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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 77 Autumn/Winter 2022 £3



DEFIANCE NOT COMPLIANCE

- Hostile environment ■ 125 years of the Bund ■ Prospects in Israel/Palestine
- Celebrating '70s antifascists ■ Why claim to be indigenous?

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EDITORIAL

As we go to press, the Tory Party's annual conference is reaching its end. Photos shared on social media show Tory delegates sleeping through it. They woke up though when Suella Braverman took the stage and made her "I have a dream" speech.

This was no reprise of Martin Luther King's powerful oration in August 1963 about a coming world of friendship and compassion across divides, in which his four children would "not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character". Braverman's dream was overcoming legal hurdles and dispensing with any need to observe human rights conventions so that, by Christmas, she could deport to Rwanda asylum seekers who have arrived "illegally" on boats. She dreams of fulfilling former Home Secretary, Priti Patel's callous plan to traffic them to a country far away with a well-documented record of human rights abuses.

Braverman was promising to add to and accelerate the suffering that desperate human beings have already endured before they arrived here in makeshift boats. Backed by human rights conventions, anti-deportation campaigners state that "No one is illegal", despite how the government defines them.

Rachel Reeves' response from Labour's Shadow Cabinet was telling. She attacked the Tories in government since 2010 for not being efficient enough in deporting those arriving on boats, and claimed that the Government has thereby let down the "British people".

Reeves' conception of the "British people" is a dismal stereotype of every white voter who lives behind the "red wall" where Labour lost so many seats in 2019. This stereotype does not include any refugees who have won their rights and live there too, or any voters there, white or non-white, who empathise with asylum seekers and oppose racism.

Her misconceptions sit comfortably with the fervid embrace of British nationalism that characterises the current Labour leadership. It also fails to show how shamefully complicit Labour has been in the spiral of ever-tightening immigration and refugee laws.

Rayah Feldman's forensic analysis of the Hostile Environment (page 6), which former Tory Home Secretary Theresa May proudly announced at Tory conference 10 years ago, could not be more timely. But her article does more than explain it. It is a call to action and a celebration of what can be achieved by united defiance.

This is an issue that the Jewish community should be raising its voice about, given that Britain's first modern immigration law – the 1905 Aliens Act – was directed at East European Jewish migrants and refugees. At grassroots level, many Jews, including Liberal and Reform rabbis, are active in practical pro-refugee and anti-deportation work. But the response from those regarded as

Jewish "leaders" has been muted. They don't want to fall out with the Tories, for domestic political reasons and for their narrowly-defined international concerns – support for Israel.

At a Conservative Friends of Israel gathering during the Tory conference, the Board of Deputies' (BoD) president, Marie van Der Zyl paid a gushing tribute to the Tories. She especially welcomed talk of plans to move the British embassy to Jerusalem, which, she bellowed through the microphone is: "...the CAPITAL of ISRAEL!"

When our Jewish "leaders" mention Israel or talk about Israelis, though, they don't mean all Israelis. On pages 8 and 9 we feature contributions from left-wing Israeli campaigners from Zochrot and Kav La'oved who are working there 24/7 against injustices and for equal rights for all. They and Palestinian human rights bodies face repression by the Israeli authorities and need all the support they can get. It seems that our community "leaders" prefer to support those Israelis maintaining the injustices.

The BoD, who profess anger when people describe them as an Israeli lobby group rather than a representative of the concerns of British Jews, know exactly how provocative such an embassy move will be, but are happy to advocate for it. On page 10 the Chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in Britain, Kamel Hawwash, born in Jerusalem but unable to return there, describes a worsening situation in Palestine that would certainly be inflamed by this move.

It is ironic that the BoD is so fervent and blinkered in its pro-Zionist stance, making it almost an article of faith that to be a Jew today means to be a Zionist, and regarding the terms "anti-Jewish" and "anti-Zionist" as synonymous. It was formed in 1760. Political Zionism was not born until 1897. In the late 1930s the BoD was still led mainly by non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews. Some of them were wary of adopting a national identity that might conflict with their British patriotism. Others argued that loyalty to a Jewish state would undermine Jewish efforts for equality outside of that state.

For Jewish socialists, October 1897 is remembered for the birth of a very different movement: the Bund – a mass Jewish workers' movement that dreamt of and fought for a better world for all, an egalitarian world free of oppression, persecution and exploitation, and free of nationalism. A world where people's rich and diverse cultures could develop freely. In this 125th anniversary year we honour the Bund's achievements (page 14). We are proud to associate ourselves with its philosophies, which we believe continue to offer a path to liberation and a better future for Jews and humanity as a whole.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue!

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A right royal time was *not* had by all

With the death of Queen Elizabeth II, an extraordinary 10-day period of state-sanctioned mourning was put in place, at considerable expense. Minor outbreaks of Republicanism were swiftly shut down. "News" and programming on radio and TV became wall-to-wall royal coverage. Monarchists blithely requisitioned memorial gardens wherever they could, even if that was deeply inappropriate.

On the weekend before the Queen's funeral a memorial garden in Hyde park, central London was temporarily turned into a shrine for the Queen. Shockingly this was the Holocaust Memorial Garden. Its memorial stones were bedecked with drawings of the Queen, cards and flowers. Prominent Jewish organisations expressed their deep sorrow at the Queen's death and were full of praise for her, and made no comment on the appropriation of a memorial for the millions exterminated in gas chambers by the Nazis and their collaborators. But on social media the upset and anger among many Jews and anti-fascists, who know that antisemitism is still rife among the aristocracy, was palpable.

Throughout the 1930s, many aristocrats

in Britain, including very close members of the Royal family maintained extremely close relationships with aristocratic Nazis in Germany, especially through bodies such as the Link and the Right Club. The 5th Duke of Wellington, who frequently chaired meetings of the Right Club, expressed his anger at war breaking out between Britain and Germany by blaming "anti-appeasers and the fucking Jews".

A window on this world was shared in a revealing social media post by the novelist and academic Rana Dasgupta, winner of the Commonwealth Prize in 2009 for his novel, *Solo*. As a result of his award, some time later he was invited to Windsor Castle for a discussion about his novel with the Queen. His social media post was based on the notes of that meeting, where he had an extraordinary conversation arising from the novel.

The Queen had made an association between an aspect of the novel and Europe's Jews. Dasgupta noted how she headed off on a tangent in which she described a meeting she had had that morning with a



delegation from the Board of Deputies (who she misnamed the Association of British Jews). According to Dasgupta, she commented that "They were celebrating their 250th anniversary – they were founded under George III." She had been positively struck by the fact that only two members of the delegation were born in Britain yet they had been so grateful and thankful.

Apparently the Queen continued: "It was really very nice, because, you know, the Jews can be so very difficult."

Hmmm.

Cover photo: Protesters block an immigration van in Peckham, London, July 2022/Guy Smallman

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Protesting for the right to protest

Among the large and diverse numbers of protesters "greeting" the 2022 Tory conference as it was opening were members of Na'amod – British Jews Against the Occupation – who were blowing shofars, as the conference was starting during the Days of Awe between Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur.

They were there especially to protest against the Bill the Tories are planning to introduce, which would stop public bodies participating in boycotts, divestment or sanctions activities. The Tories have made explicit reference to protecting Israel from such action by local councils, and claim this is protecting the Jewish community.

Na'amod say that this bill would shrink the space for Palestinian activists to advocate for their rights and stand up against Israel's brutal military occupation. They said: "Jews should not be used to justify this anti-Palestinian racism. We blew



shofars to demand that Liz Truss and the government change their ways, and drop this dangerous bill."

Na'amod further argue that, following the Policing Bill, the Borders Bill, and the Overseas Operations Bill, this legislation is the latest in the government's assault on civil liberties. They added: "Stifling protest is not the route to Jewish safety. Na'amodniks will continue to

defend our right to protest, stand up against Israel's brutal military occupation, and demand freedom, equality and dignity for all Palestinians and Israelis."

Na'amod are urging people – and especially Jewish constituents – to write to their MPs making it clear that it is a draconian piece of legislation that is out of line with UK foreign policy, and saying that, given the government's support for regimes violating human rights, including Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, this amounts to preventing public institutions from supporting human rights.

They ask those writing to their MPs to make clear to the government that conflating Palestinian rights advocacy with antisemitism is not just racist against Palestinians but actively distracts from good-faith efforts to tackle anti-Jewish hatred. Instrumentalising the Jewish community for political gain only harms the Jewish community.

Seeking justice for refugees

The Jewish Socialists' Group banner had an early outing on 5th September outside the Royal Courts of Justice where Care 4 Calais – a volunteer-run charity supporting refugees in the UK, France and Belgium – were challenging the government's Rwanda deportation plan for asylum seekers who arrive by boat on Britain's shores. Stand Up to Racism, trade unions, the JSG and other groups protested outside the court on the first day of the hearing from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. At lunchtime there was a rally with several speakers, including Dave Landau (right), who spoke for the JSG. Here is his speech.

"The Government intends to transport people to Rwanda. Who are these people? They are asylum seekers who have taken tremendous risks to seek safety and security here. Most will have no connection to Rwanda or the region. Some will have fled from Rwanda or its surrounding area. Either way it makes no human sense and is a moral outrage for them to be dumped there.

"And why is the government doing this?

Priti Patel says it is to put the people traffickers out of business. I can tell her that there is one way of defeating the traffickers at one stroke – open the borders.

"Recently the *Mail on Sunday* ran a story claiming that a large percentage of those on the boats crossing the Channel are Albanian – which is not a war-torn country. According to the *Mail* it means that they are "abusing asylum". In the first place we don't know if these figures are true. I don't trust The Hate Mail on Sunday or its sources. Leaving that aside, since when does a country have to be at war for there to be no victims of persecution? Look at Jews in Germany between 1933 and 1939. Did they not suffer persecution? Not according to the Daily Mail, then or now. And we know that Roma people experience serious persecution in Kosovo and Albania.

"This Rwanda Plan might seem illogical, and at a human level it is. But it flows logically from immigration controls. Immigration controls criminalise people or restrict their rights according to where they

were born, where their parents were born, the language they speak, the colour of their skin, and whether they adopt "British Values". That makes them inherently racist. Once racist controls are accepted you end up with something like the Rwanda plan. This is the logic of a hostile environment, which has been going on for at least 130 years.

"We must tear down the whole edifice of immigration controls – brick by brick, wall by wall."



Missing children, stolen lives

SOAS's Brunei Gallery is hosting a major new exhibition, *Empty Cradles: Israel's Disappeared Children* curated by Joanne Rosenthal and Dr James Eastwood. The disappeared children belonged to Jewish families who migrated to Israel from the Middle East and North Africa in the 1940s and '50s, and were staying in temporary immigration camps. Over half of the children were from Yemen. The state officially maintains that the children died but the families were never shown bodies, graves or death certificates. Instead, they believe their children were sent away to homes run by women's organisations and in many cases illicitly adopted, perhaps even abroad.

A growing body of evidence, much of which is assembled in the exhibition, has been uncovered to support the families' claims. It shares moving testimonies from mothers who had their children taken from them, often by force. It also reveals their experiences of condescension and racism by the Israeli authorities towards them, and how they were frequently accused of being unfit to raise their own children.

Documents and photographs reproduced in the exhibition record the policy of systematically separating Yemenite children from their parents, and how this led to their disconnection and disappearance. The exhibition also charts the role of so-called "baby homes" in housing "lost" children

and putting them up for adoption.

While the disappearances took place in Israel, the exhibition documents how international women's organisations, including some based in the UK, were also a crucial part of the story. Publicity material from the time shows that volunteers, donors, tourists and members of the public around the world were aware of and involved with work with the children, and shared assumptions about the "unfitness" of the parents, and even visited the "baby homes" when many parents could not.

The organisations involved still operate today, and many of the disappeared children could still be alive. Now families, campaigners and researchers are hoping that conversations and awareness generated by the *Empty Cradles* exhibition may encourage members of the public with knowledge about these events to come forward.

Find out more

Empty Cradles: Israel's Disappeared Children runs from 23rd September to 10th December 2022, 10:30am - 5pm at the Brunei Gallery, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG. Entrance is free. More information at www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/emptycradles



Shoshanna and Zeharia Kohavi with one of their children. When Shoshanna gave birth to twins at an Israeli migrant camp in 1948, she was only allowed to see one of her babies. The hospital said the other twin had died, but would not allow her to see the body.



Yaffa Dayan and one of her children. When Yaffa's first son was born at an Israeli migrant camp in 1964, she was not allowed to feed him. Four days later she was told he'd been taken to a children's home, but when she and her husband went there demanding to see their baby, they were told that he had died.

WISEWORDS

"I would like to be a terrorist for music education – to make a complete reform, all over the world."

Daniel Barenboim

We were sad to hear that Daniel Barenboim is suffering from a serious neurological condition and is stepping back from some of his performing. We honour his tireless work, through music and beyond, to nurture friendship and coexistence, and to campaign for peace and social justice for the Palestinians, using the platform he gained so deservedly through his astonishing talent.

An international affair

With the COVID pandemic still rife, the Jewish Socialists' Group once again held its annual members' conference by Zoom. It is not the same as meeting in person but there are advantages, as it enables us to hear directly from people more distant from London, where it normally takes place.

The quality of talks and discussions in our afternoon sessions were among the best we have had at a JSG conference. As well as reviewing our work over the past year we held two key discussion sessions. One was about campaigning against the attempts to impose the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, and seeking to promote alternatives such as the much more sophisticated Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, which places the fight against antisemitism in the context of wider anti-racism and support for human rights.

Barnaby Raine made an excellent contribution, as did Roni Gechtman, an Argentinian Jew who lives in Canada where he is an associate professor of history. Much of his research has been about the Bund and the Jewish Labour movement in

eastern Europe. He zoomed in from Halifax, Nova Scotia, and told us about the efforts being made in Canada to campaign against the negative and harmful impacts of the IHRA Definition.

The second discussion session, focusing on the French legislative elections and racism and fascism in France, could not have been more up-to-date. Our event took place on the day of the first round of these elections (the second round was held a week later.) Kevin Ovenden zoomed in from Athens and set out the terrain with lots of information and analysis about politics in France in recent years. He expressed his cautious optimism that the left might be able to block a Macron majority. His contribution was supplemented by a Zoom talk, on the spot from France, by Emmanuel Sanders who is part of a young, radical French Jewish group (Juifs et Juives Revolutionnaires), formed in 2014. Emmanuel's talk gave lots of detail about the issues that the Jewish community are concerned about, and indicated where anti-racists and left groups need to act with more consistency and stronger anti-racist politics.

Strengthening Jewish support for migrants

The Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE) has linked with with HIAS, the international Jewish movement for refugees.

Both JCORE and HIAS have long histories of supporting refugees and asylum seekers and this will strengthen the ability of British Jews to respond to issues of asylum, refugees and racial equality.

