called to testify, and, as Tad put it, "went on the lam" for several weeks in Mexico before returning. "He told me that he had fled to Mexico for a while to avoid a subpoena with the idea that, even though he was self-employed, that kind of publicity might damage his business."

"In October '56 he called up the FBI office in Los Angeles and they sent agents over and they went somewhere and they talked about it, and Norman offered information, answered all of their questions except implicating other people, and they pretty well concluded that he was not worth putting on any security index or anything like that. Even though the FBI did not put Granz on the Security Index, they did try and lift his passport, I believe, in 1958, when he applied for a passport renewal in Geneva and checked the box stating that he had once been a member of the Communist Party. He went down to the State Department with the general counsel of CBS and got the decision reversed."

Granz sometimes recorded music for the historical record, that he knew was unlikely to make a quick buck, even when it was more modernist than the pre-bebop jazz that had first fired his enthusiasm.

It was the JATP jam concerts that provided the foundation on which Granz launched his first labels. What Granz did was something of a revolution in jazz presentation.

"It was like a brand," said Tad. "He took an idea and ultimately just turned it into a juggernaut, integrating it with management, recording, and he's the only one who did it quite that way. It was like Norman Granz's take on jazz."

Tad sees a progression from what Granz started to George Wein's innovations in jazz presentation several years later. Wein, yet another Jewish facilitator of jazz, founded the annual Newport Jazz Festival in 1954 and went on to establish many other major jazz events, as well as the Newport Folk Festival.

Was there a feeling that some of Granz's JATP jams – assemblages of sometimes stylistically disparate musicians – were a bit over the top?

"Certainly there were musicians who felt that that was like a circus-like atmosphere, and maybe even a parody of jazz. Dizzy Gillespie said that JATP reflected Norman's weird sense of competition. A lot of critics panned it. There was a lot of very good music too. He had a reasonable idea of who might play well together – such as Lionel Hampton (vibes) and Stan Getz (tenor sax), on the 1955 Hamp and Getz LP. Delightful music making, with the stellar rhythm section of Lou Levy (piano), Leroy Vinnegar (bass) and Shelly Manne (drums) completing what is an all Jewish/African-American line-up."

Did Granz's influence improve or undermine the work of individual musicians closely associated with him, such as Ella Fitzgerald?

"It was just more focused. You can go back to the Decca years and say they were responsible for projecting her across an audience for 20 years. In the long run, the Verve years are more significant." Most famously, it was for Verve that Ella recorded her Songbook series of albums, her definitive interpretations of the tunes of great American popular composers.

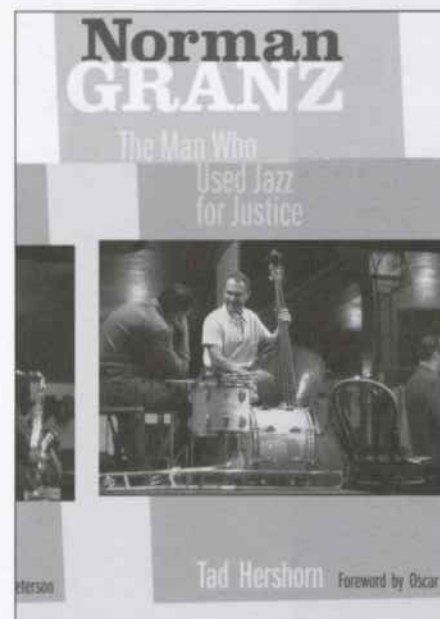
Unquestionably Granz deserves enormous credit for keeping the careers of many older musicians on the rails when first bebop then rock and roll threatened their livelihoods. Art Tatum, for

instance, the phenomenal pianist who towards the end of his life recorded a series of solo and small group albums and for Granz's Pablo label.

That, Tad said, was Granz at his best: "He knew that Tatum was ill, that he probably didn't have a long time to live, and felt that Tatum never really got his just dues. So the idea of taking him in a studio and saying just play whatever you want I think has pluses and minuses. Without Norman, there would not nearly be that catalogue of Art Tatum. On the other hand there are people like [jazz pianist] Hank Jones who say that one way you don't record Tatum is to just take him in a studio and run this through like sausage. It's an example of where Norman had a conviction about something, he could afford to do it and he did it, and there are just people who can be critical even of a fairly monumental project like that. He thought that jazz was in Tatum's debt, and that Tatum was such a unique player that he just didn't have the fame or the prospects."

That whole humanitarian side could, Tad reflected, be "clobbered" by the fact that Granz could be such a bastard:

"This is a guy when they wanted to give him a Lifetime Achievement Grammy, just said 'I think you guys are a little late' and didn't take it. Not particularly helpful in documenting a lot of the history that he made. That is just part of the mystery of him. On the one hand you feel that he never really got his just desserts, on the other hand he never really made it easy for someone to do it."



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This article is adapted from a feature that was published in the Spring 2013 edition of Cadence, the US-based quarterly of jazz and improvised music.

Norman Granz: The Man Who Used Jazz For Justice, by Tad Hershorn, University of California Press, hardback, £25.95.

As more Britons admit racism, the far right draws strength from mainstream party pandering

Data from the latest British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey shows that since 2000, the percentage of Britons who admit some level of racial prejudice has clearly increased. Nationally, it now hovers around the 30% mark – and it has coincided with a decade of gains for parties and groups on the British far right.

One mark of this uptick in extreme-right feeling is the increasingly harsh temperature of the political climate. Immigration is clearly a major issue, with some suggesting it may prove the single biggest issue for voters at the ballot box in this year's General Election. Not long ago, it was asylum seekers who were seen as the main problem; it appears that EU migrants are now the biggest concern.

Of all the major UK parties, UKIP is obviously the most vocal in its opposition to immigration – but David Cameron is steadily trying to claw back their anti-migrant vote with rhetoric and legislation. Meanwhile, both Cameron and Labour leader Ed Miliband have openly stated that multiculturalism doesn't work or has failed.

This rhetorical surge reflects a growing acceptance that opposition to immigration is not necessarily racist in itself – but for all that, that acceptance might seem pragmatic and even rational, the normalisation of strong anti-immigration feeling may in fact be the very thing that creates an atmosphere in which prejudice can thrive.

Rising temperature

As far as Islamophobia goes, the far right's current renaissance owes much to 9/11 and the 2005 London bombings. Framed

as they were in the rhetoric of the "War on Terror", the attacks and the response to them put British Muslims in the crosshairs of a newly reactionary and angry politics. While there has been some attempt in mainstream rhetoric to exempt typical Muslims from the terrorist/extremist label, it has not gone far enough.

As Chris Allen at the University of Birmingham has shown, Muslims continue to be presented as "different" and as a threat to Britain. The result, as I've seen in my own research, is that issues around asylum, immigration and terrorism have become inappropriately and inextricably mixed. Immigration is presented as a negative and as being problematic because those coming into Britain can be presented as potential terrorists.

By capitalising on these anti-asylum, anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism and anti-Muslim sentiments, the far right have gone from strength to strength in recent years.

First, the BNP became the most successful British far-right party ever, winning two MEPs in the 2009 European elections. The party fell apart and its support has now largely collapsed – it lost both its MEPs in the European elections.

But as the BNP declined, the English Defence League sprang up; meanwhile, the extreme "Britain First", which managed to tag itself with Lee Rigby's name on the EU ballot, is rapidly growing in popularity on Facebook.

Don't feed the trolls

What we have seen fits a clearly established pattern. Once the arguments

presented by the far right become established – and, perhaps more importantly, start to affect election results as they have – the mainstream soon fail to challenge the extreme right head on. Instead, rather than opposing what they are saying, major parties pander to their supporters and make rhetorical concessions to their views.

This cycle oxygenates far-right organisations and keeps them alive. It also makes deeply problematic ideas seem moderate and reasonable by comparison to their purer far-right versions – and so they end up entrenched in the mainstream.

As the BSA's alarming findings demonstrate, the results are all around us today. Many things that were once considered at least arguably racist – suspicion of asylum seekers, anger at immigrants, disdain at multiculturalism, and fear of Muslims and "Islamification" – are now widely seen as reasonable. And while being deemed racist would have once ended a parliamentary career, it is now those making accusations of racism who are running into trouble for "stifling debate" and opposing freedom of speech.