Some of this will take place within the Jewish community, through strengthening the education of young Jews on racial equality and expanding the network that has brought together synagogue congregations in the US to take action on refugee issues.

Beyond the Jewish community, the combined organisation will have



greater capacity to support programmes like JCORE's befriending project for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (JUMP) and Refugee Doctors mentoring.

If you want to get involved in JCore's work and campaigning, you can find out more at www.jcore.org.uk

CRUELTY

RAYAH FELDMAN, founder and trustee of Hackney Migrant Centre, describes how the Hostile Environment poisons attitudes to migrants in the UK and makes their lives even harder

Hostility to poor immigrants has a long history in Britain. Since the first explicitly anti-immigrant legislation in 1905, exclusion of "undesirable aliens" from the country's borders has morphed into internal border controls, today commonly referred to as the Hostile Environment. Just as in 1905 "undesirable aliens" meant poor Jews from eastern Europe, today "illegal immigrants" code names primarily poor migrants from outside western Europe who have failed to cross the racialised hurdles constructed to keep them out.

Internal controls now supplement border controls and serve to adversely affect and root out people without the legal right to live in the UK. Such policies are designed to affect primarily undocumented migrants (officially called illegal immigrants) – people whose visas have expired, who have been refused asylum, whose work permit has expired, or women whose partners control them by refusing to apply to regularise their status. Restrictions on legal aid for immigration, as well as Home Office delays and incompetence, lead people into destitution as they lose their rights to work and live in the UK.

Hostile Environment policies also target poor migrants who have temporary leave to remain. "No Recourse to Public Funds" (NRPF) conditions, routinely attached to people with family leave – spouses and other dependents – exclude people from most state benefits including Universal Credit, Child Benefit, Housing Benefit. This means that people unable to work or who work part-time because of childcare responsibilities, can often not afford rent or sufficient food and become destitute, despite having legal rights to live in the UK. It's been estimated that there are nearly 180,000 children living in families with NRPF. Many parents will have NRPF for 10 years while they wait for Indefinite Leave – most of their children's childhood.

The Hostile Environment brings immigration control into civil society, seeking to make schools, the NHS, employers, local authorities and even landlords into border guards. It reaches into hospitals, workplaces, universities, marriage, bank accounts, driving licences, rented accommodation and more. "The aim," said Theresa May when she was Home Secretary in 2012, "is to create, here in Britain, a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants".

The NHS, the most loved British public service, with its principle of treatment based on need, not ability to pay, is now a major target of the Hostile Environment. A hefty Immigration Health Surcharge for the right to use the NHS is added to application fees for Limited Leave to Remain. Even

ON OUR DOORSTEPS

worse, treatment for visitors and undocumented migrants can be withheld if advance payment is not forthcoming, unless it has been classified as "immediately necessary" or is an exempted condition such as TB.

Standard maternity care is charged over £7,000. Women are often harassed by debt collectors after giving birth, or avoid antenatal care when they have underlying, often dangerous conditions. Hospitals are required to carry out Home Office checks on patients, and NHS debts can be reported to the Home Office who can then refuse or delay subsequent applications for leave to remain.

All these obstacles have very detrimental impacts on patients and their families. One new mother said, "It isn't just a bill to me, the harassment I had to endure all those months because I couldn't pay. So I was very stressed, and that affected the way I look after my children."

The widely reported Windrush scandal highlighted the scope and cruelty of Hostile Environment policies and the ease with which they are misapplied. The 1971 Immigration Act granted Indefinite Leave to Remain to Commonwealth citizens settled in the UK before 1973. But they were given no special documentation which recorded this. So when, decades later, the Home Office started demanding proof of immigration status, many individuals holding these pre-1973 rights, who had spent most of their lives in the UK, found themselves pushed out of jobs, unable to get benefits, losing their homes, refused NHS treatment, and in some cases, were actually deported to countries they had left as children.

Four years after this scandal was exposed and people wrongly classified as "illegal immigrants" were promised compensation, only one in four applicants have received payments.

The Windrush scandal illustrates how blunt an instrument the Hostile Environment is, targeting all foreigners and minority populations whatever their immigration status. But the Hostile Environment isn't only about specific laws – it's about a climate of hostility, discrimination and suspicion, and a legitimisation of barriers against most people from overseas, especially if they are poor, being able to live in the UK on equal terms with white citizens.

This climate pervades many spheres of life, calling into question some people's eligibility for almost any activity, private or public – study, NHS care, employment, the right to drive a car or hold a bank account, or to marry the person of their choice. Under the Hostile Environment, minority ethnic and foreign people are effectively on probation unless they have proof of status and entitlements which they are frequently required to produce. But even now, the government refuses to give EU citizens with Settled Status (permanent right of residence) any physical proof of their immigration status, just as it didn't give it to Commonwealth citizens who had rights of residence before 1973, eventually giving rise to the Windrush scandal.



There is some light in this gloom though. There has been, and continues to be, successful resistance against these cruel and racist policies. Concerted opposition from the British Medical Association and other campaigners managed to stop GP practices being forced to share information about their patients with the Home Office. The Schools ABC Campaign (Against Borders for Children) brought together parents and campaigners to stop nationality and country of birth data being collected in schools with possible use for immigration enforcement, or to restrict undocumented children's access to education.

Recently, after 11 years of intense community campaigning in Sheffield and beyond, Simba, a Zimbabwean who came to the UK as a teenager, was finally granted refugee status and his debt to the NHS revoked. Simba missed essential outpatient appointments after he was billed £6,000 for previous treatment. He subsequently had a stroke and was taken to A&E where he received life-saving treatment and an unpayable debt of £93,000. He has nevertheless been left paralysed.

But campaigns like these can never rest on their laurels. Young people who had lived most of their lives in the UK, campaigned successfully for the right to student finance when it was denied them. But serious time restrictions still remain, so they have started a new campaign for equal access through a charity they have set up called "We Belong".

All these campaigns, and many more, depend on solidarity in the form of community support, publicity, and often long and hard work including collaboration with lawyers and advocacy organisations. Often apparently "instant" successes like those of anti-raids campaigners in Scotland, preventing the detention of members of their communities by mass street action, depend on years of building support networks.

All this has become more difficult as the Home Office and government continue their attacks on migrants and public protest. But both in spite of and because of this, we have to continue to fight to overturn not only all Hostile Environment policies but also the racist and exclusionary principles that underpin them.

"No Recourse to Public Funds" conditions exclude people from most state benefits, including Universal Credit, Child Benefit and Housing Benefit.

THE YEAR PAST REFLECTIONS

A HARD WON BATTLE

Determination to maintain the Jewish majority underpins Israel's attempts to stop asylum seekers from integrating into the labour market. SARA VAN GUNST of Kav LaOved – Workers Hotline describes a campaign to repeal a discriminatory law

Find out more

Kav LaOved – Worker's Hotline is a non-profit organisation which aims to protect the rights of the most disadvantaged workers in Israel, addressing violations through individual assistance, advocacy, outreach and more.

www.kavlaoved.org.il/en/

It is estimated that 4.5 million Ukrainians refugees have left their country. The sympathetic and supportive reception they received from the international community was surprising in its scale: countries opened their doors and touching acts of solidarity swept Europe. Israel, however, reacted differently. It hesitated to open its doors to Ukrainian refugees unless these were Jewish. Israel, a nation whose inhabitants have a history of persecution, looked away. Why? The background to Israel's panic at the thought of accepting non-Jewish refugees is well known. Fear of losing its Jewish majority makes Israel suspicious of the immigration intentions of any non-Jewish group.

This also explains the treatment of the 65,000 asylum-seekers, mainly from Eritrea and Sudan, who have arrived in Israel over the last 15 years via the Egyptian border. Israel de facto does not process their asylum requests, leaving their status in limbo. Israel has also tried, unsuccessfully, to deport them to other countries where their safety would be in danger. About half of these 65,000 asylum seekers have successfully resettled in other countries, mainly Canada, Germany and Sweden, but those who remain continue to face difficult conditions as Israel has consistently enacted policies that exclude them from integration.

One of the greatest hardships for the asylum-seeker community has been integration into the Israeli labour market in order to gain some semblance of financial stability. Israel has refused to grant them work permits, agreeing only to a policy of "non-enforcement" of illegal work. In May 2017, Israel also enacted the so-called "Deposit Law" to discourage employment of refugees and asylum-seekers and to bring harsh economic pressure on them to compel them to leave the country. Employers were required to deduct 20% from asylum-seekers' salaries and to deposit these funds in a state-managed account, along with an



additional sum covering the employee's benefits (paid by the employer) totalling 16% of their salary. Asylum-seekers and refugees only had access to this money if they departed the country.

Kav LaOved, an organisation that protects the rights of marginalised workers in Israel, successfully led a coalition of NGOs in a three-year long legal petition to the Israeli High Court of Justice, which finally resulted in the repeal of this 20% deduction requirement in 2020. All funds deducted from workers during these three years were returned to them, with the help of Kav LaOved staff. The community desperately needed this money as they are largely employed in sectors such as the restaurant industry and hospitality that were hard hit during the Covid pandemic.

The repeal was a huge achievement, but the struggle to protect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers continues. The state has just issued a new policy that bans asylum seekers, with some exceptions, from work in 17 cities and municipalities, including Tel Aviv and the surrounding municipalities where most of them live. Once again, the state is using economic hardship to encourage asylum-seekers to leave the country. Kav LaOved is advocating against this new limitation imposed on asylum seekers, attempting again to stop Israel's blindness to the tragedies of others.

BEYOND POLITICAL PARTIES

The Palestinian town on Beita in the West Bank might be the best starting point to examine what has been happening in Palestine-Israel over the last year and to look at the prospects in the near future. Beita's stubborn struggle against the Israeli army has cost the life of ten of its residents so far. It has also made it a symbol of Palestinian *Sumud* – steadfast resistance and resilience under the gravest of circumstances.

The current phase in Beita's resistance began in

May 2021. Under the cover of violent clashes in Jerusalem and cities inside Israel, and the attack on Gaza, the settler movement occupied an outpost they have long coveted, on top of Mount Sabih in the agricultural lands of Beita. The outpost "Evyatar" became one of the first challenges for the self-styled Government of Change formed by Naftali Bennet and Yair Lapid in June that year in coalition with parties ranging from the nationalist New Hope to the liberal Meretz and the Muslim Ra'am party.

AND THE YEAR TO COME ISRAEL/PALESTINE

In July, after three Palestinians from Beita were killed while protesting against the new settlement, the government reached an agreement with the settlers who left the outpost on condition that the Israeli army would occupy it until a land survey determined the status of the land. This was seen at the time as a signal from the new government that it was moving towards an approach that would place more constraints on the settler movement. In reality, though, the move created weekly clashes with the army, with brutal attacks on Beita protesters that resulted in seven more deaths and countless injuries. And despite the agreement, settlers continue to visit the outpost.

What has been happening in Beita this last year is indicative of the reality under a "government of change" that has brought only change-for-the-worse to Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. More settlement expansion, a surge in settler terrorism, and widespread impunity for attacks conducted by the Israeli army prevailed.

The rise in Palestinian fatalities – shockingly apparent in the murder of journalist Shireen Abu-Akleh – only confirms this. Criminalisation of Palestinian Human Rights defenders, in spite of the international community's dismissal of Israeli claims that these Palestinian organisations are engaged in terrorism, continues unabated. That this deterioration in the situation of Palestinian human rights organisations has occurred on the watch of a government that includes supposedly leftist parties and an Arab party, illustrates how Israeli human rights abuses and the oppression of the Palestinian people are rooted in the nature of the regime itself and not in any particular political party or personality. The visit of US president Biden in July was deeply discouraging, as he bluntly disregarded Palestinian interests.

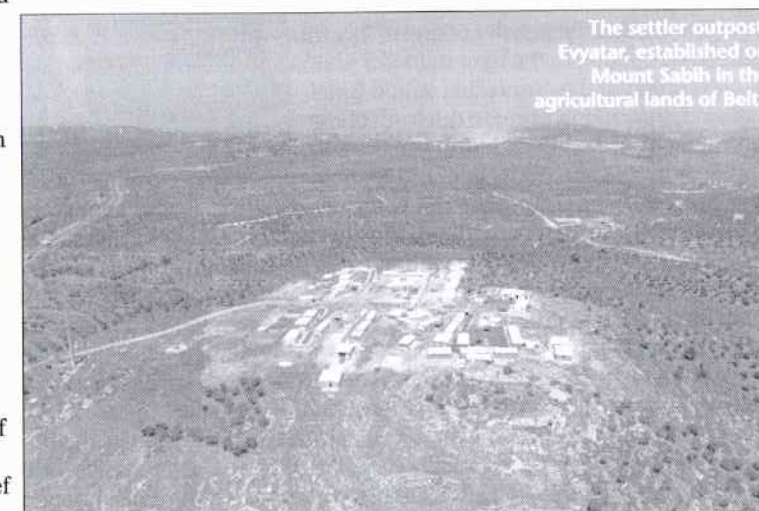
At the same time, the death of Abu-Akleh again showed a Palestinian people united in grief across checkpoints, walls and different political statuses. This, and the self-organised resistance in Beita, in Masafer Yata, in the Naqab/Negev desert and elsewhere, has demonstrated the continuity of the Unity Intifada, as the events of May 2021 were dubbed. The combination of such unity with the actions of the Israeli government compels us to think of the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea as a single political entity where different laws are enacted for Palestinians and Jews, that is, an Apartheid regime. We can see the Palestinian Nakba

(Catastrophe) of 1948 as on a continuum with fresh dispossession happening daily – an ongoing process of colonisation of the whole country.

Within the Israeli human rights community, we've seen encouraging signs of increasing activism and a clearer view of the ideological connection between the Nakba of 1948 and our current situation. This reveals a more holistic and coherent way of thinking, acting and reimagining the space "between the river and the sea". More groups are willing to talk openly of the regime in terms of Apartheid and settler colonialism, and to acknowledge the Nakba.

As Israel enters another election cycle – our fifth in less than four years – hope for change is rooted in these grassroots self-organising groups of Israelis and Palestinians, not affiliated to any political party. It's important for people in the UK and elsewhere who support the Palestinian struggle, and who believe a just and lasting solution can be achieved, to support those groups in any way possible.

For Jewish activists particularly, it is equally important to educate people within their communities about the situation in Palestine, and to take a broad approach that examines the Zionist movement more critically. It is crucial to withdraw support from organisations such as the Jewish National Fund which actively participate in Palestinian dispossession and the ongoing Nakba.



The settler outpost, Eyyatar, established on Mount Sabih in the agricultural lands of Beita

It is worth remembering the deep ties that almost all Israelis have with Jews in North America and Europe, and to know that these ties mean influence and leverage. The Zionist movement from its beginning relied on Jewish communities around the world for funding and political influence, and it still does. Growing solidarity with Palestinians, and retelling of the Jewish story as not necessarily dependent on a Jewish majority state that excludes Palestinians, can be pivotal for the kind of change we need here.