Unless the rhetoric around immigration, multiculturalism and asylum seekers changes radically, and unless mainstream politicians are brave enough to tackle the issues head on, I fear that the popularity of the far right, and the increase in public racism in Britain, will only continue to rise.

Simon Goodman

Simon Goodman is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Coventry University. This article was first published in *The Conversation* on 29 May 2014, <http://theconversation.com/>

New take on an old story

ONE SHOE TALE

by Jeremy Green
Kindle edition,
£3.47,
paperback,
£3.65

Raymond Chandler in 90 pages. Philip Marlowe, slightly disguised as a crypto-Jew called Ferenc (Frankie) Mahler, is engaged to find Cinderella, known as Drella (ugh). The action takes place in 18th-century Budapest, against the background of a War on Error. The speed of the proceedings is breathtaking; the characters have kinks you never thought of when you read the original to your kids.

Drella's family are actually The Addams Family, with her father a masochist and her stepmother and stepsisters the gleeful sadists. Drella comes across as very gloomy, not surprisingly, but this is a welcome change from the usual portrayals of her as saintly and cheerful.

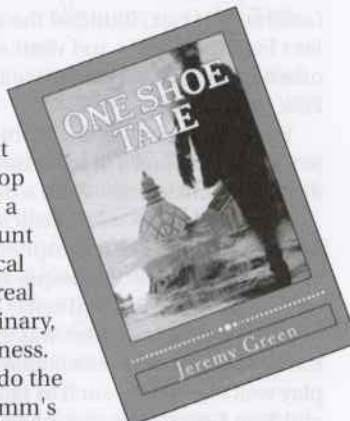
I was never sure whether we were in pre-World War I Mitteleuropa or 1930s New York, or even in Kafka's Prague. This uncertainty keeps you reading,

especially when you discover that Drella is an innocent player in a plot to stop the Prince marrying a foreigner ... I lost count of the various political and religious sects, real and (possibly) imaginary, involved in the business.

I wonder if I can do the same thing with Grimm's Fairy Tales – couldn't be grimmer so they could certainly do with a bit of political and sexual uplift or perhaps downgrade.

Please Comrade Jeremy write another!

Judith Cravitz



Which king? Which country?

A side street near Camden tube station in north London is home to the Jewish Museum – and, from March to August last year, the third floor was home to the exhibition "For King and Country?" The aim was to describe "The Jewish Experience of the First World War" using artifacts, many loaned by the Jewish Military Museum in Hendon. Displays included newspaper cuttings, postcards and diaries, facts and figures and real-life stories of a handful of individuals, with interactive features for children. The haunting narration of Isaac Rosenberg's *Break of Day in the Trenches* followed in the background.

The most intriguing part of the exhibition is the question mark at the end of the title. Did Jewish people fight for King and Country? Which King? Which Country? Was there hostility towards them? Did they keep their faith? Many of these (and more) were answered. Disappointingly – yet unsurprisingly – the exhibition focused mainly on British Jews, with a relatively smaller area devoted to the role of Jews from other countries, including Germany.

Upon entering the exhibition we learnt that the First World War was a pivotal time of change for Britain. More than 50,000 Jewish soldiers fought for Britain. Many felt desperately loyal to the country they had made their home. Some new immigrants, labelled as "shirkers", were criticised for resisting the temptation to enlist. Many had escaped to Britain from pogroms in Russia and didn't want to fight alongside Russian troops. The *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World* newspapers (which featured heavily in the exhibition) contained advertisements urging men to fight for Britain. One slogan published in *Jewish World* proclaimed "Join as Jews and be Proud of Your Race". We also learnt that, to further the cause, youth clubs were established to turn immigrant children into "healthy and patriotic British citizens" and these, together with Jewish schools, took on a military flavour.