Continues on page 10

The situation of the Palestinians worsens even when progressive parties are in the governing coalition, says RACHEL BEITARIE of Zochrot, an organisation that keeps alive the memory of the Nakba among Jewish Israelis

Find out more

Zochrot is an NGO that has been working since 2002 for exposing and disseminating historical information about the Palestinian Nakba in Hebrew, with a view to promote accountability for the Nakba among the Jewish public of Israel and the implementation of the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees.

www.zochrot.org/welcome/index/en

NO PEACE ON THE HORIZON

KAMEL HAWWASH,
Chair of
Palestine
Solidarity
Campaign,
examines the
position of the
Palestinians in
the international
arena, arguing
that they need
new strategies
for making the
occupation too
costly for Israel
to continue

President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, welcomes US President Joe Biden, July 2022. Photo credit: Haim Zach/GPO Wikimedia Commons

Find out more

PSC campaigns for justice, peace and self-determination for the Palestinians, in support of international law and human rights and against all racism.

www.palestinecampaign.org

An important test of every year that passes in the Palestine/Israel conflict is whether peace is nearer or further from realisation. The answer for 2021-22 is a clear decline in the possibilities for peace.

Israel has enjoyed increasing impunity year on year. It presents itself as a western style democracy fighting the barbaric Arabs, in particular the terrorist Palestinians, and as the frontier for the western world, upholding its values in the Middle East. It argues that there is nothing for which it should be held accountable, no matter how oppressive its policies and practices. Israel receives plaudits from the USA, the UK and others, and if anyone expresses doubts, it raises the red card of antisemitism, labelling any criticism or investigation into its crimes as motivated by a hatred of Jews.

In Britain and other countries, Israeli leaders and supporters devalue the term "antisemitism" – racism against Jews – by using it to shield a state thousands of miles away from criticism of its appalling crimes. Most recently, the new Israeli Prime Minister, Yair Lapid, wrote to the UN Secretary General asking him to disband the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Israel. He claimed that members of the COI had a history of antisemitism, and quoted the Secretary General's commitment to fighting "new antisemitism".

The world has watched news reports of Israel killing the respected Palestinian-American Al Jazeera journalist, Shireen Abu-Akleh, and the sickening attack on her coffin in East Jerusalem. No one has been held accountable for Shireen's murder or for the attack on her funeral. As she was a US citizen, America should have been working day and night to bring justice to Shireen. Instead, the US whitewashed the murder of one of its own citizens by coming to the uncertain interpretation of the events that suited Israel. Rather than working to get to the truth about the killing of an American journalist, the US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides tweeted: "I've been working around the clock since I arrived to help Israel meet all the requirements to join the Visa Waiver Program. Don't lose momentum now. This will help Israeli citizens travel to the US – put them first!" (*Times of Israel*, 28th June 2022)

When President Joe Biden visited Israel/Palestine, he signed the Jerusalem Declaration – not the one that attempted to clarify and resolve the conflict about how to define antisemitism, but a declaration committing the US to Israel's security and standing up to Iran. Despite this, he was not able to extract a commitment from Lapid even to the "two-state solution". Biden's visit to Bethlehem was cursory, and Mahmoud Abbas, an unpopular leader of a state that the US does not even recognise, honoured him with pomp and ceremony.

Biden has not rowed back on any significant changes made by his predecessor, Donald Trump. There has been no reversal of the decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital nor any attempt to move the US Embassy back to Tel Aviv. Indeed, the US Embassy is likely to be built on land that is considered to be stolen from Palestinian

families. There was no mention of reopening the US Consulate in Jerusalem or the Palestinian Mission in Washington.

Nevertheless, Abbas welcomed US donations to Jerusalem hospitals, which are badly needed, but which will bypass his Palestinian Authority to go directly to the institutions themselves. Abbas's Palestinian Authority is grappling with a financial crisis that appears to necessitate contact with any country that can help, even if they have just thrown the Palestinians under the bus.

Palestine followed the west in introducing sanctions against Russia a few days after it invaded Ukraine and supported the move to refer Russia to the International Criminal Court for war crimes. Compare this with Boris Johnson when he was Prime Minister standing against the referral of Israel to the ICC after 74 years of crimes against the Palestinians. The west has dismissed carefully researched reports by B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, which concluded that Israel was practicing apartheid against the Palestinians in all parts of historic Palestine. We might have expected Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, as a lawyer, to have taken notice of this research but he stated in the *Jewish Chronicle* that



he does not accept that Israel is an apartheid state.

The Palestinians are angry at the UK government's proposals to ban public bodies from boycotting states or companies unless those boycotts fit in with government policy. Once again Israel is being protected from accountability in the UK.

The Palestinians see the abandonment of their legitimate rights by governments but they also recognise the tremendous support they have around the world. As Israel continues to oppress the Palestinians and allow its settlers increased space for violence against them, colluding with its allies to close all avenues for popular resistance at home and abroad, the Palestinians must re-evaluate their position. They need to develop a strategy that can bring them their rights despite all the obstacles they face.

Their most effective resistance is to remain on the land and, while reserving the right to use all possible means to end their predicament, to invent new, peaceful ways to make the occupation so costly that Israel and its supporters will have to come to their senses.

THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

The Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine has just been won by Professor Svante Pääbo for his groundbreaking work on paleogenetics. He has sequenced the genome of Neanderthals as well as working out the genetic makeup of a previously unknown human species, called Denisovans. This amazing work will explain some important things about human prehistory. On the other hand, getting your DNA analysed by a "heritage and ancestry" industry that's raking in millions is less amazing. Apart from problems with the science, it's predicated on some highly problematic ways of defining our identity.

myheritage.com enthusiastically claims: "Your DNA reveals your unique heritage – the ethnic groups and geographic regions you originate from". This really doesn't pan out. It may connect you with particular individuals, and enable you to trace specific family members through the generations (including people who might be shocked to discover that they're related to you). This kind of information is hard to find if you're from a community whose history has been fractured by enslavement, persecution, war or poverty. More meticulous existing records "going back to William the Conqueror" are generally the preserve of those who have continued the tradition of conquest and want to ensure that the proceeds are kept in the family.

But you really shouldn't get excited about discovering that you are 14% Latvian or 5% Sephardi or 25% Celtic.

To start with, there's the flawed science: when you do one of these tests, your DNA is not compared with the entire population of the world; it is compared with that of a pool of other people doing the same thing. This is weighted towards affluent countries, so there is much less data on Africans, for example, which skews the results. But whatever floats your longboat – if it interests you to discover that some of your ancestors were Vikings (whatever that means), there's no harm done.

But there are serious problems with delving backwards in time for the essence of "who you are". "Ethnic group" is an imprecise and highly contested term. Ethnicity has much more to do with interaction between mobile, fluctuating human groups that have shifting, overlapping historical and current experiences, than with genetics. If we try to attach it to our DNA we're getting close to theories of race that are not only nonsensical but are extremely dangerous.

Ditto "heritage". If you're interested in discoveries about built-in immunity, then it's fascinating to know that Neanderthal genes might confer some inherited protection to certain diseases as measured across populations. But that doesn't seem to be what people are looking for. They want to find out *where they came from* – as if they can find a thread that will lead them back to the earliest origins of "their" people. They want to discover that somewhere, at some time, they were indigenous – that there was a Garden of Eden which is the bedrock of their identity.

And so we come to the use and misuse of the term "indigenous". In science this is a (not very precise) term to mean something or someone native to an area, whether we know its distant origins or not. It is also a (not very precise) political term, described at some length by the United Nations. As well as a

longstanding connection to a particular place, this description adds that Indigenous Peoples are defined by suffering rights violations, disadvantage, minority status, vulnerability, colonisation, destruction of their land, cultures and languages, and that they share a common experience with other such peoples across the world.

The UN definition of Indigenous Peoples is truly, like the proverbial camel, "a horse built by a committee". They are "inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment" and "have retained social, cultural, economic characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live". What a tangle of vague ideas that seem designed to cover all bases. "Dominant societies"? It goes without saying that those "dominant societies" are incomers in relation to the Indigenous Peoples, who, by definition, were already there. But the stratification and fracture lines are drawn in the wrong place.

The defining feature of the oppression of First Nation / Indigenous / First Peoples everywhere is that they've been conquered, colonised, exploited and murdered. They are, above all, the victims and targets of racism. They do share common experiences and common struggles with others in similar situations across the world. But they also share experiences with peoples who have been forced to migrate *into* their territory – not conquerors or colonists but refugees from conquest, colonisation, climate catastrophe exploitation and murder in far off places. Some have been prised off the land that sustained them; others, like Gypsy, Roma, Traveller people – and Jews – have been persecuted for not being attached to a piece of land.

It's disturbing to hear Jews and Palestinians arguing for their rights to the same territory not on the basis of the desperate necessity for justice now, but because they claim to be indigenous. The settlers' justification for their violence, theft and demolition of Palestinian property and lives is encapsulated in their insistence that they have a right to "Judea" and "Samaria" going back to biblical times. People arriving from New York are saying "this is our land", and claiming to be on a par with groups like First Nation Americans in having suffered an existential loss at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70CE. Even if this was factually correct, which it is not (Jews come from a nomadic tradition and have an almost continuous diasporic history interspersed with short, settled periods on that particular bit of land), this would not justify their actions.

Our opposition to the occupation, to the apartheid laws, to the racial discrimination, to the relentless violence designed to drive the Palestinians down and out must be based on our conviction that humans can and must coexist if we're not to face oblivion. The case against settler colonialism won't be made by arguing about who got there first. Neither the Palestinians nor any other conquered, colonised or oppressed peoples will move a single step in that direction by competing on the highly dubious grounds that one or other group is most "indigenous".

Indeed, anyone who can work out who is indigenous to that particular piece of land on the eastern Mediterranean will truly deserve a Nobel Prize.

Searching for
some ultimate
bedrock of our
identity is not
a useful or
progressive
basis on
which to fight
for justice
and human
rights, argues
JULIA BARD

BUILDING

Housing activist **GLYN ROBBINS** had an opportunity to spend six months working and researching alongside housing activists in New York City and discovered the rich history of housing co-operatives there. He also discovered the role of left wing Jews in creating them and their enduring legacy



If you catch the number 2 line on the rattling New York City subway, get off at Allerton Avenue and walk two minutes towards Bronx Park, at the corner of the road you'll find a distinguished looking apartment block. Its design immediately suggests a place with a history. When it was built, in 1927, this was the United Workers' Cooperatives, known as "The Coops". It was part of a movement, led by Jewish radicals, that envisaged, not only better housing for working class people, but a better society.

The Bronx is the northernmost of New York City's five boroughs (it's the only borough attached to the US mainland, in case that question ever comes up in your trivia quiz). Today, it's a very diverse place, with a population of 1.5 million, sometimes pejoratively associated with urban decline. But in the 1920s, living in the Bronx was aspirational. In *The Jazz Singer*, released the same year that The Coops opened, the Al Jolson character tells his mum that, if he makes it, they'll leave the Lower East Side and "move up in to Bronx". The suburban impulse was one of the first things ever heard in the movies! How many Jewish families in the East End of London said the same about moving to Ilford?

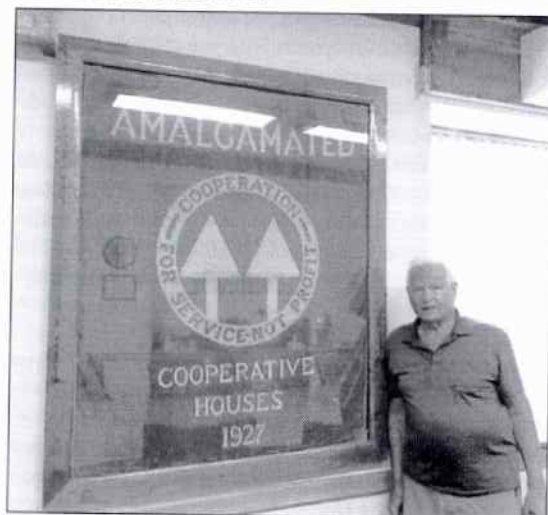
The Coops were the product of trade union organisation, particularly amongst NYC's garment workers. Determined to escape slum tenements and private landlords, the unions bought land at a relatively cheap price in the Bronx, which, in the early 20th century was still semi-rural. As well as a spacious apartment set amongst landscaped gardens with a rent they could afford, Coops tenants – known as "Coopnicks" – were invited to share a co-operative lifestyle that included on-site communal facilities, a library, cultural activities,

many in Yiddish, and political activism. Just up the road from the Coops is another block where Coopnicks helped organise a militant rent strike in the 1930s.

They also supported The Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War and, although it would be a stretch to say it was fully racially integrated, The Coops had African-American tenants when much of the US was rigidly segregated. Among them was Angie Dickerson, a long-time civil rights campaigner who attracted visits to the Coops by, among others, W E B Du Bois and Paul Robeson. In case anyone was in any doubt about the kind of place the Coops was, a hammer and sickle is carved into the stone above one of the doorways!

The Coops was one of several Bronx housing co-operatives inspired by first and second generation Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe who brought with them a determination to build a better world. Others were the Farband Houses (built by Labour Zionists), Sholem Aleichem Houses – named for the great Yiddish writer – and The Amalgamated Housing Co-Op. All of the buildings are still standing, but only the Amalgamated still operates as a co-op (the others have been privatised). It also dates to 1927 and was built by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union.

It provides 1,482 Bronx families with a home at rents approximately 30% below NYC's extortionate market level. Meetings and social events are held in a hall named in honour of Baruch Charney Vladeck, one of several people involved in establishing workers' housing co-ops in New York, who had been a member of the revolutionary Bund movement. The Treasurer of the Amalgamated is Ed Yaker, a retired teacher who has lived most of his 77 years there. He recalls that many of the early families were "anti-religious Jews" and remains a staunch trade



Above: the Amalgamated Housing Coop today
Above right: Baruch Charney Vladeck, one of the Bundist housing coop pioneers.
Right: Ed Yaker, a lifelong resident who remains committed to the cooperative principles.

A BETTER WORLD

unionist and defender of the founding co-operative principles of the Amalgamated, which drew heavily on the Rochdale Pioneers in 1840s Lancashire.

The Pioneers had a particular impact on Abraham Kazan. Born near Kyiv in 1889, Kazan left an indelible mark on New York City, where he arrived in 1904 as what today we might call an "unaccompanied minor". He became active in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and for the next 60 years, used the powerful rag trade unions as the engine for producing thousands of co-operative homes, including the Amalgamated, where he lived and worked for many years.

Kazan's earliest co-operative enterprises, like his predecessors in Rochdale, were faltering attempts at retail outlets, starting with selling sugar and matzos during a wave of strikes in the garment industry. But then, as now, the biggest issues facing working class communities were housing and health. Kazan identified the gross exploitation of a system that confronted low paid workers with the constant threat of rent hikes and eviction from often squalid homes. Today, thousands of New York tenants are again threatened with homelessness as the rapacious housing market recovers from Covid, but it's a situation Kazan would have recognised from 100 years ago. Interviewed in 1969, he recalls:

"The number of people that were forced to move one place to another grew larger and larger every month, and in those days the law was on the side of the landlord... If a man (sic) could not afford to pay the rent, all the landlord had to do was to go to court and get a warrant to have the man dispossessed... we wanted to have something better, something different than we had before.

The first 303 homes at the Amalgamated, part-funded by a loan from the *Jewish Daily Forward* newspaper, led to thousands more across New York City. About five miles east of the Amalgamated, on the other side of the Bronx, is Co-Op City, the biggest co-operative housing development in the world, where almost 45,000 people live in 15,372 homes.

Just south of Penn Street station, in the heart of Manhattan, are another 2,820 co-operative homes built by ILGWU funds in the early 1960s. Not far from the famous Coney Island boardwalk in Brooklyn is the 2,500-home Amalgamated Warbasse, the sister development of the one in the Bronx; and in Queens there's Rochdale Village, named in recognition of the Lancashire co-operators (when you walk around the site, you see the original co-operative rules prominently displayed).

Kazan had a hand in all of these, often by working with the Russian émigré architect Herman Jesser and the controversial figure of Robert Moses, New York's "master builder", who denied his Jewish origins and created a form of racist urban development that has left deep and enduring wounds. But perhaps counter-intuitively, today, about 20% of NYC's housing is protected from the



worst excesses of private landlordism, a combination of rent controls, public housing and the kind of co-ops that took root in the Bronx.

Hammers and sickles over the doorway, testify to the socialist origins of the housing.

However, we should be wary of over-romanticising these achievements. As with most big development projects, including the cradle of council housing at the Boundary Estate in east London's Bethnal Green, they had a flavour of social engineering and were preceded by displacement of previous residents, few of whom benefited from the improved, newly-built homes. Moreover, as Ed Yaker at the Amalgamated laments, promoting and preserving the ideals of co-operativism has become ever harder with the advances of suburbanisation and individualism.

Nonetheless, there are some important lessons for the UK labour movement in the housing history of New York. At a time when the political establishment, including the Labour Party's leadership, appears locked into a pro-market housing death march, resurgent grassroots trade unionism may point to an alternative.

Attending recent RMT solidarity rallies, there were repeated expressions of support for a revival of council housing as the only truly affordable homes for workers in most of our towns and cities. Translating that into action will require the kind of determination and vision of the Bronx co-operatives and the Jewish radicals who created them, but they were precisely the kind of people Starmer and Co are currently trying to drive out of the Labour Party.

During six months working and campaigning alongside New York housing activists last year, I was repeatedly struck by the enduring legacy of Jewish socialism. The seeds planted 100 years ago continue to produce young Jewish radicals who know that only fundamental social change will reverse a return to the kind of conditions, at home and at work, that their forebears experienced and successfully resisted. Preserving that tradition is why the witch-hunt of Jewish socialists here in Britain must be resisted too.



The house in Vilna where the Bund was founded

BUND

October 2022 marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Bund – a Jewish socialist movement based in the working class in the Russian Empire. In this special section we have reproduced writing

HAPPY NEW YEAR! A GUT YOR! SHONA TOVA!

On the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashona 5783 (2022), the Jewish Socialists' Group released a video that celebrated the 125th anniversary of the birth of what became a mass Jewish socialist movement. The video opened and closed with a Yiddish song – *Di Tsukunft*, the Future – sung by the late Adrienne Cooper. Here is the text with some of the images we used in the video.

Di Tsukunft

*O, di velt vet vern yinger
Un dos lebn laykhter ginger
Yeder kloger vet a zinger
Vern brider bald*

*O, di velt vet vern shener
libe greser sine klener
tsvishn froyen, tsvishn mener
tsvishn land un land*

The Future

*Oh the world will become younger
And life lighter and easier
Every complainer will be a singer
We will soon be brothers*

*Oh the world will become more beautiful
Love will grow and hatred recede
Between women, between men
Between one country and another*

This Yiddish song was written in London in 1892 by a Russian Jewish immigrant, Morris Winchevsky. On *Rosh Hashona* we think of how to create a new, brighter future. This year marks a very significant anniversary: 125 years ago, 13 Jewish workers and revolutionaries held a secret, illegal meeting in a safe house in Vilna (Vilnius). Three nights later they founded a radical Jewish movement that gave new hope to the downtrodden, impoverished Jews of the Russian Empire.

Russia's Tsarist regime restricted where Jews could live, their education, what jobs they could do. They suffered frequent mob attacks – pogroms – instigated by the authorities. This new movement inspired ordinary people to fight for freedom and dignity – and not only for Jews. It promised a better future, not by separating Jews from non-Jews nor by uprooting Jews to Palestine, but through collective struggles for justice and equality where they lived.

This movement, *Der Algemayner Yidishe Arbeter Bund* – the General Union of Jewish Workers – became known simply as the Bund, Yiddish for “union”. The Bund was secular and socialist. It wanted full civil equality and the free development of Jewish culture, especially through Yiddish, the language of most East European Jews. It fought for democracy, enlightenment and equality within Jewish life, too.

Just a few weeks before the Bund was formed, Theodor Herzl had proclaimed the birth of the

Zionist movement at a meeting in a plush concert hall in Switzerland. He asserted that antisemitism could never be defeated; that Jews would only be free in their own land.

Bundists and Zionists held opposing beliefs: optimism vs pessimism; internationalism vs nationalism; integration vs isolation or emigration. The Bund believed in *do'ikayt* (here-ness) and fought for freedom where they lived. “*Dortn vu mir lebn, dort is undzer land*” – Where we live, that is our country.

They helped to overthrow the Tsar in the Russian Revolution, to win new rights for Jewish workers and end antisemitic discrimination. But after 1917, as political power was centralised by Lenin and then Stalin, the Bund in Russia was suppressed.

In 1930s Poland, home to 3 million Jews, the Bund led workers' struggles and resistance to antisemitism. It created newspapers and journals, Yiddish libraries and schools, sports clubs, children's camps, women's organisations and youth groups.

The Nazis destroyed all Jewish movements and persecuted non-Jewish Polish socialists. Millions of Jewish lives were reduced to ashes. But the Bund's ideals could not be eradicated. Across the world today, groups of Jewish socialists are reviving and building on them.

In this anniversary year, when Jewish nationalism survives only through further dispossession, occupation and oppression of the Palestinians; when self-proclaimed Jewish “leaders” desperately attempt to stifle progressive Jewish voices; when young Jews want to strengthen links with other minorities; when there is renewed enthusiasm for Yiddish culture and other Jewish languages; when Jews and non-Jews need socialist solutions to economic and climate crises – the Bund's ideas inspire us right here, right now.

The video closed with the last verse of *Di Tsukunft*.
*Alzo mutik in di reyen,
in di reyen tsu befrayen,
tsu befrayen un banayen
Undzer alte velt*

So, take courage marching in the ranks,
In the ranks to free us
To free and renew
our old world

Zol lebn der bund! Long live the Bund!
Happy New Year from the Jewish Socialists' Group!

125

on the Bund from contributors to our magazine, and have also included the text of a special anniversary video released by the Jewish Socialists' Group on Rosh Hashona this year



A new generation building on the Bundist legacy, Warsaw, 2019

THE BUND BY VLADIMIR MEDEM, 1919

Published in *Jewish Socialist* No 11

Listen carefully to the word “Bund”. It comes from the word to bind. Bind together into one complete entity all separate things with a tie. To join feeble energies into one huge power. Put your ear to the chest of the Jewish worker and listen; his heartbeat is strong and steady. Look into the eyes of the comrade; they are wide open and clear. Take his hand; it is strong and hardened. How come? How is it that a single person, a grain of sand in this huge desert of a world, a tiny drop in the turbulent sea of life which surrounds you with thousands of brutal enemies, which destroys a whole world, grinding countries and states into dust, drowning in its depths countless human existences, how is it that in the middle of this enormous whirlwind stands a person with sparkling eyes, undaunted by the storm? Look comrade into your own soul. There you will read the answer: you have a home, a family, a basis on which to stand; you can feel that around you, above you and within you there is a great force that supports, embraces and carries you, makes you strong and does not let you fall. Do you know, comrade, the name of this enormous force? Do you know what is the name of your home, your family, your existence, your hope? Stand up comrade! Lift up your head and sing the old Shvueh! This is the Bund!

Vladimir Medem was born in 1879 in Western Latvia but grew up in Minsk, Belarus. He was a Bund activist who became its leading theoretician, advancing the idea of non-territorial cultural autonomy for minorities. His background was not typical of most Bundists. Medem's parents were wealthy, assimilationist Jews who converted to Lutheran Christianity. Medem was baptised in a Russian orthodox church.

He studied at Kiev university, and met radicals and revolutionaries, including Yiddish-speaking Jews. He was arrested and expelled from university for his activism. He did not learn Yiddish until he was 22, when he became a Bundist. As a student, he contracted an incurable kidney disease which shortened his life. Medem was imprisoned in 1901 while awaiting trial but, due to his health problems, was released on bail. He fled the country and obtained political asylum in Switzerland, joining exiled Bundists there. He returned to Russia in 1913, but within a week was imprisoned for 25 months. A further sentence of hard labour followed but he was free by 1918, and then able to participate very fully in the Bund in newly independent Poland. In 1920 he travelled to New York to raise political awareness of the Bund's struggles and gain material support for Bund projects in Poland. He died in America in 1923, aged just 43.

BENEATH GATHERING CLOUDS

MAJER BOGDANSKI, a lifelong Bundist from Piotrkow, Poland, recalls the life and work of the Bund in the period leading up to the Second World War. Majer died in London in 2005.

Published in *Jewish Socialist* No 3

The Bund consisted of three tiers – the party, the youth organisation (*Yugnt Bund Tsukunft*) and the children's organisation (*Sotsialistisher Kinder Farband*, SKIF)...

Ideologically we were Marxist. Politically we called ourselves revolutionary socialists. Where we

could gain power by the vote, in a democratic way, we would; but if this was not possible, like in Italy or Portugal, or in our own Poland, and if force was the only way of gaining power, we would use force. We were absolutely against war and absolutely against the

army. We thought it should be disbanded. But this was only until the advent of Hitler. Hitler changed our minds in this respect...

In all our political work we tried as much as possible to work with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), and also the socialist parties of the other





BUND

minorities – Germans, Ukrainians, White Russians and Lithuanians...

We organised strikes; not frivolously ... a strike was a dire necessity. Strikes were mainly for economic matters ... we had demonstrations on all sorts of occasions. If there was a pogrom somewhere, we would call a half-day strike and the shopkeepers would usually support it...

The political system we had in the '30s we called semi-fascist and this was no exaggeration... They said it was a democracy led by an authority. The government was oppressive to all its citizens. It was horribly anti-labour and anti-socialist. When the workers struck, the police would come and make massacres.

Antisemitism was the hardest thing we had to contend with all the time... In defence we sought and often got the help of the PPS... Make no mistake: we were the only ones to actively fight antisemitism. The socialist Zionists weren't interested and neither were the Communists...

Inside the Jewish community we had to contend with the Zionists –

we were anti-Zionist – and also with the orthodox. Religion to us was a private matter. There were Bundists who were deeply religious ... the people knew that we didn't go to synagogue to pray, but they knew that we were fighting to the last drop of blood for their right to religious practice. Politically we had a hard struggle with them... We had to belong and pay rates to the Jewish Kehilla [Jewish council].

They were mostly dominated by the religious ... voting rights [in the kehillas] were only for men. Women had no right to vote and that was against our principles.

Life was hard but it also had very beautiful moments. We managed somehow to have a lot of happiness and enjoyment. With the youth organisation and the children's organisation we organised summer camps and dances. We had our sports organisation. The children were particularly interesting and nice to be with. They would organise summer camps which we called socialist children's republics, and they learned to live together as socialists.

"I was brought up by the Bund, and remember as a small child, dressed in red ribbons, watching a May Day demonstration where the Bundist marchers were fighting with fascist hooligans. The belief that fighting oppression, wanting to end inequality, racism, discrimination and chauvinism is the norm, not an option, I owe largely to the Bund."
Wlodka Blit Robertson, Warsaw Ghetto survivor, London

A CHILD OF THE BUND

ESTHER BRUNSTEIN writes about the Medem *shule* – the Bundist school she attended in 1930s Lodz. Esther died in London in 2017.

Published in *Jewish Socialist* No 11

As pedagogues our teachers were excellent ... nothing was compulsory. The school was run on free and democratic lines.

I remember all the teachers with absolute devotion and love ... there was a great feeling of belonging. It was an extension of home ... we really felt we were being taken care of as little people. As people we mattered.

What this school has given me ... was a strong feeling of what was right and what was just. We somehow managed to carry it within us. And as far as I'm concerned it helped me in the ghetto in the darkest hours of the war. I have always retained this

feeling and belief in my fellow human being...

At the Medem *shule* we had no such thing as a religious assembly. The other schools did but it was not forced upon us. We had a hymn for the school... "Lomir zingen a lid tsu der yidishe shule, vos iz aleme undz azoy tayer. Lomir zingen mit freyd un mit hofnung ful, oyf a velt a fraye a naye (Let us sing a song to the Yiddish school, which is dear to us all. Let us sing full of hope and joy for a new and free world).

... [T]here was the sense of unity at school, for instance when we took our lunches to school, we would often put them in a

communal basket so that the children who were not so well off also had something nice to eat...

Boys and girls did everything together. We were one of the few co-educational schools at the time. There was a great sense of equality in our school. We had men and women teachers and this was very progressive for its time. When they taught the Hebrew prophets, they taught not just in terms of what they were saying should happen but what was the right thing to do...

They imparted a strong sense of Jewish identity, not through nationalism but *folkkultur* and a sense of belonging to a people.



"The Bund was the gift from my mother to me. She lived and breathed its ideology. It saw her through the darkest days of the Holocaust and stayed with her all her life. She never gave up believing a better world was possible. We need the Bund now more than ever."
Lorna Brunstein, installation artist exploring memory, loss, inherited trauma

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"The Bund's political agenda didn't aim to achieve 'what is good for Jews', but what is good for humanity – which would necessarily benefit all. For them, promoting Yiddish secular culture with pride did not contradict a deep commitment to a just society for all in the future. At the same time, they were truly national and fully internationalists – and as such, anti-nationalists."