Jews of Russian origin in London's East End and other parts of Britain spoke Yiddish, and this German-sounding language contributed towards riots in Bethnal Green and Leeds. For many Jews, the case for war was not clearcut on political or religious grounds. Many conscientious objectors were forced to serve in a non-combatant role or face Military Service Tribunals, and a thousand more (including Morris Miller) were subjected to hard labour in Dartmoor Prison.

Many British Jews felt an all-British battalion would demonstrate patriotism, while others hoped it would encourage the more insular immigrant communities to "do their duty". A considerable number of Jewish people living in the East End of London formed the 1st Battalion of Judeans (part of the Royal Fusiliers) and as so many of them were tailors they were affectionately known as the Shnyder Regiment. The exhibition paid tribute to them, focusing on some who became well-known

in later life, including the artist Jacob Epstein and first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion.

Many Jewish people fighting in the First World War found themselves fighting alongside – or against – other Jews. German and Austro-Hungarian Jews met British, French and Russian Jews on the battlefield. Keeping their faith was another struggle. British Jewish soldiers were all provided with a copy of *A History of the Jews* in an attempt to reinforce a sense of heritage, identity and a will to fight. The War Office did little to help Jewish soldiers to practise their religion, though many non-Jewish officers were sympathetic and, where possible, allowed Jewish soldiers to take leave on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

This was replicated in other countries, and one of the photographs in the exhibition showed 1,600 German Jewish soldiers attending a Rosh Hashanah service in Brussels in 1916. The British Chief Rabbi failed to arrange for the provision of kosher food, and during Passover Jewish soldiers were allowed to have matzos instead of bread, as long as it was supplied by relatives and friends. It was rarely possible to observe the Sabbath, and the Jewish chaplains inevitably highlighted God and Army tensions. The exhibition did, however, feature a set of carefully preserved tefillin (phylacteries) which helped one Jewish soldier, Russian-born Hyman Rutstein, to maintain his faith in the trenches.

The exhibition contained handwritten diary entries of Jewish nurse Florence Oppenheimer as she fought to save men's lives on a military ship. One diary extract, written as she set sail from England in 1915, read: "Some of the officers look such boys. How many of the 400 I wonder will ever come back." Florence Oppenheimer married *Jewish Chronicle* editor, Leopold Greenberg, shortened her first name to Florrie and now (perhaps unfortunately), instead of being remembered for her wartime diary, she is best known for her book, *Jewish Cookery*.

By 1918, serving in the British army brought new opportunities; immigrant communities were better integrated into British society than ever before, with many Russian Jews granted free citizenship. Some wanted to abandon their Jewish identity; others embraced Zionism and a Jewish home in Palestine. Five British soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross. In Germany, 30,000 Jewish soldiers received the Iron Cross. With the country humbled in defeat, however, some people suggested Germany had been betrayed by Jewish Marxists. This "stab in the back" myth became fundamental to the Nazi perspective on the First World War, blaming Jews for their defeat.

More than a million Jews fought in the First World War. By the end of the war, over 170,000 had been killed. Was it worth it? The exhibition didn't have to offer an answer.

STUART GOODMAN explores the questions raised by a fascinating exhibition at London's Jewish Museum, on Jews in the First World War, held during last year's anniversary of the outbreak of that war



Poetic licence

MASKS OF ANARCHY – THE HISTORY OF A RADICAL POEM, FROM PERCY SHELLEY TO THE TRIANGLE FACTORY FIRE
by Michael Demson, illustrated by Summer McClinton
Verso, £9.99

"Rise like lions after slumber/in unvanquishable number/Shake your chains to earth like dew/which, in sleep had fallen on you/ye are many – they are few". One of the most widely quoted pieces of poetry. But how many know Shelley's poem *The Masque of Anarchy* or why he wrote it?

This inspiring graphic history delves into these roots partly by exploring the afterlife of the poem as it was carried down generations and across continents. Layer by layer, Shelley's personal, political and literary life-journey emerges – starting with his return from Ireland in 1812, fired up and radicalised by the struggle for emancipation from anti-Catholicism and British rule.

The narrative is interleaved, in alternating chapters, with the story of Pauline Newman, a young American union activist. A Jewish immigrant to New York in 1887 and the first female organiser of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, she used the poem in mobilising tens of thousands of women workers in strikes and demonstrations.