Roni Gechtman, historian, Mount St Vincent University, Nova Scotia

"Throughout literature on the Bund, the word *mishpokhe* comes up frequently; the Bund really was a family and felt like that to its members and activists. I feel that spirit has continued with the neo-Bundist activities I've been involved with in Britain in the past 15 years or so. May we Bundists always behave towards each other with good-heartedness, kindness and *khavershaft*."
Joseph Finlay, Jewish socialist activist and historian

"Bundists criticised other Jews without fear of being called antisemitic or self-hating. They unhesitatingly challenged Zionists, rabbis and Jewish factory owners. In short, Bundists weren't romantic or sentimental about Jews or Jewish life. Bundists were never ashamed. They identified what was wrong, diagnosed what was needed and worked towards improving the life of the Jewish masses."
Irena Klepfisz, poet, writer, teacher, activist, New York

BUNDISM IN ENGLAND

Written histories of Jewish radicalism in England have focused especially on Jewish anarchists and communists, eclipsing the history of the Bund in this country. **BENJAMIN NADEL** sketches the early role of Bundists here. He was born in Petrograd in 1918; lived in Poland from 1957 until 1968, and then went to New York in 1969, where he died in 2014.

Published in *Jewish Socialist* No 6/7

As soon as the Bund was created in Tsarist Russia, there also arose Bundist groups in the counties of emigration in Western Europe, as well as Galicia and Bukovina which at that time were part of Austria...

Already in the year 1900 there existed in London a Bund association, *Der Veker* (The Monitor). Arkadi Kremer, one of the founders ... of the Bund came to London and founded a printing shop for the Committee of the Bund outside Russia ... they printed the leaflets, pamphlets and periodicals of the Bund which were then smuggled into Russia for distribution there...

Arkadi himself did all the technical, administrative, typographical and distribution work necessary to publish the Bundist literature... Arkadi and [co-worker] Kossowski were helped ... by a Bundist from Vilna, Max Nadel...

In 1907 Nadel met Lenin in London... In a conversation recorded in the book *Early Blossom* by Leon Bernstein, he thus described Lenin's autocratic nature: "[H]e (Lenin) keeps all the reins of power in his hands ... he will bow to nobody ... should this man succeed in his desire to obtain power the whole world will be shaken."

...The London Association of the Bund – [*Der*] *Veker* ... took part in a demonstration of 25,000 Jewish and English workers to protest against the pogrom in Kishinev; they celebrated the First of May and the anniversary of the Bund ... they collected money for the Bund's self-defence groups in Russia. In a

house-to-house collection on 30 July 1905 they received over £106 from 325 donors. In June-July of the same year there began to appear in London a weekly, *di pogromen blat* (the pogrom paper) issued by the Bund's Self-Defence Committee.

Similar Bund groups sprung up in ... Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool...

120,000 Jews ... lived in east London ... their main problems were the struggle for daily bread and equal rights for themselves in this country and for those left behind in Russia... They helped ... a great number of families in need, on the spot, and sent help to intending emigrants in Russia ... they established a special Workers' Fund under the Chair of Berl Rosner, a Bundist from Lodz who had become naturalised in 1909...

During the years of the First World War, until 1917, Victor Alter [a prominent Bund leader in inter-war Poland], who came to England as a refugee from Belgium after it was invaded by the Germans, was active here. He worked in a factory ... and later as an engineer. He became a leading member of *Der Veker* and was also active in the British Socialist Party to which the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation, formed largely with the participation of Bundists, was linked.

After the First World War the Bundists concentrated in the Jewish Socialist Organisation which became a base for campaigns of aid for the Bund in Poland.



Benjamin Nadel

"The Bund experience opens for discussion the important but lost alternatives of 20th century European history. The Bund represented democratic socialist perspectives on internationalism, ethnicity and multicultural solutions that were suppressed. The Bund was ahead of its century but its ideas are vital for labour and human strategies in our current world."
Hakan Blomqvist, historian, Stockholm

Bundists in London, around 1950. In the front row from right to left are two of the writers here, Esther Brunstein and Majer Bogdanski. On the far left is Esther's brother, Perec Zylberberg.



youth still felt left behind. Skinheads sought to assert their identity and give themselves a sense of power by attacking those perceived as weaker in one way or another.

Some skinheads victimised new Asian immigrants to the East End. Yet, skinhead cultural influences often overlapped with Jamaican ska/reggae Rude Boy style, and there were also black and mixed skinhead groups in east London with anti-racist attitudes.

But racist skinheads grabbed the headlines. In April 1970, as he was walking from Bromley by Bow tube station late at night, 50-year-old Tosir Ali was attacked by two 18-year-old skinheads. He died from knife wounds. The first six months of 1970 saw several violent skinhead attacks on Asians in Tower Hamlets and Newham and a skinhead rampage down Brick Lane.

In September 1975 the NF held an anti-mugging march through Bethnal Green, blaming street robberies on Caribbean youth. Friction between black and white youth increased while the NF cast itself as the defenders of older white women who, it claimed, were the main victims of street crime.

During this decade Caribbean communities in Britain were stereotyped not just by the far right but by mainstream right wing tabloids. Black teenagers were depicted as muggers and an unwanted problem for the police, while Black adults were

depicted as benefit scroungers and a drain on society.

By the mid-1970s, more skinheads were aligning themselves explicitly with the National Front and the British Movement. They turned up at NF paper sales at the corner of Bethnal Green Road and Brick Lane, which became more frequent from 1976 onwards. A Young National Front was formed nationally, which distributed leaflets (with an antisemitic graphic) on "How to spot a red teacher". It published a youth paper, *Bulldog*, and attempted to recruit in schools.

With youth unemployment rising, and the NF falsely blaming immigrants, anti-racist and anti-fascist organising by young people became crucial to resisting the far-right threat. Young Bengali activists in Tower Hamlets formed several youth organisations from 1976 onwards. The older generation felt worried about becoming involved in demonstrations, but young Bengalis, acutely conscious of their daily experiences of racism, were less inhibited. Their parents continued to believe that their stay in Britain was temporary, but young Bengalis were starting to live by a slogan they and Asian youth groups around the country were popularising: "Here to Stay – Here to Fight".

Rock against Racism (RAR) emerged in autumn 1976. The Princess Alice pub in Forest Gate, east London, hosted RAR's first gig. Through 1977, RAR gigs in many cities brought (white) punk and (black) reggae bands together, playing to equally mixed audiences. The Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was launched in November 1977 to produce mass anti-fascist propaganda and mobilise street resistance to NF marches. RAR and the ANL provided exciting cultural and political initiatives for young people, who began wearing the badges: School Kids Against

the Nazis, Skateboarders Against the Nazis, and various other identities "against the Nazis". Simplistic slogans saying NF=No Future, NF=No Fun, served a real purpose, but there were contradictions. RAR's emphasis on punk and reggae made it more successful in attracting Caribbean youth than Bengali youth.

In January 1978 the Tory leader, Margaret Thatcher, raised the political temperature by promoting the Conservatives' own anti-immigrant politics in a TV interview for *World in Action*. She deliberately stirred up fears among white British people when she said, "People feel they will be rather swamped by people of a different culture... We are a British nation with British characteristics."

She openly sought to win back votes from disaffected Tories leaning towards the NF, while trying to convince Labour voters that her party would protect (white) workers from what she described as ill-effects of immigration. By doing so, though, she seemed to confirm the veracity of the NF's racist arguments.

Antiracists and anti-fascists sought to create a large scale, imaginative response to this dangerous political climate. In 1978, two huge carnivals against racism took place: the first in April, in east London, an area where Bengali communities, especially, suffered far right harassment; the second in September, near Brixton, where Caribbean communities suffered far right and police racism. Between those two events, though, there were months of street level conflict, racist violence, fiery meetings and militant protests.

Ten days before the first carnival, racists in Plaistow, east London, murdered 10-year-old Kenneth Singh. Four days after the carnival, 24-year-old Altab Ali was stabbed to death by three youths on his way home from work. Thousands of Bengalis marched to Hyde Park and Downing Street, protesting Altab Ali's murder. Further protests took place. The numbers contesting the Sunday morning pitch at the end of Brick Lane continued to grow. The fascists' numbers were boosted by supporters travelling in from Hertfordshire, Kent, and Essex.

On 10th June, Enoch Powell returned to the fray. He was an Ulster Unionist MP from 1974 but was still invited by local Tory associations to speak on immigration. On this day he addressed an anti-immigration event in Billericay Essex organised by local Conservatives. He said:

"Violence does not break upon such a scene because it is willed, or contrived... but because it lies in the inevitable course of events... [I]n the next 20 years one third of the inner metropolis of key cities will have passed to the control of a population which by reason of the strongest impulses and interests of human nature, neither can, nor will identify itself, or be identified with the rest... [T]hose who foresaw and feared they would be swamped will be driven by equally strong impulses and interests to resist and prevent it."

This was incitement. The next day, 150 National Front supporters rampaged down Brick Lane throwing rubble and bottles through Bengali shop windows, attacking Bengalis on the street. Some needed hospital treatment. Bengali youths came out to confront them.

In late June, 45-year-old Ishaque Ali died from a

heart attack in hospital after a vicious assault by three racist youths when he was walking with his nephew along a Hackney street.

The events in the East End through that summer, are collectively known as the Battle of Brick Lane – the struggle against racism and fascism in which black and white *did* unite, in which self-defence was organised daily by a community that saw itself as here to stay. The activists and supporters of Bengali youth movements played an absolutely central role.

During the last three years I've volunteered on an oral history project in which we have recorded the stories of that time, primarily through the words of those activists. The interviewees clearly appreciated the activism of groups like the ANL, but what was uppermost in their minds was not the weekend battle at the top of Brick Lane; it was finding ways to cope with and challenge their daily lived experience of racism, racial violence and disadvantage in so many spheres: housing, school, the workplace, encounters with police.

The word "Islamophobia" didn't exist in the 1970s, though some attacks took place close to mosques. Fascist propaganda then made no specific mention of Bengalis or Muslims. They used the umbrella

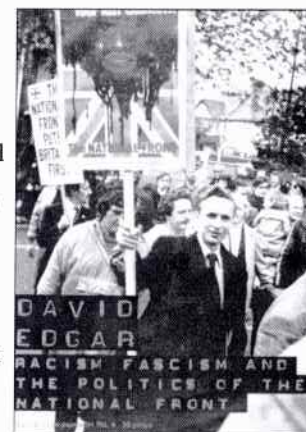
terms – "Asians" or "immigrants" rather than referring to religion. They depicted a typical Asian on racist stickers as a man with a turban.

The slogans of the anti-racist/anti-fascist resistance movements of the 1970s were inspiring. But

sometimes well-motivated slogans can be misleading. I remember placards from the late 1970s that said: "Yesterday the Jews, today the Blacks", which intended to show how the terrible treatment of Jews by earlier racists was now visited on Black and Asian minorities, who had apparently replaced them as the principal targets. It made me uncomfortable because I knew that old-school antisemitism still existed, that fascists don't replace targets but accumulate them.

Two outstanding publications from the late '70s really understood this: David Edgar's pamphlet, *Racism, Fascism and the Politics of the National Front*, published by the Institute of Race Relations; and Michael Billig's book, *Fascists: A social psychological view of the National Front*, based on interviews with middle-rank NF organisers in different localities.

Both publications



identified an over-arching antisemitic conspiracy theory that was pivotal to the fascist worldview, and explained its connection with the more visible and directly threatening street-level racism towards Asian and Caribbean immigrants. Fascist theoreticians believe there is a world Jewish conspiracy to dilute and undermine "white civilisation" by fostering multicultural societies. They blame Jews for encouraging and organising the very presence of non-white immigrants in Britain.

According to Billig the higher recruits moved within the NF, the more they were introduced to the idea of waging war against a "world Jewish conspiracy". At street level, ordinary members sold the paper, *National Front News*, dominated by anti-immigrant stories, but the core membership were encouraged to read *Spearhead* journal, where in-depth articles combined economic critiques and anti-communism in a conspiracy theory that emphasised Jewish power. At NF paper sales at the top of Brick Lane, they often ran a bookstall, where, among anti-immigrant literature, you could buy other titles such as *Did 6 Million Really Die?* and *Hoax of the 20th Century*, denying the Holocaust.

The British Movement advanced the same conspiracy theory. A March 1978 graphic from their journal *British Patriot* depicts the Britannia figure being strangled by a six-headed snake. The snake's central heads represent Jews and communists. They are flanked by an Asian and a Caribbean, who in turn are flanked by agitators for the Socialist Workers Party and Gay liberation.

Racists and fascists in Europe and America today are spreading the Great Replacement Theory, claiming that "White Nations" are being undermined by the growing presence of Muslim migrants and refugees from Asia and Africa who are replacing them, while white families have lower birthrates. Who pulls the levers? "One Worlders", or "Cosmopolitans" with Jewish names. It is essentially the same theory from the 1970s brought into the 21st century – the same conspiratorial hidden hand. The fight against fascism and its conspiracy theories goes hand in hand with our fight against all aspects of daily racism.

Turbulent emotions on a Holy Land tour

STUART GOODMAN and his partner were the only Jewish participants on a recent group tour to Israel. He recounts the visit, which culminated in a traumatic experience

My wife Pauline has been an active member of St John Ambulance for more than 30 years and while she carried out her First Aid duties, I helped with some of the administrative tasks. We are both members of the St John Ambulance Historical Society, and they regularly organise visits to Israel to view connections with the Crusades and the Hospitallers. Jerusalem has an important place in the history of St John Ambulance, which is named after the 11th century Knights of St John who set up a hospital in the city to care for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land.

This was my first visit to Israel, and I had reservations about going. I am not in favour of the Israeli government's politics and I wasn't sure how, as a Jew, I would fit in with the St John Tour which would include information on the life and teachings of Jesus. We were the only Jewish people on the trip – other than our tour guide Suzi (see opposite page). Many of the other participants were devout Christians for whom the trip was a pilgrimage.

This was a contrast to Pauline's first visit to Israel 52 years earlier when she spent six weeks living and working on Kibbutz Machanayim in the Upper Galilee, close to the Golan Heights and the Lebanese border.

The trip itself was interesting. I particularly liked Old Jerusalem's cosmopolitan feel with synagogues, churches and mosques close together. The tour included a visit to Masada, the desert fortress where,

the pogroms which provoked the emigration of many Jews (including my grandparents) from Eastern Europe. That film also mentioned the Bund, whose ideas are a source of inspiration for the Jewish Socialists' Group. I was moved by Jerusalem having a site to remember Nazi genocide of the Jews – and they don't ignore others who suffered and died, including Roma, Gay people and Soviet prisoners of war – but I felt uneasy about another video that appeared to suggest that the Holocaust justified Zionism.

We arrived in Israel the day after the killing by Israeli forces of the Palestinian-American *Al Jazeera* journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh. Some Israeli friends were on the way to see us but turned back when they realised that our hotel was in East Jerusalem and there had been some "trouble" near there because of the killing. I'm not sure whether they were being cautious or paranoid.

We saw lots of soldiers, many of them young people doing their national service. Some appeared to be larking about, showing each other pictures on their mobile phones – I wasn't sure whether this was part of an act to look friendly. Our tour took us to the River Jordan, where St John is believed to have baptised Jesus. There were two young Israeli soldiers on one side, with Jordanian soldiers a short distance away. We were told it wasn't uncommon for both sets of soldiers to be seen chatting with each other.

I was unhappy when we were told to have our passports ready to cross through the controversial military-controlled Wall to visit biblical sites like Bethlehem and Jericho – and I was disappointed that I looked out of the coach window too late to see a Banksy.

Then we visited the Western Wall – the Wailing Wall to Jews, and the Buraq Wall to Muslims. As a remaining part of the Second Temple, a very holy site for practising Jews, I was prepared to have an emotional response to seeing it. But the emotions I felt were not what I had expected. Most of the square in front of the wall was barricaded off, with hundreds of soldiers at tables bearing machine guns and bibles. It could have been a passing out parade for newly-recruited soldiers who were given a machine gun in one hand and a bible in the other. Shockingly, this was also depicted on a T-shirt being sold in an Old Jerusalem market with the slogan "Guns 'n' Moses"!

I was upset to see soldiers loading their weapons, with many soldiers marching and chanting. They were doing a stiff-arm salute with their fists clenched. I was reminded that, during the Passover Seder, we read about slaves being brought out of bondage in Egypt *beyad khazaka uvezroah netuya* (with a clenched fist and an outstretched arm). That's what they might have intended to represent but if they had raised their arms ever so slightly, it would have resembled a Nazi salute.

I complained to one of the soldiers saying I was offended by the military display; I felt it desecrated what was supposed to be a holy place. The soldier said he had to speak to someone, and left; I didn't see him again. I did not go down to the Wall to pray

because I felt that doing so would have been to condone the military presence and that using the Wall for military purposes could be regarded as Israel rewriting Jewish history.

I was very angry to see soldiers chanting, and machine guns and bibles around me. I looked around and quite loudly asked: "What the fuck is going on?" I'm not ashamed to say that the sight of all this made me very upset, and I left in tears, comforted by Pauline. One member of our tour group was an Anglican Priest. He was also unimpressed with the

sight of the military and, on seeing me upset, invited me to pray with him. Although I declined his offer, I said I appreciated the gesture.

Whilst we were in Israel, I commemorated my father's *yortsayt* (anniversary of his death), and I had contemplated saying *Kaddish*, the mourner's prayer, at the Western Wall. But instead, when the tour visited the beautiful Ein National Park in the Jerusalem mountains to view the remains of a Crusader fort, I made a spontaneous decision to recite the prayer overlooking a peaceful stream lined by fig trees.

Bridging troubled waters

I was born in Melbourne to a German Jewish father who had escaped the Holocaust and described himself as a secular humanist Jew, and a non-Jewish Swiss mother – and I grew up feeling somewhat Jewish. To please my paternal grandmother, while she was alive, we celebrated Seders and I had a Batmitzvah. But my father thought the Jewish schools spent too much time praying so I was sent to a private High Church of England Girls Grammar school for 12 years. Little did my father realise how often I would be on my knees in that Christian school. Although I was exempted from attending religious education classes, my father told me to stay and learn about Christianity, as we lived in a Christian country. This was to serve me well in my chosen career as a guide for Christian pilgrims.

Years later, after an Arts degree, I studied drama, and the dean of the school suggested we find our roots before embarking on an acting career. So in 1982 I went to Israel and spent a year on a kibbutz where I taught English. The country fascinated me – it was so much more interesting than my life in Australia, so I decided to live there.

On returning to Oz, through my involvement in community theatre productions, I encountered a group called Jews Against Zionism in Australia (JAZA) who made me aware that in the creation of the State of Israel as a homeland for the Jews, 700,000 Palestinian people fled or were evicted from their land. I found this very disturbing and considered abandoning my decision to emigrate, however, I did go to Israel with the idea of starting an Arab-Jewish theatre company. For reasons ranging from difficulties in finding venues to cultural and language differences, I was unable to realise that dream.

I was shocked to realise that under the Right of Return, I automatically became an Israeli citizen but Palestinians in the diaspora could no longer return to their lands. To prove that Jews and Arabs could coexist, I and my then Israeli partner moved to an Arab village, Beit Safafa, right on the Green Line near Bethlehem, which had been cut in half between 1948 and 1967 – half occupied by Jordan and half by Israel. We lived there for four years. None of my Jewish friends were keen to visit me as it was during the time of the First Intifada in 1987. My Palestinian neighbours are still very good friends.

An eye-opener for me was when I said to my Palestinian landlord that I felt a particularly violent terrorist action was not helping their cause; he corrected me, saying they were not terrorists but freedom fighters.

I joined Women in Black Against the Occupation

and stood for one hour in the centre of Jerusalem every Friday for many years. We each held a Hamsa hand with the words End the Occupation in Hebrew, English and Arabic. Once, I was physically attacked by right-wing Jews for wearing a badge displaying the Israeli and Palestinian flags together. Friends had to drag me away. I can honestly say that has been the only antisemitic incident in my life, and from my own people too. But I have often been called a self-hating Jew at demonstrations.

Machsom Watch (Checkpoint Watch) was another organisation I joined, and went every week with other women to observe how young soldiers behaved towards the Palestinians, sometimes intervening.

As I knew little about the country, I enrolled in a Ministry of Tourism Guiding course, and became a guide of Christian Pilgrimage in the Holy Land. There is almost no other work for guides. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, I visit a lot of sites in the Occupied Territories such as East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho and Nablus. Few Israelis visit these places, either out of fear or because Israeli law forbids them to. But I am not afraid, and I and my groups always feel protected by our Palestinian bus drivers.

I work for a Christian Palestinian company; the drivers are mostly Muslims and the tour groups come from the UK. I meet interesting people and see a lot of the country on the 10-15-day trips, and by trying to simplify the very complex political situation, I am able to help groups understand what is happening on the ground.

During the first Gulf War in 1990 all guiding work ceased, so I returned to Australia for a visit. There I met my current partner who is not Jewish and has no desire to live in Israel or Palestine. However, every year (apart from during the pandemic) I return to lead a few groups and keep in touch with what is happening. I keep a low profile in Australia these days, as I don't wish to be turned back at Ben Gurion airport for my political views.

I have never been a Zionist and don't really understand what that highly charged term means today. Israel is a fact of life. I don't want to go into the details of what I think about who did what in the past. What matters to me is how Israel is behaving now. I am sickened by the daily reports I read in Ha'aretz, and thinking about the future of Israel/Palestine is depressing. The country is becoming more and more right wing; the left hardly exists; and I see no solution in my lifetime.

Perhaps if or when the Messiah comes, she will sort it all out!



SUZI ROSEDALE, a Jewish Australian, is a tour guide for Christian pilgrims in Israel/Palestine. She describes the events in her life and the commitment to coexistence that led her to this career

For information about what has been happening in Israel/Palestine over the last year and responses from campaigners for justice for the Palestinians, see the reports on pages 8-10.

The Western Wall – a supremely holy sight overwhelmed with soldiers supplied with tables filled with weapons and bibles

Making sense of an unknown past

LIVING WITH SHADOWS
Merilyn Moos
Independently published, £8.25

I must declare an interest. I know the author, having first met her on the Aldermaston March in 1963. Like her, I joined the International Socialism Group and as a teacher in a technical college, then a poly, worked closely with her in rank-and-file organising and revolutionary politics for much of the 1970s before I left teaching and our lives diverged.

We've kept in touch, on and off, and I read Merilyn's novel, *The Language of Silence*, based loosely on her childhood experiences as well as her biography of her father, *Beaten but not Defeated: Siegfried Moos, a German Anti-Nazi who settled in Britain*.

Even so, her new slender volume *Living with Shadows*, stunned me with its directness and devastating simplicity, beguiling and enchanting as it weaves a story of discovery and imaginative reconstruction, trying to make sense of the suppressions of her childhood. What we

have here is a brief set of vignettes in which the author tries to peel off the scabs of the hidden histories she grew up with (or rather, without), the secrets and emotional deprivations that have structured her life.

Born in 1944 to German refugees living in Oxford, then Durham, Merilyn was brought up in an almost locked-away environment. Her mother was emotionally cold and often openly contemptuous of her clever but shy and introverted daughter. Her father displayed warmth and emotion towards her but was also fearful and incredibly overprotective.

Paranoid about being spied upon, any friendships were actively discouraged and Merilyn grew up alone with no other family around or sense of background or belonging. This continued into young adulthood, with her parents intervening to destroy any emotional relationships she might show signs of forging with men. They also tried actively to stop any involvement in politics. The

one countervailing event was an annual outing with her father to the Durham Miners' Gala, to hear the speakers at Platform 2, where militants "raised the real issues".

What she picked up from her mother was a love of music and reading; and from her father a love of nature, art and sculpture in particular, through the practice of which, in later life, she has been able to find great joy and creativity.

But her formative years were structured around an accumulation of absences. As she says, "I was swaddled in silences." She goes on, "An acute listener, I heard the unspoken. Though I did not know of the murder of my parents' families and comrades, I could hear the knock of death."

Her father, she discovered much later in life, was a leading producer, lyricist and theoretician of the workers' agit prop movement run by the Communist Party in Berlin, forced to flee almost immediately after Hitler's accession to power. Her mother, an actor and writer in the same movement had to escape to England and Siegfried joined her there. Decades later Merilyn discovered that she had gone soon after to Moscow in 1936 for six months to visit her lover Brian, and possibly to marry him. Forcibly separated by the Party, he was then sent to Spain, and later executed in the purges. She returned to Britain and to Siegfried – and Merilyn grew up, she has come to believe, in the shadow of her mother's grief, for her lover and for the failure of the revolution she had believed in.

Knowledge of any of this was withheld from Merilyn, and perhaps from everyone else. Not knowing, her turn to revolutionary politics was an act of rebellion against her parents. It was only later she discover that this was a return to what had animated their lives in Germany!

It did come out occasionally, for instance in March 1953, the family retreated to the rarely used "drawing room" and three glasses were produced together with a dusty bottle of Moselle. The occasion – to drink a toast to the death of Stalin, and Merilyn, aged 9, was offered the first glass of wine in her life!

Readers of Jewish Socialist will be particularly interested in Merilyn's Jewish background – or rather, lack of it: "My parents never talked about religion in front of me. They never mentioned that they were historically Jewish or that some of their relatives had been murdered as Jews. I would not have known what a Jew was."

But enough. This is a short book, to read and savour. Much of it is the story of her finding her way back to her parents, whom she discovers she hardly knew. An engrossing, sometimes terrifying, but absolutely life-affirming memoir. Make sure you read it.

Richard Kuper

Drained of meaning

Antony Lerman is the one that got away. As research officer and later director at the Institute of Jewish Affairs, the research arm of the World Jewish Congress, he helped to relaunch it in 1996 as the Institute of Jewish Policy Research, and later resigned as he found he could not speak freely without "organisational constraints".

He is now Senior Fellow at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue in Vienna and Honorary Fellow at the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at Southampton University. He is also the author of the autobiographical *The Making and Unmaking of a Zionist*.

In *Whatever Happened to Antisemitism?* he documents – in sometimes excessive detail for the non-specialist – the process by which various independent national and transnational Jewish community initiatives for monitoring and combating antisemitism were hegemonised and integrated into an Israeli-led narrative centred on defining criticism of Israel as "antisemitism".

This book is the story of how the concepts of the "new antisemitism" and of Israel as "the Jew among the Nations" were promoted and became central to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism. The classical formulation of "new antisemitism" was by Israel's Minister of Diaspora Affairs, Natan Sharansky. He defined criticism of Israel as antisemitic by testing it according to the "three Ds": double standards; demonisation; and denial of Israel's right to exist. These came to inform the wording of the IHRA Working Definition.

But these three Ds turn the real world upside down. Far from suffering from a double standard, Israel benefits from one. So, for example, with the protection of the USA, Israel is not held accountable for having invaded, occupied and annexed territory beyond its internationally recognised borders since 1967, while Russia is justifiably condemned for doing exactly that.

Demonisation is a better description of how Palestinian resistance is generally portrayed, and how Arabs and Muslims are stereotyped as "terrorists", than of armed settlers who terrorise the local population with the backing of the Israeli state and the IDF, who are, in turn, portrayed as victims of Palestinians acting in self-defence.

States do not have "a right to exist"; people do. Did Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia or the USSR have a "right to exist"? Or Austria-Hungary? Does the Islamic Republic of Iran have a right to exist? Of course, no one questions Iran's existence. But the Islamic Republic of Iran is not just a country; its name also describes a regime whose specific features can and should be questioned, and are, including by many Iranians.

Descriptors such as "Jewish state", "Islamic state" or "Christian state" are political terms, and their meaning depends on the uses to which they are put. As Palestine was already inhabited, it proved impossible to establish a Jewish state as wished for by the early Zionists, "as Jewish as France is French",

without suppressing and dispersing the population already there and preventing them from returning.

Lerman unpicks the claim that it is antisemitic to point this out or to reference institutional racism against Palestinians and others in the single political regime between the Jordan and the sea. This has been well-documented by Israeli human rights organisations and others, including the widely respected Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem, the New York-based international monitoring body Human Rights Watch, widely quoted by the US State Department when Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State, and Amnesty International. All these organisations have long been critical of Israel's human rights abuses, as well as those in other countries, and now they have concluded that Israel is an apartheid state, they are deemed antisemitic.

This also applies to a considerable proportion of American Jews, who, according to a recent poll by a pro-Israel group, see Israel's treatment of Palestinians as comparable to US racism towards Afro-Americans, and many who believe Israel is committing "genocide" against Palestinians.