Her story begins as, aged 10, she fled the antisemitic pogroms in Lithuania with her mother and sisters, and had to confront the poverty and oppression of immigrant life in America. In the process, as she puts it, "I lost my childhood".

But she also became radicalised, reading the Yiddish paper *Forward* as she witnessed tenants being evicted and workers being laid off. She started writing for the paper and organising, but

realised that communicating with the largest number meant learning English. A college professor introduced her to Shelley, encouraging her to read *The Masque of Anarchy* and explaining that it is a call for workers to unite in defiance of the tyrants who oppress and exploit them.

Meanwhile there are flashbacks to Mary Shelley's extraordinary life story – her parents, her relationship with Percy and her own writing. The narrative progresses to the 1819 Peterloo Massacre, which inspired the poem, and then shifts to a 1911 New York garment factory fire that caused 175 deaths.

Newman used *The Masque of Anarchy* to harness the upsurge of anger, mobilising a 120,000-strong protest march. The poem was set out in full for the first time – by then a living, breathing call to arms.

The book is a unique take on the 19th-century transition from republican idealism sparked by the French revolution, via class consciousness and the fight for women's rights, to labour struggle. Refracted through the poetry, it highlights the importance of imagination and vision in inspiring and sustaining resistance, even in the most desperate times.

The graphics leave readers the space and freedom to interpret the lives and ideas for themselves, rather than being handed down tablets of stone. What might otherwise seem abstract and obscure becomes accessible, even to those new to politics, poetry or history.

Piers Mostyn

Dissident voices

WOMEN AGAINST FUNDAMENTALISM: STORIES OF DISSENT AND SOLIDARITY
edited by Sukhwant Dhaliwal and Nira Yuval-Davis
Lawrence and Wishart, £17.99

In the mid-'80s, for my sins, I joined the Labour Party in Nottingham. Several inner-city wards were riven by two competing Kashmiri factions, groups of men who voted as a bloc depending on what their leader said. These whipped votes were, at times, obeyed by "members" who did not speak English and who had little idea what they were voting for. I say "members" because often their membership was paid for them by their wealthy leaders. Kashmiri women were almost entirely absent. In return, Nottingham Labour parcelled out favours to these "community leaders". Similar things were going on nationally, not just with Kashmiris, and not just with Labour. Community leaders could get some of what they wanted by packing meetings and delivering the votes come election time. It was something of a tradition – in certain areas it used to be the Irish, now it was the Kashmiris, Bangladeshis and, in some areas, strictly orthodox Jews.

In the outside world there were some feminist women from ethnic minorities who were less than keen on these, invariably male, community leaders. After 1989 these women came together as Women Against Fundamentalism. Many had already been in local groups such as Southall Black Sisters or in distinct ethnic groups, but WAF brought together women of Hindi, Muslim, Jewish, Irish Catholic and other backgrounds who had a history of opposing communalism and religious orthodoxy and could see the similar patterns across different communities.

Women Against Fundamentalism waxed and waned and waxed and waned again. This book marks the end of WAF as a campaigning group, but draws together many of their members' individual stories and revisits the many campaigns they fought.

The group was sometimes seen as "anti-Muslim", which was convenient, but a quick look at the individual stories contained here shows how wide the group's background was and the broad canvas on which members operated.

What marks out the stance of many members is that, while many of them did work and campaign within general groups – CND, Israel/Palestine or whatever – they chose to remain within their communities rather than become outsiders. The first choice was often personal, as Sukhwant Dhaliwal puts it "On not becoming a Southall Stepford wife".

Since the high water mark of WAF, some things have changed for the better – the power of the Catholic Church in Ireland has been much reduced, whereas there really are UK supporters of the Islamic State and, hilariously, some people are currently boycotting the *Jewish Chronicle* because it is just not right wing enough.

Just as the current wave of feminism in (dominated by young women, it feels (to this male outsider) that we would all benefit from a new wave of women against fundamentalism. This book provides a fascinating and personal history on which to draw.

Ross Bradshaw

Groundbreaking historian

William (Bill) Fishman 1921-2014



"As long as there is one cobbled alley, one undeserted tenement left, which recalls the voices and images of the khaverim, I still walk with my father."

Many, possibly most, readers of this magazine will have family roots in London's Jewish East End. Some will still live there. That is not my family background but I was entranced to visit the area I had read so much about, sometime in the early 1970s, when the Jewish presence was more apparent than it is now. Back then, the area was shabby and poor; many of the properties were abandoned. The arrival of hipsters and the encroachment of the City would come much later. I wanted to live there, and never did. But I was drawn to the work of Bill Fishman.

Bill's first book was *The Insurrectionists*, which discussed the impact of French revolutionary ideas on the Russian revolution, but he was encouraged by historian, Richard Cobb, to look closer to home. This led to a string of publications, the most important being *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*, *The Streets of East London* (with photographs by Nicholas Breach, who had worked with Cobb on *The Streets of Paris*), and *East End 1888*. Apart from the first title, all Bill's books were published, very successfully, by Duckworth, from their Old Piano Factory – a publishing address worth having for sure. Duckworth also published a *festschrift* for Bill, *Outsiders and Outcasts*, which is now very hard to find. Unfortunately for Bill, but fortunately for me, a change of ownership at Duckworth saw his books abandoned, and my organisation, Five Leaves, took over as Bill's publisher.

Bill, a tailor's son, had a successful academic career, largely at what is now Queen Mary, University of London, where he had been appointed Barnet Shine Senior Research Fellow in Labour Studies in 1972. He also had various visiting professorships at American universities, and retired as an academic in 1986. Many of his students, colleagues and friends went on to become leading historians in their own right. Anne Kershen, for example, would follow Bill in writing about the East End, and brought the story forward to the arrival of the Bangladeshis; Rachel Lichtenstein, wrote about Rodinsky's Room in the old synagogue in Prinzelet Street and later about the Jews involved in the

diamond trade in London. One historian, Nick Baron, the son of Bill's great friend the novelist Alexander Baron, found inspiration in history as a teenager talking to Bill. Anne, Rachel and Nick will be among the speakers at a memorial meeting at Queen Mary in April (see below).

But what about the man himself? Recently someone told me about his first encounter with Bill, when he arrived at university. The young man was dressed as a punk, with a Mohican haircut. Bill grinned at him and said, "You need to read Kropotkin (my boy)." He did of course, and still does. Bill was in great demand for his East End walks, the idea pioneered by him, and to share his memories of the Battle of Cable Street. He had cut his teeth as a member of the Labour League of Youth, and remained a member of the Labour Party, despite having great sympathy for anarchism – especially the anarchism of Rudolf Rocker.

Post-retirement, there were the guided walks of course, guest lectures and adult education. Bill always bought a copy of the Big Issue, even if he'd just bought a copy round the corner. And in conversation he was always great value. He often talked about meeting Gandhi while he was in the forces, and was active in support of Indian independence. More surprisingly, he was a crack shot and considered a career in the army. Bill picked up quite a lot of Hindi when stationed overseas, to the surprise of some Indians in the area where he lived in London, who found themselves hailed in Hindi by this very elderly looking Yiddisher fellow.

The years before his death were not kind to Bill. His mobility was severely restricted and he became more dependent on Doris ("Doll"), his wife, intellectual companion, and mother of their two sons, Michael and Barrie.

Bill said that he'd had a good life, and that was true. Although his focus was on the Jewish East End, he was no narrow nationalist, and celebrated the contribution of everyone who tried to relieve the desperate conditions of the poor in Victorian times, just as he welcomed the new immigrants who would replace Jews in his beloved East End.

Ross Bradshaw

Five Leaves Publications, Nottingham

FURTHER INFORMATION

The memorial event for Bill Fishman is at 2pm for 2.30pm, prompt, on Saturday 25th April 2015 at the Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, Arts Two Building, Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS.

All are welcome but places must be booked in advance via info@fiveleaves.co.uk.