The proposition that these are all antisemites becomes increasingly untenable, and Lerman sums up the problem and the danger of attempting to impose this redefinition of antisemitism:

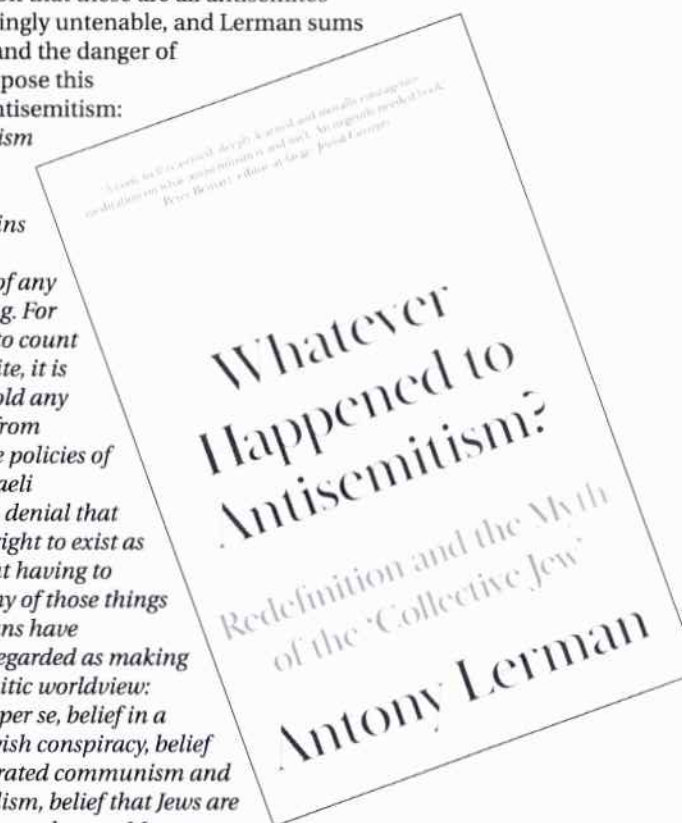
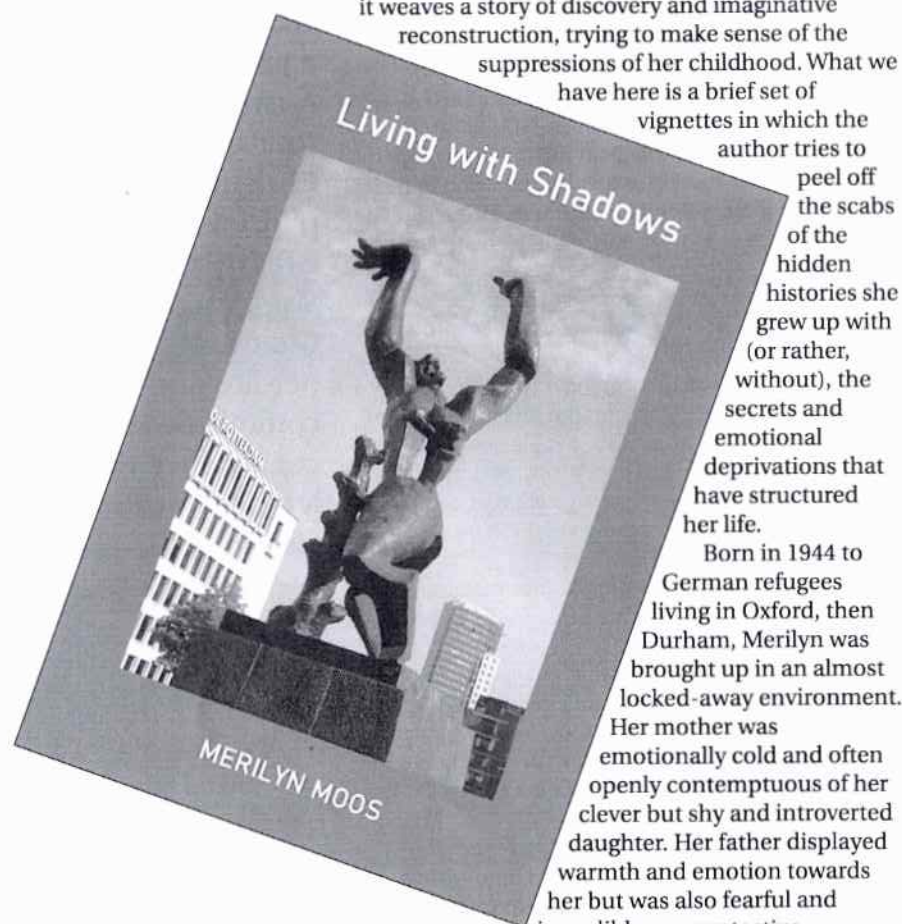
The anti-Zionism equals antisemitism argument drains the word antisemitism of any useful meaning. For it means that to count as an antisemite, it is sufficient to hold any view ranging from criticism of the policies of the current Israeli government to denial that Israel has the right to exist as a state, without having to subscribe to any of those things which historians have traditionally regarded as making up an antisemitic worldview: hatred of Jews per se, belief in a worldwide Jewish conspiracy, belief that Jews generated communism and control capitalism, belief that Jews are racially inferior and so on. Moreover, while theoretically allowing that criticism of Israeli governments is legitimate, in practice it virtually proscribes any such thing.

This not only shields Israel from accountability, but it seriously undermines the fight against real antisemitism, which is indeed on the increase, along with every other form of racism, including antisemitism perpetrated by governments that are strong supporters of the Israeli occupation and suppression of the Palestinians.

Stephen Marks

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ANTI-SEMITISM? REDEFINITION AND THE MYTH OF THE "COLLECTIVE JEW"

Antony Lerman
Pluto Press,
£17.99



Temporary refuge for socialist survivors

SOCIALISM IN YIDDISH: THE JEWISH LABOR BUND IN SWEDEN
Håkan Blomqvist
translation by
Håkan Blomqvist
and Paul
(Hersch) Glasser
Södertörn
University, £15

In some ways the most notable thing about this book is the fact that it exists at all: the author is a non-Jewish professor of History at a Swedish University who doesn't speak Yiddish or Hebrew; the subject, a small number of Bundists who either escaped or survived the horrors of Hitler, Stalin and other forms of virulent antisemitism in Eastern Europe.

The book focuses on the Second World War and its aftermath. Less obvious is the spotlight on Sweden. But if the cultural link isn't obvious, the historical and geographical connections are. Sweden is just across the Baltic sea from Germany and Poland, and some Jews from Eastern Europe went there to escape from the Nazis and from Stalin, as well as from refugee camps and the antisemitic pogroms in Poland after the war.

The story that the book tells is a noble but sad one. The blurb describes the Bund, not unfairly, as "one of the losers of history", though the author tries hard to celebrate its achievements. Whereas in Eastern Europe the Bund grew out of the Yiddish-speaking working class masses of Lithuania,

Poland and the rest of the Pale, the refugees who came to Sweden had no native

constituency to work with. In the Cold War, the Bund was opposed to Soviet dictatorship and tried to link with social democratic parties in the Western World. They had to deal with the establishment of Israel, hostility from the mainstream Jewish community in Sweden, and the pressure to assimilate. Many of the Bundist refugees were damaged by the war, the Holocaust, and losing most of their friends and families. They tried to rebuild the Bundist family and remember their heroes, songs, food and culture, but it wasn't very long before most

of them either left for the larger remaining Jewish communities in Western Europe, the US and Canada, and Israel, or gave up political activity completely.

Håkan Blomqvist is Director of the Institute of Contemporary History at Södertörn University near

Stockholm. With a lot of help and support from Yiddish associations in Europe, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, he has trawled diligently through archives, with heroic translation help from YIVO's Paul Glasser, to find information for the book.

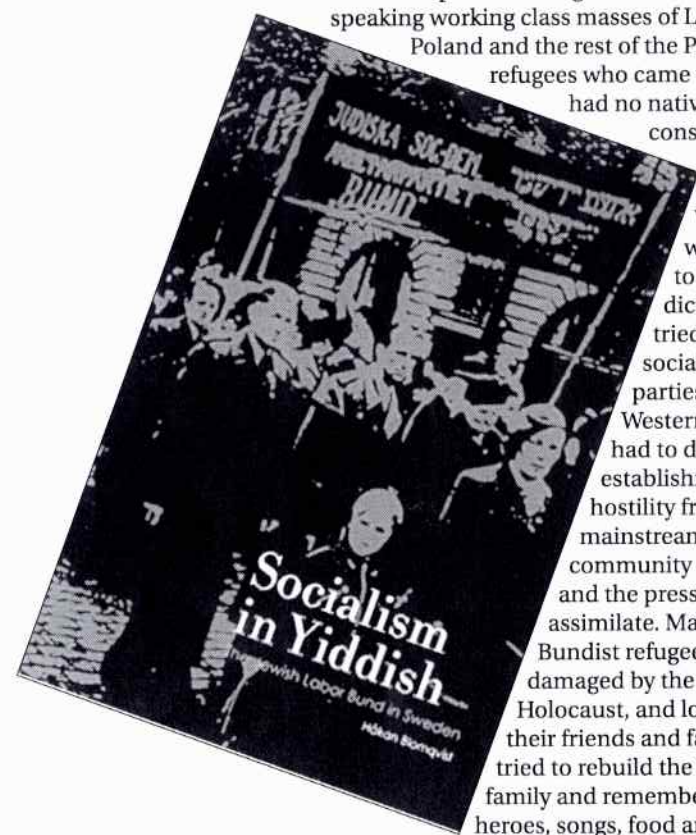
One of the central figures was Paul Olberg, born Hirsch Schuschkovitz in Latvia, in 1878. He worked for various socialist publications as a young man, was an unwilling guest of the Tsarist police for a period, took part in the 1905 Revolution in Russia, sided with the Mensheviks against the growing Soviet dictatorship (as did the Bund's leadership), worked as a journalist for left publications in Sweden and Germany and got to know many leaders of the non-Bolshevik left. He and his wife Frida Markovna settled in Stockholm in 1933 after the Nazi seizure of power. With his deputy Sara Mehr (born Sara Mobschnebna Matles in 1887), he was both the leader of the Bund in Sweden and the Swedish representative of the Jewish Labor Committee. The JLC, which still exists, was formed in 1934 in New York by Yiddish-speaking immigrant trade union leaders and leaders of such groups as the Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, the Bund, and the United Hebrew Trades, in response to the rise of Nazism in Germany.

In these two roles, Olberg toiled tirelessly to help the refugees who flooded into Sweden, both during the Nazi period and the war, and after the war. With his help, several Bund Homes were founded, notably Neglinge and Kumla Herrgård near Stockholm and Mälarbaden near Eskilstuna in south-east Sweden. Life was not easy, and Olberg constantly had to sort out practical problems of building repairs and tenancy agreements.

The Bund continued to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto fighters, to celebrate the First of May each year with Swedish socialists, and to honour its martyrs. Irena Klepfisz, who wrote of her life in the last issue of this magazine, spent some time in Neglinge as a young child with the survivors of her family as they moved in search of a permanent home. The Bund effectively ceased to exist in Sweden by the early 1950s, with some sad personal bitterness at the end that is not unknown in left groups. Paul Olberg died in 1970, Sara Mehr in 1973.

The book is a moving tribute to so many inspiring Bundist activists who are now barely remembered. After the original version was published, Blomqvist was inundated with requests for information about relatives and friends he had brought back to life from the archives. The book is a remarkable labour of love: one person's tribute to one strand of Jewish and socialist history – as much a *mitzvah* (good deed) as a book.

Raf Salkie



Forged in struggle modified in migration

This book was first published in German in 2014. The original title, which translates as *New Worlds in the New World*, suggests more than the English title that the focus is on the Bund in the Americas. The Bund's history began in the Russian Empire and continued in Poland, and Wolff aims to show how an identity forged in struggle as an illegal movement in the Russian Empire, consisting of both socialism and Yiddish culture, was transported first to interwar Poland and then to countries like the USA and Argentina.

The book spans the whole of the Bund's history from 1997 until after the Second World War, and Wolff's focus is on Bundists and Bundist activism rather than the Bund as an organisation. He looks at and analyses the content of Bundist activity in Eastern Europe – for example, gatherings, publishing, party work, educational work, labour struggles, armed militancy and fundraising. It is not surprising that he finds a different pattern in the Russian empire when the Bund was an illegal organisation to Poland when Bund activities were legal.

Publishing was very important, from *Arbeter Shtime* (Workers' Voice) which was produced on illegal presses in the Russian Empire or smuggled in from abroad, to journals and daily newspapers in Poland. The Bund's theoretical journal, *Unzer Tsayt* (Our Times), was published in New York from 1941 to 2002 and can be seen, Wolff says, as an example of *Memorik*, which he defines as "expressions of a common Bundist history uttered with a commemorative function, ranging from meetings to songs and poems, autobiographies, the restoration of its archives in New York."

This *Memorik* passed through a number of phases, Wolff calls them "nodes": the history of class struggles generally; the "founding myth" of the Bund in the Russian Empire; prominent Bundists such as Hirsh Lekert (executed in Vilna in 1902 for shooting the regional governor in retaliation for his repressive measures); and festivals such as May Day and commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The Bund's transnational networks, which began to be constructed as early as 1903, represented the longterm project of secular *yidishkayt* (Jewishness, Jewish way of life) in combination with *doikayt* (here-ness) and *mishpokhedikhkayt* (sense of being part of a family). By 1907 the Bund was able to host

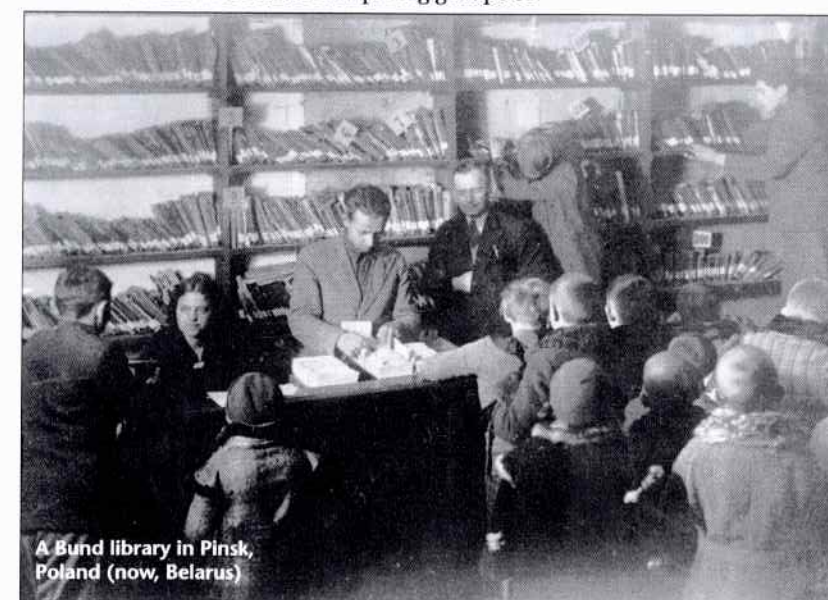
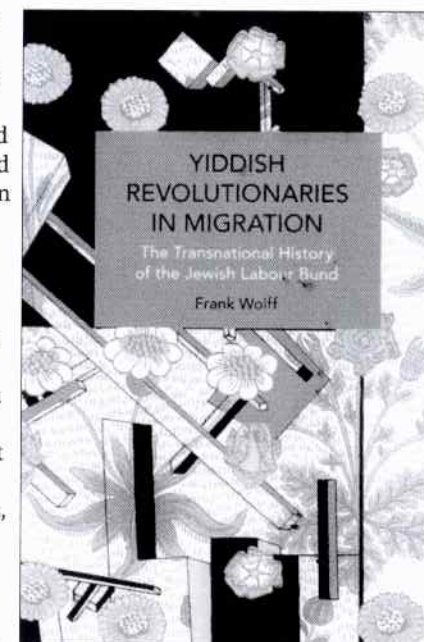
a meeting of more than 1,000 in Paris.