Enlightened and illuminating

Mike Marqusee, 1953-2015

It is night time in East Jerusalem. Reva, my partner, and I are sitting at a table in the dimly lit interior of Askadinya, a Palestinian restaurant, waiting for Mike Marqusee to join us for dinner. Suddenly a frail figure, slightly bent, leaning on a stick, appears at the entrance. He hobbles over to our table and, painfully, squeezes himself into a chair. For the next three hours the whole place is lit up as Mike regales us with his anecdotes and analysis, illuminating every subject under the sun.

People who knew Mike often described him as a "Renaissance Man" on account of the breadth of his interests and his knowledge. I call him a *mentsh* because of the depth of his humanity and because it is a vivid Yiddish word for someone with his qualities; and Mike never ceased to be a yidl. In the preface to his autobiographical *If I Am Not for Myself* he says: "I have never had the slightest doubt that I am a Jew." Mike was many things: author, poet, activist, connoisseur of cricket, Bob Dylan and Muhammad Ali (to mention just a few subjects). But, to be frank, he was never cut out to be a rabbi, for he was also, by his own account, an atheist and a "left secularist". So, he asks himself in the book, "What makes me a Jew?"

What comes immediately to mind is Isaac Deutscher's category of the "non-Jewish Jew". But that's wrong. Deutscher's examples, such as Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, either did not identify as Jews or did not use Jewish sources – even if their origins left a recognisably Jewish mark on their thought and attitudes. They went to the border and crossed it, leaving Judaism behind. Mike did not leave it behind. When he crossed the border into the universal space of humankind, he took his Jewish identity with him. Not only did he take it with him, he took it by the scruff of the neck and he made it his own, claiming it for himself with such tenacity that not even the combined forces of the Chief Rabbinate, the Board of Deputies and the Embassy of the State of Israel could take it away from him.

What he took with him was not a religion but a sense of sharing with other Jews common sources, common texts and a distinctive historical experience as a minority. For Mike, Judaism was not a set of beliefs about the origin of the world or the order of things but a set of references, a repository of human experiences, a "repertoire of meaning" (in Stuart Hall's phrase): on all of which he drew like Jacob at the well upon seeing Rachel for the first time. Mike is more in the "tradition of Jewish secular thought" that David Biale describes in *Not in the Heavens*. He was someone who did not so much cross the Jewish border as open it, opening it up to



the width of the world.

"My Jewishness," he writes in the preface to his memoir, "is ... a locale where the self intersects with history, past and present". He describes Jewishness as indeterminate and says that every attempt to narrow it down "has backfired, broken down or produced manifest absurdities". The attempt to narrow it down that is most on his mind in the book – as it was in his life – is *worse* than absurd: tying Jewish identity to Zionism. "I find in anti-Zionism,"

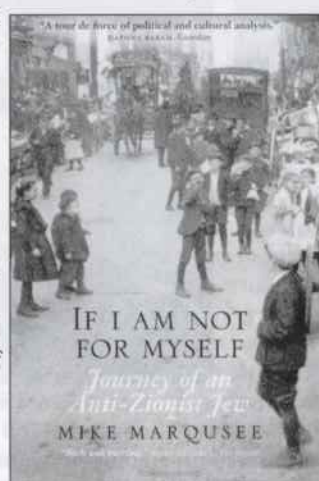
he explains, "emancipation both as a Jew and as a human being, and any consequent diminution in my Jewishness is strictly in the eye of the beholder".

For Mike, being an anti-Zionist meant being simultaneously opposed to two kinds of oppression. First, it was "an expression of a positive solidarity with the Palestinians as victims of injustice and specifically of colonialism". Second, it was an act of defiance against those forces that police the Jewish border and seek (you might say) to colonise the self of individual Jews. Their take is that Jews who reject Zionism reject themselves. For Mike, to the contrary, anti-Zionism meant *claiming* himself as a Jew. "The people who call us self-haters want to steal ourselves from us – appropriate our selves for *their* cause – and speaking as a self, I'm damned if I'm going to let them get away with it."

These are the words with which his memoir closes. They refer back to the quotation on which he drew for the title of the book, the whole of which is this: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am for myself alone, what am I? If not now, when?" These are three questions in one: they were indivisible for Mike in his life as they were for the ancient Palestinian whom he was quoting: Hillel HaZaken, Rabbi Hillel the Elder.