Focusing in particular on the United States and Argentina, Wolff shows how Bundists drew on their past to structure the organisation's approach to the conditions it faced in those countries. He says that, as with any migrant group, Jewish life in the Americas was fundamentally shaped by transfer and contact with the "old home". For example, a pattern of informal street meetings known as *birzshes*, enabled members to organise and exchange information in the Russian Empire; these were reproduced in Argentina to pass on news, and to help each other orient themselves and find jobs in their new country.

Education came to be a vital activity, particularly in inter-war Poland, where the Bund was one of the main organisations behind TSYSHO, the Central Jewish School Organisation. Teaching was mainly in Yiddish, and TSYSHO became the largest secular group of Jewish schools in interwar Poland. Wolff quotes

Bundist educational activists such as Khaym Kazdan as seeing the Bund's education network as the "engine of an evolutionary process moving towards a culturally independent *yidishkayt*, to be measured more in terms of literary output than proletarian culture."

The TSYSHO schools movement was reproduced in Argentina, though the political conditions there meant that there were three competing groups of



YIDDISH REVOLUTIONARIES IN MIGRATION: THE TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF THE JEWISH LABOUR BUND

Frank Wolff,
translated by
Loren Balhorn
and Jan-Peter
Herrmann
Haymarket
Books, £35.99

INFORMAL STREET MEETINGS KNOWN AS BIRZSHITS ENABLED MEMBERS TO ORGANISE AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE. THESE WERE REPRODUCED IN ARGENTINA TO PASS ON NEWS, AND TO HELP EACH OTHER ORIENT THEMSELVES AND FIND JOBS IN THEIR NEW COUNTRY.

Jewish secular schools: those of the Bund, Poalei Zion and the Communists.

Fundraising was an important activity. The TSYSHO schools were supported by donations from unions and branches of the Arbeter Ring (Workers' Circle) in the USA – which Wolff describes as a “secondary Bundist organisation”. The Bund also raised money for the Medem Sanatorium, on the outskirts of Warsaw, which was part of TSYSHO, for example through the powerful 1936 film describing the work of this child-centred institution, *Mir Kumen On*.

Wolff shows that Bundists, including of those who immigrated early to the New World, give more weight to the memories of their experiences in the Russian Empire rather than in countries they moved to. He does not ask whether the Bund's transnational networks represented a genuine polycentrism – the notion that all Jewish communities, wherever they are in the world, are equally valid and none should prioritise their needs over those of the others – or whether at different times different countries were central to the Bund's activities. From his sources, I believe there is evidence that up to around 1918 the activities of the Bund were focused on the Russian Empire, so any international activity was to do with supporting the Bund's activities there. Similarly, in the interwar



Above right: Bundists at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where Martin Luther King Jr gave his “I Have a Dream” speech.

Below: children at the Medem Sanatorium reading the *Folksaytung* newspaper.



period, I would argue that the activities of the Bund across the world were centred on Poland, such as raising funds for TSYSHO schools and later on doing all they could to assist the underground struggle in occupied Poland.

Only after the destruction of its Polish heartland did the Bund become a genuinely multinational organisation. But the fact that all its leading activists in New York and elsewhere drew on their experience in Poland meant that increasingly its *Memorik* – in terms of its commemorations of, for example, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – was about the construction of an identity which looked back

to Poland and the Russian Empire. As I once heard a Bundist say at a Bund conference in New York in the 1990s, *doikayt* (here-ness) could easily slip into *dortnkayt* (thereness).

Despite being over 500 pages long, the book is by no means a complete history of the Bund. So there is nothing about the content of Bundist conferences in Russia and Poland, and little about the development of the Bund's key principles: *doikayt*; national cultural autonomy; and *yidishkayt*. Wolff does include a fascinating debate among Moshe Rafes, Esther Frumkin and other ex-Bundist activists in the Jewish section of the Communist Party (*Yevseksiya*) about the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Bund in 1922, but this discussion would have benefited from a section on the experience of the Bund in Russia from 1917 to 1920 when its freedom of activity was increasingly constrained by the Bolsheviks.

Wolff is one of the leading specialists on the Bund today and he is drawing on a range of important sources, to judge from a separate article he has written on Bundist historiography. These include books in English by Henry Tobias on the Bund up to 1905, Ezra Mendelsohn on *Class Struggle in the Pale*, Bernard Johnpoll on the Bund in Poland between the wars, which he titled *The Politics of Futility*, as well as more recent work by Jack Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture in Inter-War Poland*, and David Slucki on *The International Labor Bund After 1945*. Above all there is the Bund's own five-volume Yiddish language history the *Geshikhte fun Bund* (History of the Bund), written in the United States in the 1950s and '60s, which contains a level of detail not available in English language sources.

Remarkably there is no single-volume English history of the Bund which summarises these sources (there is a French language *Histoire du Bund* by Henri Minczeles). If such a volume existed, Wolff's study would be a useful complement. Until such a study is produced, there is no substitute for looking at all these rich sources.

LINDA SHAMPAN 1949-2022

Linda Shampman was an active member of the Jewish Socialists' Group for many years, serving on its National Committee until 2014 when she stepped down for health reasons.

In addition to her JSG work, she was also a longstanding campaigner for Gypsy, Roma Traveller rights through the Gypsy Council, and for rights for disabled people. She was the secretary of Labour Heritage, an organisation dedicated to labour movement history in Britain, working especially among Labour Party members.

Linda's parents were from Jewish families whose roots were in India and Poland. Further back the family in India were from Iraq's Jewish community. **PAM LAURANCE** remembers her friend.

Linda was a very serious person who could also be very funny. She and I were/are both Jewish and socialist but that's not how we knew each other.

I met Linda in 1991. We had both just joined Askham Family Centre as senior social workers working for the London borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.

She was a highly principled person, given to acting quite unconventionally at times. She told me how once, when she was working at an area social work office, a client came in asking for money in circumstances which Linda knew would not fit in with the current guidelines. Linda thought she should be given the money. So she got the client to fill in all the required forms, went out of the room, returned telling her it was agreed, gave the client money out of her own pocket and threw the forms away.

Linda left the family centre after a few years but we stayed friends. She became a psychotherapist and I became a counsellor, so we also had some contact professionally. She moved in with John Grigg. My partner, Ian Saville, and I met up with Linda and John for meals from time to time. Linda and I would sometimes swim or walk together until those activities became too strenuous for her. And we had long phone conversations putting the world to rights... there has always been a lot to put to rights, of course.

Linda was also involved in a discussion group called Candeltalk and Biscuits, which Ian and I were part of. She always had a very considered intelligent view on whatever was under discussion.

Linda had coped with uncertain health since she was young and was very philosophical about the limitations it put both on how she lived her life and the slim prospect of her making it into old age.

She had a wide range of skills and knowledge.



She did a degree in Chemistry, then qualified as a social worker and then worked as a psychotherapist. She also qualified as a nurse. It was a standing joke between her and me that about once every three or four years I would discover some highly developed skill she had that I had known nothing about. One of those skills was playing and teaching the piano. She also practised violin frequently in her final years.

Linda was a very kind person, with lots of friends relying on her support and practical help in times of trouble. She gave a huge

amount of support to her mother towards the end of her mother's life.

She was also active as a campaigner, volunteer or supporter with a large number of organisations, such as Action on Disability, the Medical Foundation (also known as Freedom from Torture), the Refugee Council, Medical Aid for Palestinians, CND and the Labour Party.

I said she could be very funny. When I worked with Linda, we had adjoining desks, and we got into the habit of writing tiny notes to each other on very small Post-It notes. I had a few conkers on my desk and, when I came back one time from a few days off, she had arranged them in a circle, as if in a meeting, each with a speech bubble stuck to them cut from Post-It notes. I can't remember what they all said but one of them read: “I think you're all nuts.”

On another occasion, Linda and I had arranged to meet in Roundwood Park not far from where I live. I apologised for being a few minutes late. Referring to the road I had just walked along, I said, “I thought the park was on the left but it popped up on the right.” Linda said “A lot of people say that about the Labour Party.”

Goodbye, Linda. So many people in so many walks of life are going to miss you very much.

DAVID KESSEL 1947-2022

David Kessel was a longstanding Jewish Socialists' Group member in the East End of London, and a generous supporter of the group. He was a poet and activist, especially among people who are marginalised and oppressed by dealing with mental health issues and their treatment in society. **DAVID ROSENBERG** writes

We saw David too rarely because of his challenging life circumstances, but when he did come to our meetings, he would listen intently to the speaker and discussion, and then intervene with a short, incisive and powerful contribution, spoken calmly and quietly.

He first came to our meetings in the late 1980s, after his second breakdown and subsequent diagnosis as schizophrenic had already prevented him from continuing his work as a doctor in East London, where he was one of several very committed and radical doctors who have worked in this district.

In those early years, he had also distinguished himself as a trade union activist campaigning on doctors' working conditions. He had had his first breakdown at the age of 17 before going to medical school.

David was born into a family of communists – an Irish mother of Catholic heritage and a Jewish father of German Jewish heritage who came to London from South Africa.

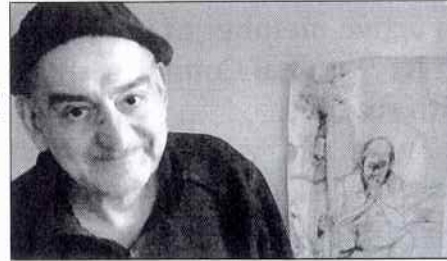
When he was unable to continue working as a doctor, he put his energies into his poetry and working with a range of groups, bringing people

Life Against Death, 1999

The east wind of high summer.
Old men with cider bottles,
And I suddenly an old man.
Through the slums with Jesus,
Black, broken hearted, golden Grace.
The whistling Cockney gives
His heart away at street corners
To the young alki: cursing, skint.
Bengali dawn
On the Whitechapel waste.
The Gestapo will pass -
There shall be silence
Broken by cawing crows
And the vixen's cry.
Strong as our pain is strong,
Our children are.
A savage peace,
The rain over Stepney.

In Memoriam Salvador Allendé, 2010

The bells of St Anne's are ringing down East India Dock.
Do they ring for Christ or for Pinochet?
Tears falling like rain
On the mean streets of London,
Red as workers' blood,
Falling on a market place,
On a labourer's fierce decency,
A busman's daily lot;
Flooding the streets with pain and desire.
Plane trees finger into a winter sky,
As beautiful as Bengali girls,
Straight as cockney lads.



struggling with mental health issues together so they could give each other mutual support. He was a frequent contributor to *Survivors' Poetry* and also *The Recusant* which describes itself as "oppositional poetry, prose, polemic". We are very proud to have published some of his poems in *Jewish Socialist*.

In a eulogy, David's son Tom, described him, as a schizophrenic who "never hid from his condition. Instead, he embraced it. He embraced the identity and the community as a whole where, I believe, he found a sense of belonging and purpose." He was "a friend, a comrade and a counsellor who sought to understand his condition so that he could help others... An outsider, a survivor, a soul searcher, a chess player, a park lover, a café dweller... A quiet agitator with intense dark eyes."

Living in the East End, David was very aware of the area's anti-fascist traditions and its immigrant, cosmopolitan nature and atmosphere. He was acutely conscious of its traditions of class struggle and the struggles of the marginalised and desperate today among different communities of East Enders. He left many beautiful moving words, and will be very sorely missed.

We are all alone, but not separate
From each other in streets and parks.
We live in the spaces of other's lives.
To spill the entrails of M.I.6,
That worldly terror,
Onto the wide market pavements,
Between the alikes and fruit stalls.
Life so fragile, death arbitrary.
Lascar seamen and Bantu gold miners.
And I have heard in desperate streets
Poor kids whistle like blackbirds, at midnight.

London, 1997

City of Chaplin and MIS.
A troubled cockney girl, stranger to herself,
Marrowed by a grey savage sky across the river.
Moneyed nothingness in Knightsbridge.
The walking dead, their symbols and threats,
Haunt this city, driving us into underground passages,
Where generosity of hearts and arms are everything.
A lungfull of the wind across a park
Before the dawn of cockney power
The heart of London drowned outside an offie.
From a tenement a blackbird sings;
Mellow the sound, sour the land.
Incendiary to the spirits
Of a broken, bitter people.
Beyond our narrow classes, our stilted politics,
Our poverty of heart and stomach,
We are all searching for sweethearts to walk on windy
October afternoons when brown golden leaves are falling.

ASK THE RABBI

Our respected teacher is here to solve your problems in these troubled times.

Q: I'm finding it very difficult to pay my energy bills. What help and advice can you give.

A: Start a business.

Q: Have you any examples of weaponising antisemitism?

A: We turn to an eminent rabbinical scholar, Rebbetzin Chodge, who alone can guide us. "Politicians who use the genuine fear of a growing

antisemitism for their own personal ambitions, as Liz Truss has done, is deeply cynical and insulting." Rebbetzin Chodge has to leave us now to participate in Keir Starmer's political broadcast at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin and then conduct a discussion on how to put toothpaste back into its tube.



This Ask the Rabbi column is sponsored by AIPAC.

AIPAC are also proud to sponsor Senator Norman R. Lyming, who has pledged to purge the US of globalists like George Soros and Rothschild-run cabals. Lyming's family own the biggest gun warehouse in Texas. GunWorld is currently offering a free trip to the Holy Land with every semi-automatic rifle purchased. (You must be over 13.)

AIPAC also sponsors Mary-Lou Botox, a former wig stylist and close confidante of Donald Trump. A staunch defender of Israel, Mary-Lou will be addressing the AIPAC conference this year on the Great Replacement Theory.

Jewish Socialist Archive

We are very pleased to announce that the **Bishopsgate Institute** in collaboration with *Jewish Socialist* has created a digital archive for this magazine. So far the first 25 issues are available to search by issue, author, subject or keyword in an attractive and accessible way. The next 25 will be accessible very soon as pdfs – though we will have to wait a bit longer for them to be fully searchable.

Jewish Socialist magazine was conceived in 1984. The first issue, produced with cow gum, Letraset, galley proofs and scalpels, came out in spring 1985, and it was groundbreaking. We had an enthusiastic reception which has never waned.

In recent years we have seen a wonderful blossoming of confident Jewish radicalism and flourishing Jewish countercultures. *Jewish Socialist* now finds itself among a constellation of progressive initiatives that are reflected in our pages.

You can or follow a link from the JSJ website at www.jewishsocialist.org.uk/resources/js or go to the *Jewish Socialist* page on the Bishopsgate Institute website at www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/jewish-socialist-archive and immerse yourself in radical, secular Jewish material.

We are grateful to Stefan Dickens and the team at Bishopsgate for all their work in developing access to this wonderful, rich resource.

Please visit the archive, delve, learn and enjoy this treasury of Jewish socialist writing.