Hillel also said, "In a place where there are no men strive to be a man." Mike did. He was a *mentsh*.

Brian Klug



WHO FIXED IT FOR JIMMY?

Revelations about Jimmy Savile raise questions about who helped him. Baroness Thatcher hosted Savile at Chequers, Edwina Currie let him loose at Broadmoor to undermine the Prison Officers' Association and at the BBC shadowy MI5 officers advised Auntie Beeb on her appointments.

Actress and theatre director Joan Littlewood had been banned from working for the BBC along with her partner Jimmy Miller (better known as singer Ewan MacColl). Watchers on the couple's home in Hyde, Cheshire, reported to MI5 in April 1939: "A number of young men who have the appearance of communist Jews are known to visit Oak Cottage. It is thought they come from Manchester." The ban on Littlewood was relaxed after a few years, but she remained under MI5 surveillance right into the 1950s.

When poet Mike Rosen completed his trainee year at the Beeb in 1972, he was told no department could offer him employment. In fact, two or three wanted to, but Mike failed the vetting procedures, and joined a line of subversive influences against whom we were protected.

Some say the MI5 vetting procedures were not so efficient if they failed to spot anything unwholesome about Jimmy Savile. Perhaps his deviations weren't the kind they were watching out for.

DEJA VU, "ABU"

With BBC news quoting an alleged British Jihadi's dream of raising "the flag of Islam" over Big Ben and Buckingham Palace, the message on Umma.com discussion site might have seemed genuine. "Who wants to join me so we can wage war and jihad against the corrupt west?" asked someone posting as "abuaisha10", under the heading "I am pledging allegiance to the caliphate".

But administrators of Umma.com were curious about "abuaisha10", who had just registered with their Muslim forum, and posted this one comment. They discovered that abuaisha10's IP address (195.234.240.212) belonged to DMG Media (formerly Associated Newspapers), publishers of the *Daily Mail*. The address appears to be associated with the *Mail*'s chief reporter, David Williams. Maybe Williams has another persona, or someone had gained access to his computer, but it

must have reminded them of what happened five years ago. On 7th January 2009, while Israeli bombs were dropping on Gaza, the *Sun* ran a front page splash headline "Terror Target Sugar", claiming Sir Alan of that ilk headed a list of top British Jews being targeted by Muslim extremists in "revenge" for Israel's actions. It quoted a "counter-terrorism expert" called Glen Jenvey, and a posting in the Umma.com forum from someone calling themselves "Abuislam", asking: "Have we got a list of top Jews we can target? Can someone post names and addresses?"

The original context had been protest about the war, but that wasn't all. When Umma.com attempted to trace "Abuislam", they found by a remarkable coincidence that this poster shared IP and email addresses with... Glen Jenvey. The Press Complaints Commission looked into it; Lord Sugar sued the *Sun*, saying it had endangered his security. Glen Jenvey has never forgiven those who spoiled his career in counter-terrorist expertise. But some journalists never learn.

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

A story from La Paz (it is in *The Guardian* so it must be true) says the clock on the Bolivian congress building has been made to run anti-clockwise, to remind people they are in the Southern hemisphere ("Bolivia turns back the clock in bid to rediscover identity and 'southernness'", Sam Jones and Sara Shahriari, *The Guardian*, 25th June 2014).

The rationale for this is supposed to be that clock faces were originally based on sundials, and the sun's shadow moves differently in the south. "We're in the south and, as we're trying to recover our identity ... our clocks should turn to the left," says Bolivia's foreign minister, David Choquehuanca. "Who said clocks always have to run the same way? Why do we always have to be obedient? Why can't we be creative?" Why not, indeed? But the clock that goes widdershins is not entirely new. I've seen one before, in the northern hemisphere. It had Hebrew characters and was in the Old Jewish Quarter of Prague, not far from where certain Elders allegedly met and drew up their famous Protocols.

I don't know what the connection is with Bolivia, but I'm sure our friends the conspiracy theorists could have devised one by now, even if the plot requires the clock to strike 13.